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# Launching an appeal amid 'hard times'



GORDON DANIELS

John Coull, a new member of the board of the United Way of Hampshire County, center, explains Tuesday how he endeavors to "Live United." That is the slogan this year of the United Way's campaign. Marian Kent from the Jamrog Group, left, is also a new board member and attended a campaign kickoff breakfast Tuesday in Hadley. Bill Sayre, right, is the board's secretary.

## United Way sets \$1.2M goal, up slightly in a year of community need

By NICK GRABBE  
Staff Writer

**HADLEY** — With poverty on the rise locally, "these are the times when the community needs us most," said Marilyn Richards, the new board chair of United Way of Hampshire County.

Speaking at the kickoff breakfast for the 2009 campaign Tuesday, she said it may be more difficult to raise money this year because of the economic slowdown.

"People are carefully thinking

about their contributions, but on the other hand they realize how important it is," she said. "In hard times, people dig deeper."

The United Way received \$1.13 million in donations and pledges last year, and the goal for the new year is \$1.2 million. The money will support 27 agencies working in three areas: children and youth, health and safety, and economic security.

Benjamin Barnes and Susan Clopton are co-chairing this year's campaign.

The United Way helps residents

connect to their neighbors as well as providing shelter to homeless families and peace to troubled children, Barnes said. "When the community is strong, my family is more secure," he said.

The United Way provides "a deeply inclusive and satisfying way to belong," said Clopton.

Florence Savings Bank has agreed to match up to \$10,000 all donations from any first-time contributor, Barnes said. And employees at Kollmorgen have already pledged \$67,000, he said.

"With your help, I know we'll meet and exceed the goal," Barnes said. "We're stronger as a community when the campaign succeeds."

Julie Pokela, who is stepping down after two years chairing the United Way's board, said that two years ago there was concern over its direction.

"The organization was able to turn around," she said. "The support from the community and the partner agencies has been very gratifying. It speaks to how much people support the United Way and want it to succeed."