

DAILY HAMPSHIRE GAZETTE

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United Way gets \$10K TMNT lift

By OWEN BOSS
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NORTHAMPTON — Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles to the rescue — again.

When the United Way of Hampshire County's hopes of reaching its fundraising goal were nearly dashed, the agency got another boost Tuesday from Mirage Studios, creators of the famed adolescent reptilian superheroes.

Until Mirage pledged \$10,000 in addition to the \$25,000 raised during the "TMNT Challenge" last September, United Way's ambitious campaign goal of \$1.225 million was in jeopardy.

According to John Ebbets, CEO of United Way of Hampshire County, Mirage executives decided to step up to the plate after learning that the campaign was projected to reach \$1,215,000 — just \$10,000 less than its original target.

"We announced that we thought we were going to be just short of our goal and spent another month and a half trying to close the gap," Ebbets said.

"When they heard we still hadn't reached it, they said they wanted to help make it happen. They've been tremendous to work with and have been a

great asset to the city of Northampton."

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Gary Richardson, CEO of Mirage Studios, said he was thrilled with the success of the TMNT Challenge and its ability to stimulate an increase in the number of first-time donors and workplace giving.

"The fact that our initial challenge generated far more than \$25,000 in matched giving made it an easy decision for us to step up and close the gap," Richardson said.

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When creating the Ninja Turtles franchise in 1985, Mirage founders worked out of a renovated factory space in Florence, where the bulk of the creative output was done, according to the company's website.

Funds raised in this year's campaign will be allocated to a network of United Way Partner Agencies working in three main program areas — children and youth, health and safety, and economic security.

The campaign also supports the United Way's work with the Emergency Food and Shelter Program and a variety of other community initiatives.

To learn more about the United Way or programs the group offers in your community, residents are encouraged to visit the organization's website: www.unitedwayhampshirecounty.org.

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