

LABOR: A Tradition of Service to the Community

In 1942, organized labor's generous financial and voluntary support towards local United Ways, natural disasters and war relief efforts was recognized by the Community Chests and Councils, Inc. (now United Way of America). To coordinate effective support organized labor and the Community Chests and Councils, Inc. agreed to join in collaborative fund raising and community development. As a result, labor liaison positions were established on the staffs of local Community Chests.

In 1946, the Department of Labor Participation was established at United Way of America.

In 1948, United Way of Wyoming Valley, in cooperation with the Greater Wilkes-Barre Labor Council, created a full-time labor position and a Department of Labor Participation. The person's title in this position is AFL-CIO Community Services Liaison.

The Labor Participation Department continually involves labor in United Way's fund raising and community services activities. In recognition of labor's support, United Way annually presents the United Way Labor Award to a union or union member who has provided outstanding support. Additionally, union names are included on employee award certificates, whereby an employee group or work site has qualified for one of United Way's special employee campaign awards.

The Labor Participation Department has worked cooperatively with the Greater Wilkes-Barre Labor Council's Community Services Committee and the local labor movement in helping to address numerous human service needs. Some noteworthy accomplishments include:

- (1) Holds the distinct honor of having trained more union members and conducted more Union Counselor Training Courses than any community in the U.S.;
- (2) Obtained the support of the Union Building Tradesmen in 1983 to provide free labor in creating the St. Vincent de Paul Kitchen;
- (3) Received a commitment from the Operating Engineers Union Local 542 in 1984 to place their building on loan to the American Red Cross as a disaster center in cases of regional wide-scale disasters;
- (4) Conducts bi-annual appeals from labor for blood donors; and
- (5) From 1994 to present, has served as a co-sponsor and helped coordinate the National Association of Letter Carriers (AFL-CIO) Food Drive, which is our area's single largest food drive.

Because of the many outstanding and beneficial community services activities our Labor Participation Department has been able to jointly work on with the Greater Wilkes-Barre Labor Council, the Council won the first-ever PA. AFL-CIO Boyer Uehlein Community Services Award in 1990. This award denotes excellence in volunteer community service projects. In addition to the state recognition, a national honor was bestowed upon the Greater Wilkes-Barre Labor Council and United Way of Wyoming Valley in 1998 when they won the National AFL-CIO Model City in Community Services Award. This honor recognizes labor councils and

United Ways which worked cooperatively in developing effective community service programs in meeting human service needs.

In 1999, the Labor Participation Department started a Labor Leadership Giving Program. This was a result of our local United Way and labor movement being requested by United Way of America to be one of four pilot programs nationwide.

In 2002, our local Labor Leadership Giving Program was recognized as a "Best Practice Program" nationwide by United Way of America.

Along with the Labor Participation Department's working to gain labor's support in the realm of campaign, community services and volunteer committee involvement, it has the prime responsibility of working with our area's dislocated workers, and assisting with our organization's Information & Referral Service.

Dislocated Worker assistance is provided through on-site information programs to persons who are scheduled to lose their jobs. Information about dealing with the loss of a job as well as available supportive services is shared with the dislocated workers. This community service started in 1982 and has presented program information to over 100 job sites and thousands of dislocated workers.