

John Boccacino:

Hello, and welcome back to the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast. I'm John Boccacino, Senior Internal Communications Specialist at Syracuse University.

Mike Frasciello:

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John Boccacino:

We are thrilled today on the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast to welcome on Mike Frasciello, the Dean of the College of Professional Studies here at Syracuse University. He is also one of the co-chairs on a campaign that is near and dear to many of us here at Syracuse University and in Central New York. It's the United Way Employee Giving Campaign, which kicked off earlier in October and will be running through December. We will give you the specifics on how long you can make your gift if you are an employee of the university. But Mike was kind enough to join us here on the podcast, and Mike, how are you holding up these days?

Mike Frasciello:

Really well, John. Thank you. Thank you for having me.

John Boccacino:

I can't think of anything better when it comes to the holiday season than giving back to your community through the United Way Employee Giving Campaign. Take us into your involvement. How did you get started with this campaign?

Mike Frasciello:

Well, I've been with Syracuse University for 23 years this month actually, October was my-

John Boccacino:

Happy anniversary.

Mike Frasciello:

Yeah, thank you. And throughout my entire time with the university, we've been engaged with the United Way. It's just part of what we do I think annually here. The campaigns are always really fun. I know we'll talk a little bit more about that in a bit. Previous leadership here at the college, participated as chair or co-chair over the years. So when the United Way and the provost reached out and asked if I'd be willing to support and serve in this role, which was last year, it was my first year, and of course I jumped all over it for a chance to work with Ryan C. Williams.

Then this year Associate Provost, Marcelle Haddix, joined. And so that was like almost a no-brainer. Everybody wants an opportunity to work with Marcelle. So yeah, my involvement is simply trying to help with the campaign again this year in a way that draws awareness, and interest, and gets folks really excited about it.

John Boccacino:

Well, I know that you're celebrating a personal anniversary for work here at Syracuse University. The United Way of Central New York is also celebrating a milestone anniversary this year. It's the 100th anniversary of the United Way of Central New York and their great work to make a difference for our residents here in town through all these essential services and projects that we are going to get to. When it comes to this United Way Employee Giving Campaign, what are this year's goals?

Mike Frasciello:

Well, the fundraising goal this year, like last year, is \$100,000. Again, we set that goal working with United Way and some internal sort of conversations and discussions. The pandemic has really disrupted it over the last couple years, our campaign, and lots of other things going on. The economy, gas prices, things like that, just the basic cost of things.

So I think we set an achievable goal for the university at \$100,000 just for the campaign, and we think that we'll certainly meet that and hopefully exceed it. But it does feel like an achievable goal this year. So it's \$100,000, and again, as you mentioned, the campaign proper started October 14th but staffers are able to give well into the spring of next year even after the campaign. And that all counts toward the annual campaign total.

John Boccacino:

How can you explain to our audience the difference that their gifts make? What will the proceeds that we raise from the United Way Employee Giving, how will that make a difference for residents in Central New York?

Mike Frasciello:

Yeah, it's a great question. There are nearly 70 specially funded programs and projects that are embedded within the 28 local health and human service agencies and non-profit agencies that United Way partners with every year. So every dollar goes toward supporting those programs and agencies. I can share two of those that are really impactful that we've seen benefit significantly from our participation. One of those is the Thriving Families program. So this is a United Way collaboration of local organizations that serve families that are at risk of housing instability.

The program takes this two-generational approach where case managers connect parents and children to supportive services like job training, and food assistance, mental and physical health services, and it's sort of a whole family approach. That's one really significant program that's directly impacted and supported by every dollar that we raise. Another that I think resonates a lot with us here at the College of Professional Studies, certainly with a lot of our colleagues and peers across the university, is the third grade readiness program.

That program is designed to address disparities in developmental outcomes that emerge in infancy and then widen in childhood. So the dollars that we commit to the campaign that fund the third grade readiness program, those funds go directly to early learning and parental involvement during children's first five years, and also designed toward improving literacy to put them on a path to sort of a third

grade accurate reading level by the time they reach third grade. So those are two programs that we've seen benefit directly from the campaign, and they're two of the signature programs within the United Way's broader partnership with the 28 local health and human service nonprofits.

