

TUESDAY

August 9, 2011

Established 1786  
Northampton, Massachusetts

# DAILY HAMPSHIRE GAZETTE

GAZETTENET.COM

2008 & 2009  
NEW ENGLAND  
NEWSPAPER  
OF THE YEAR

Volume 225, No. 290

75 cents



KEVIN GUTTING

United Way of Hampshire County interim director Marilyn Richards works with Ben Murphy at the United Way office on King Street in Northampton.

## Interim United Way chief sets goals for tenure

By LAURIE LOISEL  
Staff Writer

**NORTHAMPTON** — For some people, retirement is not about living the easy life.

That seems to be so for former Northampton City Councilor Marilyn Richards, who stepped in Aug. 1 as interim CEO of the United Way of Hampshire County. Richards said her main goal as temporary leader for the agency is to help ignite its all-important annual fund drive — and keep the trains running until a permanent replacement for former CEO John Ebbets is found.

Last year's United Way Campaign raised \$1.225 million. The goal for this year hasn't been set yet, according to Richards, but she expects it will be in that ballpark.

"We're still tweaking the num-

bers," she said. "Considering the economy, I would venture to say it would be close to that amount or maybe a little more."

This year's goal will be announced officially at the campaign kick-off, which has been set for Sept. 15. Richards admitted that the downturn in the economy makes the United Way campaign especially challenging this year.

But, she noted, because the lion's share of the campaign is approaching employees through their workplaces, the response tends to be strong.

"Most people who have a job are so grateful they have a job that they're willing to share just a little bit for other people," said Richards. "The



KEVIN GUTTING

Former Northampton City Councilor Marilyn Richards is the interim director of the United Way of Hampshire County.



## United

■ Continued from B1

economy has shown us that we're all one step away from being in that place."

### Approaching an old hand

The agency's board approached Richards about taking over in an interim fashion knowing she was familiar with the United Way and that she had undertaken several other major projects since her retirement from Cooley Dickinson Hospital four years ago.

"She could hit the ground running," said United Way Board Chairwoman Christine Shirtcliff. "I'm delighted to have her in place."

Shirtcliff, who is chairing the search committee, said the board felt having an interim was essential, and that Richards — with her deep knowledge of the agency — made an excellent choice.

Richards, 67, is a longtime volunteer with the United Way, including many years serving

in leadership positions. She was chairwoman of the board of directors from 2008 to 2010, and previously headed up the community campaign for two years. "It's a really busy time of year," said Richards. "We're gearing up for the campaign and it's a really small staff, so one person down is a lot."

Richards said she is working now with United Way staff and volunteers to line up the so-called "pacesetter businesses" who get the annual fund drive off to a strong start. Pacesetters agree to hold their employee appeals within a month after the Sept. 15 campaign kickoff.

"We're in campaign mode right now," said Richards, lining up new pacesetters or having old ones "re-up."

Richards said she will have a hands-on role in the upcoming campaign.

"It's such a small staff here that part of the leadership role is to not just be a leader, but to help run the campaign," she said. "The CEO's a major fund-

raiser really."

### Search under way

Richards said having an interim CEO will help the search for a permanent CEO be successful.

"It gives them breathing room," said Richards. "My job is really to keep things rolling until we find the best person for the job."

Shirtcliff said the eight-member search committee has been reviewing what she said are dozens of resumes from people — mostly local — interested in the post. She said the hope is to have a decision by early September, and to have the new person on board some time later in the fall.

She said the search committee will make a recommendation to the board, which will make the hire.

Ebbets left the United Way earlier this summer after four years to take a job at the University of Massachusetts Fine Arts Center.