Good afternoon and thanks for joining us I am Judy Simpson. Have more than 80 years ago former President Calvin Coolidge referred to Vermont’s indomitable people. He noted the generous spirit held by the people in a brave little state of Vermont. Coolidge’s remarks came on the heels of the great flood of 1927. But as we’ve seen in the past 10 days in the wake of the devastation caused by a tropical storm Irene. The former president’s comments about the people and the spirit of Vermont are as true today as they were 84 years ago. United Way chapters across our state also some up the generous spirit of Vermonter particularly in times of enormous community needs. To learn more I'm joined this afternoon by Martha Maksym. Martha is the executive director of the united way of Chittenden county welcome to you and thanks so much for being with us today.

Martha.: Thank you for having me.

Judy.: Now for 20 years your position was held by Gretchen Morrison. You worked with Gretchen for much of that time but tell me about your involvement in the United Way and now your new role as executive director?

Martha.: I started at United Way 17 years ago. When I first was at United Way I was there director of community investment and my role for the past 17 years has been about how we take the resources that we are able to mobilize in the community and allocate them. I’ve done a lot of work in the community forming really important partnerships to improve conditions for people in the community and this new position now allows me to continue some of the work the crotch and it over the years she was a wonderful mentor to me and take the organization farther along improving conditions for people.

Judy.: Can you explain the mission of the united way? What makes it different today than what a lot of Vermonter know as the community chest of years ago?
Martha.: Sure the mission of the united way of Chittenden county is to mobilize our community to improve people's lives. It's interesting that when I started at United Way people often felt that the United Way was about our annual community campaign and there's really been a significant shift in our thinking that actually the campaign and other ways we mobilize people is really a means to an end and the end is really about improving people's lives. When we talk about mobilizing the community we do it by mobilizing resources. We do have the annual campaign that we kicked off this morning. And we also mobilize volunteers and we also mobilize partnerships that are not just with the nonprofit sector but with other sectors in the community to bring people together addressing needs in the community.

Judy.: So the United Way has more than just another layer of philanthropic giving?

Martha.: Absolutely also we've had a lot of discussions over the years about what makes United Way different? I think to be able to share with your viewers the analogy that I like to use is when you think about people investing in a mutual fund because you're not quite sure what's the price tag that you want to be investing in. We really feel by investing with the united way of Chittenden County you are investing in a portfolio of programs that really are about impact in the community. We do a tremendous amount of work research to understand what the needs are in the community how to address those needs in ways that will return improve conditions for people as a return on investments. That's our work these days and we hope people know that that investing with us is really about investing in improving conditions for people in the community.

Judy.: It sounds like you're looking at what you're doing looking at what you've done in the past looking at what's happening now in a community and trying to evolve to change with whatever happens in the community.

Martha.: Absolutely I think one of the things I've been most proud about in my tenure at the united way is how nimble the organization has been able to be two continues to look at needs in the community. They do change over time and we need to be our donors and investors expect us to understand what's going on in the community at a particular time and released use the resources that we can mobilize to improve conditions. I've been very proud of how nimble we've been able to be over the years to change what we're doing when it's necessary to improve people's lives.

Judy.: Given what's happened throughout the state with the destruction from Irene and Sunday marks the 10th anniversary of 911. Do you see similarities from the response of Vermonters especially in Chittenden County where storm damage was fairly limited?

Martha.: I have been thinking a lot about this and my night to have our annual kickoff. As I remember 10 years ago I was at the United Way and we were planning a community event with the Champlain Initiative which is a healthy community initiative. the event was looking at how are the children and at the time we were hoping we would have 150 200 people come and join us then 911 hit and we saw people coming out of the woodwork to say I want to be and community I want to do something I want to help I want to be with others that's what our community is about and these past couple of weeks in the state of Vermont have just I believe been shown the true beauty of who Vermonters are what we are what the values we have as a state. That people really are willing and able and incredibly generous to come out and help our neighbors in need.
Judy.: I think we’ve gotten more calls from people saying how can I help them people who say we need help.

Martha.: Absolutely. It’s been heartwarming but not surprising to me. I think having been in this work for a while it’s not surprising this is just what we all would expect from people that are neighbors and friends in Vermont.

Judy.: Let’s talk a little bit about the areas of focus for the united way of Chittenden county. Who decides what you invest in whether it’s going to be volunteer resources or monetary resources?

