

WHY UNITED WAY MATTERS

By: Sara Janes

United Way
of Laramie County



I have always been a supporter of United Way. Originally it was just through thinking it was a great organization and that what they do is worthwhile for our community. More recently though, my support for United Way has become much closer to my heart. Last year I was asked by my agency head at work to be the United Way coordinator for the 2011 campaign. I was first of all honored to be asked, and then I was somewhat stumped as to what I could do to really make a difference. I realized that I didn't like to be begged for money (no matter what the cause was) and thought there were probably many others like me out there as well.

So, I decided I needed to find out for myself why United Way matters. I knew I needed to volunteer at some of the United Way recipient organizations so I could see first-hand what United Way does in our community. Also, I felt it was important for me to share my experiences with the other employees in my organization so they could "see" what I saw, and could then make a decision as to whether or not they wanted to donate.

When I went to each of the site visits, I think I had an idea of what I would see and experience when I was there. But at each, my eyes were opened. I thought I knew what some of the organizations did in our community. And I thought I knew what "type" of person was the recipient of the services. The common thread in all of the places I visited was the people. Every place I visited had people just like me and my family there. Normal, everyday people who relied on these organizations in order for their children to eat, or to receive training so they could get jobs to support their families.

I know it sounds cliché to say my life was changed by my experiences, but it was. And I am honored when I get the chance to share my experiences with others. I always tell the people I am talking to that I do not want them to feel like I am pressuring them into donating to United Way. But if it is on their hearts to participate in the funding campaign, then I can say without a doubt that their contributions would be put to very good use in our county.