

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** February 20, 2018  
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## **United Way of Hastings “Heart of Hastings” Holds Open House at New Office**

**(Hastings, MN)** – The United Way of Hastings (UWH) has been the Heart of Hastings for over 50 years, helping others in need. Recently, it moved its office to a location that is considered the Heart of Hastings, in the newly renovated Meyer Co Building in downtown historic Hastings. A heart-themed open house and ribbon cutting event was held on Valentine’s Day, February 14, 2018, at the UWH’s new office at 113 2<sup>nd</sup> St E, Ste 102, Hastings, MN.

Community members toured the renovated space that was designed with a welcome area, work areas, offices, and a conference room. Highlights of the space include the original rock wall from when the building was constructed in 1863 along with the original terrazzo flooring, the original wood plank ceiling, and the iconic storefront windows. At the event, nearly 100 community members and partners enjoyed Valentine’s Day cookies provided by Lori Birk from Shear Attraction Salon and beverages provided by Wendy Dodge-Agen from The Onion Grille, while learning what continues to make UWH the Heart of Hastings.

The open house began with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Hastings Police Chief Bryan Schafer, who also serves on the UWH Board of Directors, followed by the recognition of active and retired military members. Law enforcement as well as fire and emergency services personnel, who help to ensure the protection of citizens and the Hastings community, were also thanked.

UWH Board President, Margaret “Peggy” Horsch, JD, welcomed visitors to the special event. Current Board members were introduced and thanked for their leadership and commitment to serving others. Past Board members were acknowledged for their service. Lew Linde, who helped establish UWH in 1964, was thanked for founding UWH on the principle of neighbor helping neighbor—an organizational principle that still exists today. Special donors such as Rose Mary Lorentz and Kathy Reuter were thanked for their support. Dean and Shirley Markuson were thanked for supporting capital improvements to make the move possible along with Beth and Kevin Warner, owners of the building, and Dave Langenfeld, builder of the beautifully renovated space. The staff team of Mari Mellick, Jane Neumiller-Bustad, and Amy Schaffer were also recognized.

“The United Way of Hastings would not be here in our community for 54 years without the generous donations that fund the programs and services that build a better life for all of our community members,” said Horsch. “To those that support the mission through monetary donations or contributions of time and energy, please know that we work every day to honor your commitment to the community. Our commitment to you is to invest your dollars and time to serve those in need respectfully, with the help of our community partners.”

Mari E. Mellick, CAE, Executive Director, spoke about the impact UWH has in the community by facilitating collaboration amongst community groups and partners. UWH makes an impact in a variety of ways such as through internal services, like Imagination Library and Food4Kids, that help kids; through Funded Partner Agencies, like the Hastings Area Senior Center and Hastings Family Service, that provide direct services; and via collaborative partnerships with other organizations, such as Community Education, to help fund Hastings Middle School Promise Fellows who work with kids to help them be successful at school.

“UWH’s primary source of funding comes from employees who are allowed by their employers to make investments to UWH via payroll deductions,” said Mellick. Some employers no longer offer United Way campaigns or offer limited campaigns which has reduced funding to UWH. With UWH’s newly launched Have a Heart Club, individuals can now make monthly recurring contributions outside of the traditional payroll deductions. Mellick encouraged community members to join the UWH’s Have a Heart Club by visiting [www.unitedwayofhastings.org](http://www.unitedwayofhastings.org).

Attendees were also advised of the difference that UWH can make with a \$5 donation. Mellick explained that there are students in Hastings that arrive to school on Monday mornings sick and unable to focus on learning, due to not having enough to eat over the weekend. “Food4Kids snack bags provide kid-friendly food to students over the weekend. A \$5 donation helps to cover the cost of one bag so that a student can have food for the weekend and return to school Monday nourished and ready to learn,” commented Mellick. Over 125 students are currently receiving bags of food to help with weekend student hunger. A key component to Food4Kids is that UWH funds 360 Communities support workers at the schools who work with families that are facing hunger challenges, amongst other challenges at home, to help determine the root cause of weekend student hunger.

Just prior to the ribbon cutting, Zach Biermaier, Christ’s Family Church Youth Minister, spoke about the impact UWH has with Helping Kids Succeed which helps to building webs of support for youth. Biermaier led a prayer for the community and UWH. The event was concluded with the cutting of the ribbon by UWH Board members. Horsch concluded, “UWH is founded on the principle of working collaboratively with the entire community to find solutions. Thank you for your friendship, your collaboration, and your dedication. We look forward to building on that relationship that we have established together. And through that relationship, Hastings will continue to thrive.”

To learn more about the Heart of Hastings, the Have a Heart Club, or to purchase Heart of Hastings apparel, visit [www.unitedwayofhastings.org](http://www.unitedwayofhastings.org).

The UWH is an independent United Way that has worked for over 50 years serving Hastings and the surrounding rural communities within Independent School District #200. Its mission is to build partnerships to improve the lives of people in our community. Donations are accepted year-round. For more information about the UWH and the agencies it funds, visit [www.unitedwayofhastings.org](http://www.unitedwayofhastings.org).

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