

R E P O R T

Your United Way of Broome County investment at work

April 1999

Community Planning helps groups solve Broome County problems

Community Planning is one of the three services supported by donations to United Way that are also administered by United Way.

Community Planning works with other organizations within Broome County to avoid duplication of services and to achieve results that would be impossible for a single organization to accomplish. These relationships also give United Way a better understanding of community needs, which helps it to develop priorities in determining the areas in Broome County that most need funds.

Community Planning works with all types of organizations: public organizations, such as units of county or state government; non-profit organizations, such as local charities and churches; businesses; civic organizations; and virtually any other groups involved in the area of health and human services.

Community Planning helps on "Our Community's Promise for Children"

For example, Community Planning has been a key player in the Broome County "Our Community's Promise for Children" coalition.

Meeting for almost two years, this group has brought together representatives of schools, government, and non-profit organizations interested in health and human services. Its goal is to focus community attention on the needs of children, making residents aware of the services that are available, and presenting ideas for helping to change current situations that are not supportive for children's growth and development.

The "Our Community's Promise for

Children" coalition is connected to the America's Promise campaign, which began in Philadelphia in 1997, coupled with a local initiative. The coalition is presenting a series of 10 "Promises for Children," such as "Every child will have access to regular health care," which are each being highlighted for six weeks through a variety of methods, including public service announcements and articles in the news media. For each one, information is presented about the problems that currently prevent fully achieving "the promise," as well as ideas for using community re-



sources to improve the situation.

Individual "promise teams," composed of representatives from various organizations, also meet to share ideas for improving the status of children in specific areas.

The program is having some impact on the community. One of the first promises presented after the program was launched in May 1998 was "Every child will have a parent who understands and stimulates growth and development." One of the ways devised to implement this promise was through the "Please Read To Me" program.

As part of the program, volunteers, in conjunction with the maternity units of both UHS and Lourdes Hospitals, talk to new parents about the impor-

tance of reading to their newborns. Books, purchased with funds from local Rotary Clubs and Binghamton High School students, and packaged by RSVP, are presented to each parent. Follow-up information is sent to them at the end of six months and after one year.

Program rewarding for children and volunteers

The program has been successful not only in getting new parents to understand the importance of reading to their very young children, but also in uniting organizations to conduct a project none of them would have been able to handle on their own. It has also been very rewarding for those volunteers involved.

"Never have I had so much fun or felt so worthwhile in a volunteer position as I do with the "Read To Me" project," related Pat Burns, one of the volunteers. "Believing as wholeheartedly as I do in the philosophy of the project—that reading to babies right from the start enhances brain development and attachment—captured me as a volunteer. However, it is the interest and excitement I see in the faces of the new parents as I explain the idea, that keeps me enthused and committed."

The "Our Community's Promise for Children" coalition plans to continue its activities through June 2000.

United Way supports Community Planning, but only with your help. Since United Way keeps its cost low, over 85 cents of every dollar raised goes directly to member agencies and activities. For more information about Community Planning, contact Erik Jensen at 729-2592.

