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Bank shapes United Way challenge

HADLEY — When supporters of the United Way of Hampshire County gathered last week to launch a new campaign, a local bank was there to offer a spur that pays tribute to Easthampton history.

Easthampton Savings Bank is offering a challenge grant of \$22,500 in support of this year's campaign, officials said.

Dubbed the Easthampton Savings Bank 225 Challenge, the money will be used to stimulate gifts from first-time donors, along with incentives to increase workplace campaigns — by matching these donations one-to-one.

"In celebration of the city of Easthampton's 225th anniversary, this \$22,500 challenge grant is a great way to continue the bank's commitment to supporting significant local causes and community organizations," Bill Hogan, president of Easthampton Savings Bank, said in a statement provided by the United Way.

The help is needed, United Way administrators make clear. They began the new campaign



JOHN EBBETS

with a meeting Thursday at the Courtyard Marriott in Hadley.

"It's a bit of a perfect storm scenario where you have a dramatic increase in the need for services while at the same time most state and foundation funding continues to decline. This makes the locally generated, solid, reliable funding from this United Way even more important," said John Ebbets, the organization's CEO.

This year's campaign will be

led by Julie Cowan, a vice president of commercial lending at TD Bank, and Justine G. Holdsworth, a financial representative with Davis Financial Group, LLC.

The theme of the new campaign is "Live United 365."

In remarks Thursday, Cowan and Holdsworth said donations support a network of agencies helping to advance the common good — 365 days a year.

For this drive, the United Way has set a goal of \$1.250 million.

The money raised enables the United Way to support agencies that work in the fields of children and youth; health and safety and economic security, among others.

The campaign also supports the United Way's work with emergency food and shelter programs, First Call for Help, 2-1-1 and Success by 6.

The United Way announced that 18 companies have agreed to be "pacesetters" for this year's campaign.

"Pacesetters play an important role of creating momentum for the whole campaign," Cowan said.

"These companies understand the importance of running early campaigns to help 'set the bar' for subsequent giving."

The pacesetters include Atkins Farms; Applied Mortgage; Blair Cutting & Smith; Chart-Pak; Daily Hampshire Gazette; Easthampton Savings Bank; Finck & Perras Insurance; Florence Savings Bank; Integrity Development and Construction; JC Penney; King & Cushman Insurance; Kollmorgen Electro-Optical; Northampton Co-op Bank; Packaging Corp. of America; Webber & Grinnell Insurance; Whalen Insurance; Wright Builders; and Wright Architectural Millwork Corp.

Also last week, the United Way added six new board members: Amy L. Bergin, Sidonia Dalby, Amy Landry, Renee Moss, Amy B. Royal and Reza M. Shafii.

Retiring board members included Alan Bloomgarden, Sandra Doucett, Chris Hannibal, Michael Wall, Elizabeth Weissbach and Marilyn Richards, who served two years as campaign chair and two years as the board chair.