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## United Way CEO takes UMass job

### Ebbets to work for Fine Arts Center

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**NORTHAMPTON** — The leader of the United Way of Hampshire County will depart in late July, drawn to what he termed a longtime desire to work for the University of Massachusetts and support the arts.

John Ebbets of Hatfield will become director of development for the Fine Arts Center at UMass, starting at the end of July.

He leaves after nearly four years as chief executive officer of the United Way, where he is credited with reconnecting the nonprofit organization with its community base after a previous CEO's abrupt resignation.

In an interview Thursday, Ebbets said that he was most proud of "stabilizing the organization with continued donor engagement, success with the campaigns, and great work with funding our community investment side."

"If you donate to the United Way you know your money is having a significant



JOHN EBBETS

## United Way chief takes new job

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impact," he said. "I've been touched by so many people."

The search for a new United Way leader will begin immediately, according to Christine Shirtcliff, chairman of its board, who will coordinate operations during the transition to a new CEO.

"We're certainly grateful for John's contribution," said Shirtcliff. "We're saddened that he's leaving, but wish him well.

"But what I'd like the public to know is that the organization is not an individual and the organization is alive and well," she added. "The campaign is in a good place, we have good relationships with our partners and our office staff is stable."

Shirtcliff is planning for a seamless transition and said that Ebbets has offered to help with the search process. She thinks it might be unrealistic to have a new leader in place by Ebbets' departure. "We're holding out judgment about needing an interim," she said.

"You have to have serious fundraising skills," said Ebbets of the job. "You need to be a good communicator; you'll be talking to a variety of people.

You have to be able to work with a lot of volunteers, and a volunteer board with a lot of opinions."

"In my life in the United Way, everybody is a potential donor," he added.

The United Way is within "spitting distance" of its fund drive goal for this year of \$1.25 million, Ebbets said. The drive ends June 30.

As CEO, Ebbets oversaw an increase in the annual campaign for each year of his four years. Before joining the United Way, he worked as an account executive for Clear Channel Radio in Springfield and as advertising and marketing director for the Daily Hampshire Gazette.

In his tenure, which started in September 2007, Ebbets said he worked to better define the role its board plays, stabilize its donor base, identify areas for growth and increase funding to partner agencies as well as the number of them.

As CEO, he replaced Lewis S. Stess, who quit in the fall of 2006 after attempting to redefine the organization in ways that were not, by most accounts, well received by its traditional donors.

The United Way runs an annual fundraising campaign on

behalf of dozens of community groups. The money collected is allocated in three main program areas: children and youth; health and safety; and economic security.

Ebbets thanked the United Way's staff and "the thousands of donors who each year help advance the common good for all in this community."

"I am happy to pass on to a new leader an organization that is both financially and operationally sound with the hope they will take it to new levels of success," he said.

He added, "I am leaving for only one reason — I've always wanted to work at the university, and as a past board member for the FAC and longtime supporter of the arts, this position was a great match and simply too good to pass up."

In addition to serving on the FAC board, Ebbets has volunteered with the Literacy Project and Cooley Dickinson Hospital and served as president of the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce. Ebbets, 56, is married to Patty Masure. They have two post-college children.

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