John Boccacino:

It's really reassuring to know that, again, 100% of the gifts that our employees make to support the United Way's Employee Giving Campaign will stay here in Central New York, will have a direct impact on residents that really need the services the most. And I'm so glad you mentioned the pandemic, because charitable efforts have not been immune to the down economy, and people are watching their pennies and watching their wallets more now than they ever have before. But it doesn't matter, right, the size and the scope of the gift, every dollar matters, right, when it comes to a gift?

Mike Frasciello:

Every dollar. Every dollar matters. It can be as small, as large, as you can give. But every dollar does matter.

John Boccacino:

We will gladly take all of those donations that have six figures involved as well as the ones that are \$1 to \$5.

Mike Frasciello:

Oh sure. Sure.

John Boccacino:

I mean, again, all sizes matter when it comes to gifts out here. And I think it's great, Mike, that when we were talking about this campaign, the university and the community, you can't have one without the other. We are so ingrained in this city and in this community. It's a softball question, but why does Syracuse support this United Way effort?

Mike Frasciello:

It's a softball question. It's a really great question, and it's not complex. As you mentioned at the top, United Way this year is celebrating 100 years in Central New York, and the university has been directly involved with supporting the United Way since 1972 through our annual employee giving. And again, that employee giving has a direct and powerful impact on helping the local community right here in the Central New York region and really designed to address the community's most pressing issues. Community needs are always there. The university's been here for, I don't know, almost 150 years, and so it's almost a responsibility or obligation that we have to the region, but certainly to the community to support and help solve the problems that the community is faced with.

One of the things that we talk about a lot here is that Syracuse University is one of the largest employers in Central New York. So nearly 90% of our 6,000 employees they live here full time in Central New York. That's a lot of people. This is a community we live and work in, and so when we talk about an obligation and a responsibility to the community, it's actually these are our neighbors, these are us. This is individuals within the university that benefit from these programs. So I think the commitment to the United Way, if it's not seamless it's almost symbiotic.

John Boccacino:

You mentioned that this is your second year serving as co-chair for this campaign. I gather your passion is quite strong for this project. What has your involvement been? What does a co-chair do to drum up support and get people to want to give back to this?

Mike Frasciello:

Again, I've had the benefit of being with the university for as long as I have and seeing the exceptional work that some of the co-chairs have done over the years. And it's really the role and the job is to bring awareness and excitement, and really make it fun. There's a lot of fun ways that each of the units and volunteer groups within the university, and creative and innovative ways they find to raise money for the campaign. So yeah, I think my role is simply to encourage, and remind, and explain, and describe the way that even the smallest of gifts has the greatest of impact through the campaign.

John Boccacino:

And I want to give you a chance to spotlight, what are some of those creative and fun ways that employees, or school college unit areas, how will they give back to this campaign?

Mike Frasciello:

There's the typical stuff like bake sales, and down here at the College of Professional Studies last year we did a coffee cart, Coffee Cart Tuesdays I think we called it. It was baked goods, and coffees, and things, and you could donate as much as you wanted, or you were able, for a donut and a cup of coffee. That kind of thing. Lots of different raffles, and bake sales are pretty common. Something else that we're doing here this year at the college that we are not going to take credit for, it was suggested in an organizing meeting of some of the volunteers, is a day off raffle. I'm going to get this wrong, but like three tickets for \$5, six tickets for \$10 or so.

Like 10 tickets for \$10. Something like that. You throw your ticket in a hat, and we'll have a drawing, and you can get a day off, a free day off. And we actually ran our raffle at our fall retreat or all-college retreat a few weeks ago. But a lot of other folks do the same thing. Outside of that though, just while we're on it, something we started last year which has worked exceedingly well is the text to donate. Which folks who attend games at The Dome, at the JMA Wireless Dome, you have an opportunity to text to donate during the game. We do the announcement and broadcasting during the game, and that's generating really great engagement with the community.

And then kiosks that are set up throughout campus, the Schine Student Center, I think we're supposed to have one in Barnes if it's not already there, for folks to just do sort of a kiosk swipe and donate. And then of course through MySlice individual employees can go to MySlice and make one-time donations or recurring donations to support the campaign. So yeah, those are just some of the ways that we're trying to make it easy and fun to participate. MySlice is actually the easiest way to do it. Just pop on there and you can do the one-time, or you can do recurring. And your one-time can also be through payroll deduction as well. So it's really easy.

