

United Way copes with fewer donations

Rolf Boone

Demand is up and funding is down for nonprofit organizations in Thurston County, a survey has found.

Details of that survey, jointly produced by United Way of Thurston County and The Community Foundation of South Puget Sound, were unveiled by United Way staff members, including executive director Pam Toal, at an Olympian editorial board meeting Wednesday.

"We want to have real data about the needs out in the community so that then we can figure out the best means to address it and can mobilize the community around some possible solutions," Toal told the board.

Of the 24 nonprofit organizations that responded to the survey, the data show:

- **All but one** reported increased demand for its services in the past year.
- **Fifteen** nonprofits estimated an average demand increase of more than 30 percent.
- **Fourteen** reported a reduction in funding the past year from private and public sources.
- **Fourteen** organizations also reported reductions in pay for some clients, operating budgets and hours and staff members

United Way of Thurston County board member Larry Geri said the general environment for nonprofits is challenging because foundation, governmental and personal donations are down.

"All three are under some pressure," he said.

As for how United Way is faring in this slower economy, Toal said it was too early to tell, although some donors and organizations have notified United Way that they will not be able to help this year.

"It's a very uncertain time and we know it's here for a while," she said about the slower economy.

This year's goal is to raise \$1.4 million for the organization, up from \$1.35 million last year. The current fundraising campaign ends March 31.

To further aid its fundraising efforts, United Way also has launched the Women's Leadership Council, a program designed to promote financial self-sufficiency among women and connect more women to philanthropy, said Kim Wyman, co-chairwoman of the leadership council.

Wyman said a steering committee has been formed to recruit women into the group, with a goal of 50 members. Ultimately, the council could raise about \$50,000, Wyman said.

"We're trying to get that next generation of philanthropist," she said.

Rolf Boone covers business for The Olympian. He can be reached at 360-754-5403 or rboone@theolympian.com.