Martha.: We went through a very extensive process back in the late 2006 2007 where we brought together hundreds of community members to help us look at what were the current needs in a community what was the appropriate role for the united way with the resources that we are able to leverage. Through the community process the community really identified three areas of focus for us to be looking at. Those three areas of focus our education income and health. The education impact area is really about birth through high school what does it take to make sure that parents have the resources and the skills they need to raise their children safely in a healthy way that kids have what they need early on in life to enter school ready to learn. That we support kids through school would safe places to be after school with appropriate role models and that ultimately we want to say kids graduate from high school. That income impact area picks up from there. We’re really looking at financial stability and that we as are certainly feel as an organization of and I share this as the leader of the organization we have a moral obligation to make sure that the emergency food and shelter system in the community is available to people. But honestly we need to be investing in keeping people from needing to use those services. So the income impact area is really addressing what’s it going to take to get some on the skills and supports that they need to work and stay at work and advance at work. How do we help people with financial stability financial literacy. Housing continues to be a huge need in this community. The cost of housing, the availability of housing, so we’re looking at how United Way resources can help people stay in their homes, afford housing and things like that. Then the health impact area is really looking at healthy body and mind so there’s access to healthcare substance abuse and mental Health Services which continue to be huge needs in the community and then also under that impact area we’re looking at nutrition and safety and the homes so child abuse and neglect domestic violence things like that. Those are our areas of focus and we have the teams of volunteers. Three teams of volunteers who work with us your round there about 15 to 18 volunteers on each impact team and these are the folks that work with us to understand what the needs are in the community. They review requests for funding from programs that address the issue the areas under each impact area. These are the teams that really make the recommendations for how we use the funds that were able to raise through the community campaign every year and they also than are looking at them they go in monitor the investments. They do site visits with the programs to check in with how it’s going. The program said they were going to do something in their application is it happening? Are there things that have gone and the way? And they use those site visits to stay informed for the next year’s round of requests for funding and things like that.

Judy.: Let’s talk a little bit about that and how you know the investments have posed by the volunteer committees are wise in the checks and balances.
Martha.: We are absolutely committed to measuring the impact of the investments that we make. We have on staff a technical assistance to help agencies understand what it is they want to be measuring in terms of the impact of their programs and then helping them develop the valuation tools and using those of valuation tools to improve their programs and the three questions that we ask when we are going to be investing in programs or any kind of strategic initiatives are how much are you doing? How well are you doing it? And as anyone better off as a result of? The going back to my first discussion about being the new investment adviser for folks and getting that return on investment this is really the way that were measuring that. So every program or initiative that we invest and needs to be able to answer those three questions.

Judy.: You said the mobilized thousands of volunteers for local nonprofits. President Obama and Vermont Governor Shumlin are also very focused on volunteerism. Are there examples that you can highlight in our own state?

Martha.: Absolutely. This morning we had our hometown hero annual awards which is again one of the most humbling events that I attend every year. Two beautiful opportunities for us and the community to say thank you to some extraordinary volunteers. We gave out five awards this morning to all mentioned briefly. One is a business award to a business that really exemplifies giving back to the community through volunteering and this year's award winner was Hampton direct. They've been a wonderful business to really give their employees opportunities to understand needs in the community do a lot of volunteering in the community to help support those needs. Volunteerism is a part of their corporate culture now and it's really I think for them been a wonderful way to keep employee morale up but also for the company to understand how it can give back to the community. That was our business award winner this morning. The individual adult award winner this morning was this very inspiring woman named Marcy Ryan. Marcy as through her own personal challenges became our real advocate for people with disabilities and she actually was the founder of the Vermont center for independent living way back in the seventies. Then she moved on and noticed a need for people accessing Medical Equipment and she started a program called wayward wheels which helps get people Medical Equipment deliver to them and then she actually really began to recognize a need for transportation for people with disabilities and it was her vision line and discussions with the transportation authority in Chittenden county that led to the creation of SSTA special services transportation authority. She is an inspiring and inspiring woman it was really a lovely and if I could just mention the other winners this morning there's a young man named Joshua Belpre who won for his volunteering with the organization puppets in education. The adult winner was a woman named Dot Black. Dot was volunteering for Homeshare VT and the group winner this morning was a group of people on the Chittenden impact panel. Have they present to people who have been charged with DUI and DWI with their own personal challenges and the impact of DUI in their personal lives it's an extraordinary group of people as well. So those are winners this morning.

Judy.: You've been at this a long time have you noticed a difference as far as you mention the businesses is there more of a corporate culture two have employees do community service and have that part of the corporate culture do you think?
Martha.: I do. I think that Vermont is known for companies that are really looking at what they call the triple bottom line. What's their profit what's their environmental footprint and what is their role and how do we give back to the community. I think that is what Vermont businesses are known for and credited for the so there's a tremendous amount of volunteerism that is happening in communities. In the next few weeks we're going to be working with IBM and some other companies around days of caring. Where employees and it's tide to the United Way campaign the where employees are going to be going out and doing community service projects all over the community and I really believe it's becoming something that differentiates Vermont businesses from others this triple bottom line mentality that we really need to look at within the community in which we live and work.

Judy.: Many viewers are outside of Chittenden county-- how can they get in touch with their own United Way chapters?

Martha.: Going to our web site at WWW United Waycc. org and we have a list on there on all of the united way's in the state and folks are welcome to connect up to their united way's and the work that there doing in their community.

Judy.: And it's not just a monetary donation that United Way is looking for volunteers are critical.

Martha.: Yes. Our call to action I would say is give advocate and volunteer so we really certainly are looking for people to give and we've seen tremendous generosity in the wake of Irene. I want people to also look in their own communities there still tremendous need in local communities. The economic downturn has been very very difficult on families and individuals so there's tremendous need in local communities and we think that the united way community campaigns every year is a way for people to look at the whole community and focus on that. The advocate call to action I believe that really there are opportunities to talk with legislators this year there some tough decisions that need to be made and how do we do it in a way that honors the values that I think we've seen in the past couple of weeks. And then volunteering there's always opportunities to volunteer.

Judy.: Martha thank you so much for joining us today.

Martha.: Thank you so much for having me.

Judy.: That's our program for today I'm Judy Simpson we will see you again next time on across the fence.

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