

REAL PEOPLE, REAL STORIES.

THIS IS WHY WE GIVE.



Diane Dillon

There are so many worthy causes today that need our help, and so many wonderful organizations doing great work that need financial support from people like you and me. It's hard to decide sometimes what to do and who to help. I support the United Way and the SEFA campaign because of my parents, my grandparents and a story I've been told my entire life.

My parents raised me and my siblings to be there for family, to help our neighbors when they needed us and to help our communities by giving our time and our financial support whenever we could. For me, this education started before I was even born.

The year was 1960 and it was Christmas time in Buffalo, NY. My parents were packing up the car with my brother and sister, gifts for their families, and clothes enough for a few days. My mother was about six weeks pregnant with me when they crossed the border back into Canada and headed for their hometown of Chatham, a small farming community in Ontario.

Back then, the trip took much longer than today so along the way, my family stopped to eat. When my Dad called one of his brothers (from a pay phone!!) to give him an ETA, they were told that my grandparent's home was in flames. Thank God no one was hurt but there wasn't

much that could be salvaged from the house. My parents arrived on December 23rd to find the house still standing but the flame and water damage was so bad that most of my grandparent's possessions had been lost...including all of the Christmas gifts for their grandchildren.

The United Way was one of the first to help my family. They were there within a few hours helping my grandparents and parents by making sure they had a place to stay and what they needed to stay warm to get through the next few days. The United Way even provided some toys and made sure the entire family had a nice Christmas dinner. They gave my family hope and as the story was told to me, a wonderful Christmas holiday that would never be forgotten. My family's story is just one of many out there... in our own community and beyond. Any one of us could someday need the help and guidance of a United Way agency. My family did and so I give to the United Way as a way to say thank you and to help other families in need. I don't know if I can ever repay the kindnesses shown to my grandparents but I know I can try by donating to the United Way/SEFA campaign.

Won't you please donate too?

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Nancy Concadoro

I was once asked why I am such a strong supporter for the United Way. While I contributed to campaigns for many years, I never fully appreciated the impact the United Way has within the community until I was able to see for myself firsthand how the organizations they support truly help individuals and families in need.

My previous role afforded me the opportunity to guide employees who needed assistance, often in their most dire circumstances, and facing the most difficult of challenges. The issues they faced were significant-sudden loss of a family member, the impact of chronic illness, childcare concerns, domestic abuse, amongst others. Because I had available the local Community Services Directory, I was always able to find the appropriate agency for their needs.

These are the agencies our United Way contributions support, some more familiar (YMCA), others not (nutrition services for the elderly). The feedback received from these individuals was always positive, and they were thankful that in their most difficult of times they were able to receive assistance.

As a result of these experiences, my support for the United Way became very, very personal. Your contributions help support our community, our neighbors, families and friends. I can assure you, it does.

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Tammy Elowsky

So, I'm often asked, "Why do you donate to SEFA?" That's not an easy answer, as I guess there are a number of reasons. I have been donating to United Way (which SEFA funds) since my first "real" job out of college at Disney, over 20 years ago. I was brought up in a family where giving back was highly valued, be that your personal time (volunteering on committees, working Habitat for Humanity, doing walk-a-thons, etc.) and/or your personal resources (payroll deduction, Good Will donations, etc.). After years of doing so, though, there came a time when my own personal family benefitted from the generosity of others through the United Way.

Nine years ago, our son went in for a well-child visit and got a clean bill of health, hitting all of his milestones and was a happy-go-lucky little toddler. He got a couple of shots, a lollipop and we were sent on our way with a smile. The following day, our son was unable to breathe and was hospitalized for a week. He came home from the hospital no longer looking at me, lost all language, couldn't bear to be touched, had night terrors, marathon meltdowns and was banging his head. Shortly after, he was diagnosed with autism.

Over the years, programs from Oswego ARC and Oswego Arise have helped us teach our son to be independent. ARC aided him with early intervention therapies. As he's gotten older, Arise has helped him enjoy his community with Arise at the Farm, where kids with disabilities and their siblings can go to enjoy summer camp for a week, and social skills classes. Also, Arise has a Sibshops program where our daughter can make friends with other siblings of kids with disabilities, have fun and receive sibling counseling (not that she knows it!). These are life-changing programs that can't be purchased with our checkbook, as they don't exist to purchase. They are provided by Arise at no cost so there is no barrier for those who need it to access it.

Because of programs like these, today in 7th grade my son is fully included in his middle school into regular education classrooms where he averages merit/honor roll grades. He is making gains socially as well, with friends he stays after school to play ball with and a certain young lady friend that calls him her "boyfriend". Now it is for this reason that I give to SEFA and I finally know where to designate my money, Oswego Arise. United Way has been there for our family with just that little extra support when my children needed it. For that, I am forever grateful. This is why I will always donate to the United Way, and the way to do that here on campus is to donate to SEFA.

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Kristin Gublo

A number of years ago I was thrilled to learn that I could allocate my donation to an organization that is part of our campus community. It is The Children's Center which is located in Sheldon Hall. Our employees are tremendously fortunate to have this service on our campus. You cannot put a price on a dependable, safe, nurturing learning environment for your children while you are at work. I was extremely grateful for the phenomenal teachers and programming that my children were exposed to. But it is not just our employees that benefit, I see many non-traditional students in my department utilize the center. With United Way funding, Kathy Lea the director, is able to offer a significantly reduced tuition rate for our students. These parents can afford daycare, continue to make progress toward their degree, graduate and pursue their dreams. My children are both in elementary school now but I will continue to give to the center to help future Oswego students.