

It truly is wonderful to see so many of you here today to join us in celebrating the power of community.

Like so many of you, The United Way has been impacted by the current economic crisis. Like some of you, I am feeling challenged, but I am also energized. That is because I believe we have the right strategy: advancing the common good by focusing on education, income and health to create opportunities for a better life. It is no secret that organizations that hold to their strategic course during economic downturns are better positioned for success on the other side of the storm.

Our small, dedicated and amazing staff, along with our committed volunteers, has been able to make much of our vision a reality. We've highlighted some in our video but there are other aspects of that vision you might not be aware of. Let me share them with you now.....First let me assure you that

- ✓ We still have numerous successful workplace campaigns – some of which are up year over year.
- ✓ We continue to support the front-line agencies in our community who provide the basic needs including food, shelter and other emergency assistance.

**In Addition**

- ✓ We've organized The Circle of Hope Latino's Helping Humanity Partnership as a giving circle similar to that of our Northern Santa Barbara County Women's Fund
- ✓ Thanks to the efforts of Jenny Sayers and Ashley Mistretta, our AmeriCorps and VISTA members, the Community Volunteer Center and Online Volunteer Coordination Program has been developed in collaboration with United Way of Santa Barbara.
- ✓ We've opened the Santa Ynez Valley Nonprofit Center in collaboration with, The Community Action Commission, Court-Appointed Special Advocates and United Way of Santa Barbara

All of this, and we continue to raise the bar.

Our ambitious **10 year goals** include partnering with others in the areas of Income, Education and Health

**Education** – we will work to cut the dropout rate of our high schools by 50%

**Income** – to decrease the number of financially unstable families in our communities by 50%

**Health** – to increase the number of healthy youth and adults in our community by 1/3

These goals might seem overwhelming to some, but at United Way, we have learned firsthand the magic that takes place when partners come together to identify priorities, develop strategies, and simply believe “Yes, it can be done; and say, “ Yes, I will help.”

Last week I was asked by an agency executive, “What can we do to support the United Way?” I offered a couple of ideas, but I held this one back because I wanted to share it with you today. It is time for us to go back to what has worked for us in the past. This year we will work with the Advisory Council teams in Santa Maria and in Lompoc to develop Campaign Cabinets to lead the community in their fund-raising efforts.

At United Way, it all comes down to two words: **Join us**. Whether it is your time, goodwill, ideas, enthusiasm, financial support, serving on a task force, as a board member or as a campaign cabinet member – **we need you**. This local United Way is the embodiment of: “If we all do a little, we will accomplish great things together..”

Thank you for being here today.

Award plaques to Mary Harvey and Cary Gray.