Just pop on there and follow the sort of voluntary pledge link or panel that you should see on there. I think it displays right on the main page. It just says, United Way Campaign 2022. The other opportunity are Giving Tuesdays. This has really grown into this global movement and the United Way has of course brought that into the campaign. It's celebrated on the first Tuesday after Thanksgiving, which this year falls on November 29th. So we'll be doing a big push for Giving Tuesday as well as part of the campaign.

And then communications and emails will be going out throughout the campaign. So any of this that folks are curious about they'll be seeing it a couple of times over the next couple months.

John Boccacino:

I mean I love the slogan, the tagline, United, we do more. I think that that really typifies that we're all in this together. We have to have each other's backs when it comes to this effort. What have you noticed about the community rallying around this type of campaign? Just how well does our employee base respond to the call to give back?

Mike Frasciello:

I think we respond pretty well. Again, we are the largest private employer in the region. And I think, just sheer volume of the total number of employees that participate demonstrates our commitment to the community and to the work that the United Way does. There's a statistic that I've seen a couple times is, 25% of the population of Onondaga County benefit or will benefit from the United Way of Central New York funded program.

So when we think about individuals responding, employees responding to this, it's a response but it's really more than likely given that total number, like a quarter of the population of the county, it's more than likely that you've got a friend, or a classmate, or a coworker, or a neighbor, that has been or will be assisted by the funding that United Way provides to these local agencies.

So again, I think the uptake here, and the interest, and the involvement across the university is really just a reflection of our participation and our membership in the community. Right? This is where we live and work. The United Way is about us, so it's not about them. The United Way doesn't help someone else. United Way is helping us, all of us.

John Boccacino:

There's been some great promotional videos out there. We had Felisha Legette-Jack, the amazing new women's basketball coach, the alumna returning home, of course, Coach Jim Boeheim, a two-time degree holder from Syracuse, the legend on the men's basketball side, putting out these videos. It really seems like it's, again, from the top down the buy-in has been incredible from our staff members who want to lead the way. But I'm sure that there's people that might be a holdout. It's tough around the holidays, you've got gifts to go out there and buy for your family. What would you say to someone who's on the fence and thinking, "Boy, I really want to do this, but I'm still not committed to making a gift?"

Mike Frasciello:

That's a great prompt, John. Before I even answer that, I'll just say having Coach Boeheim, Coach Legette-Jack, on those videos really upped our game this year. I think those of us that shot some videos last year we were like, "Ah, wow. That's how you do that." You know? Their involvement is just fantastic. I think if there's folks that are sort of, "Yeah, I might have a few dollars, but things might be a little tight," but even if it's \$5 or \$10 that you might be able to donate it.

I think it's just a good reminder to know that every gift to the United Way supports and improves the opportunities for all members of the community, all members of the community, to live a full healthy life and to have their basic needs met. That's another part of the importance of the campaign and the work that the United Way does. The smallest of gifts, it's going to promote and expand access to high quality cradle-to-career education opportunities, creates greater opportunities for economic mobility within the community.

When you give, again, when we give even the smallest of gifts, we're participating in this sort of collective commitment to providing access to things like healthy food, and safe and affordable housing, physical and mental healthcare for everyone in the community. That's something I would just ... You know, the smallest of gift does all of that. It's pretty impactful.

John Boccacino:

I think I saw a quote from you somewhere that you never know when you're going to need the services, so why not do the right thing and help when you can, because who knows what'll happen down the road and you might need to be on the receiving end of one of the many non-profit partners that the United Way of Central New York teams up with it. It's a great campaign. Show off your generosity and show off your charitable nature by giving back. You can do a one-time donation. You can go through MySlice and make a recurring payment. It's really as easy as can be.

The campaign will run through December 16th. There will be efforts of course at the JMA Wireless Dome where you can text to give back. We make it as easy as we can. He's Mike Frasciello, the Dean of the College of Professional Studies here at Syracuse University. Again, he was kind enough to pull back the curtain and tell you why you should do what you can to help out with the United Way Employee Giving Campaign here at Syracuse University. Thank you so much for your time.

Mike Frasciello:

Of course, John. Always a pleasure.

John Boccacino:

Thanks for checking out the latest installment of the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast. My name is John Boccacino, signing off for the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast.