

United Way of Martin County Community Impact Report

“Great Things Happen When We LIVE UNITED”

Situation Analysis: Forbes recently ranked United Way as the country’s second largest charity by donations received. However, according to the 2014 National United Way Tracker Study, nearly half (46 percent) of the public doesn’t know what United Way does. The biggest reason people do not trust United Way is that they “don’t have enough knowledge about the organization.” On a local level, United Way of Martin County (UWMC) worked with the local college to compile research to determine what the community knows about its local United Way. Results show that more than 50% of Martin County residents were unsure that United Way is helping to make a difference in education, financial stability and health. Additionally, 75% were unaware that donations to UWMC stay in the local community! UWMC uses many tools, including its annual report, to communicate its mission with its **audience including current and prospective donors, volunteers and supporters.** A content analysis revealed UWMC’s previous annual reports focused on fundraising accomplishments and event recaps and lacked mission-focused communication. Research shows that storytelling is the single most powerful communications tool available because stories help us remember, understand and relate to an organization and they also link us to our sense of generosity. Studies show that donors tend to give twice as much when presented with a story about an affected individual as opposed to reading huge abstract numbers of the overall scope of a problem. Armed with this information, UWMC set out to use its annual report as a vehicle to tell the story of its impact through three people the organization has helped in the areas of education, financial stability and health. The annual report is also used as a fundraising tool. For the first time appeal letters included in the annual report were coded so that data could be compiled and the annual report’s fundraising effectiveness could be analyzed.

Objective: 1. To develop an annual report that showcases UWMC’s mission by sharing compelling stories of three people UWMC helped in the areas of education, financial stability and health. 2. To distribute to a mailing list of 4,000 people including current, past and prospective donors. 3. To surpass

the industry average 2% response rate. 4. To cover the costs of producing and mailing the annual report through donations.

Implementation: The annual report featured the theme “Great Things Happen When We LIVE UNITED.” UWMC worked with its agency partners to identify clients who would provide a face and a story to bring the “great things” to life on the pages of the annual report. The stories featured Yolanda – a working mother who received financial stability assistance through UWMC’s tax preparation program; Adrian – a young boy with autism who received critical services through a UWMC health-related program; and Audrey – a young girl who received tutoring that helped ensure she was kindergarten ready through a UWMC educational program. UWMC contacted and interviewed clients and developed their stories. Photo shoots were scheduled and Yolanda, Adrian and Audrey sported T-shirts with UWMC’s tagline -- LIVE UNITED. UWMC worked with a graphic designer who developed the annual report within the organization’s brand standards. UWMC analyzed its current donor list and targeted gated communities where the majority of its current donors reside. Appeal letters were tailored to each community and an existing donor in each community was asked to serve as a “signer”. By using a well-known resident in each community to sign the appeal letter it gave the solicitation a personal touch. The annual report was also distributed at events and uploaded electronically and shared through UWMC’s Facebook, email newsletter and website.

Evaluation: 1. UWMC’s mission was shared through the stories of Yolanda, Adrian and Aubrey three real people who UWMC helped in the areas of education, financial stability and health. 2. The annual report was mailed to 4,000 people including current, past and prospective donors. 3. The response rate was 3.98% and surpassed the industry standard of 2% . 4. The total cost to produce and mail the annual report was \$11,156 and the total amount raised was \$119,077 – more than 10 times the investment. In fact, Adrian’s caretaker was so moved by his feature and thankful for UWMCs support she returned a pledge form with a \$250 first-time gift.

Budget: Costs - Graphic design \$1,100; Printing: \$2,804; Postage: \$7,804; Letterhead: \$600; Envelopes: \$1,172; Photography: \$500; Income – Sponsorships \$2,500 Staff time: 40 hours.