

10 Myths about United Way of Central Maryland

1. **United Way of Central Maryland's work only involves funding other agencies:**

Not true! Our work involves so much more than money...

- We've partnered with the City of Baltimore to help advance the 10-year Plan to End Homelessness, acting as the fiscal agent and helping to market and evaluate efforts related to the plan.
- We've convened key stakeholders around the Obama Administration's "Promised Neighborhoods" initiative and other capacity building projects.
- Partnerships with companies like Procter & Gamble, have resulted in programs like Dream & Flourish, designed to mentor and inspire middle school girls in Baltimore County.
- Our staff serves on countless boards, task forces and committees in all 6 jurisdictions, helping make macro level changes that will benefit the community.
- Our volunteer engagement program, Share Yourself, hosts an annual nonprofit makeover challenge that benefits youth programs and helps link people to projects on a daily basis.
- Through 2-1-1 Maryland at United Way, thousands of callers have immediate information and referrals to specialized resources, from energy and utility assistance and housing to intensive child care needs and volunteer opportunities.
- 2-1-1 Maryland at United Way also operates the state's Earned Income Tax Credit hotline. Last year, UWCM helped more than 1,200 callers to recoup an estimated \$2,361,000 from federal and state EITC campaigns.
- We advocate in Annapolis and Washington, D.C. to champion for health and human service issues that improve the quality of life for everyone in the region.

2. **United Way of Central Maryland takes too much of a cut when you want to designate your gift to a specific agency.**

Effective with the 2009 campaign, United Way is lowering our fee structure for designations to a flat rate of 5%, with a minimum of \$5 and a cap of \$500. There is no fee to designate to United Way, our key focus areas (education, income or health), or the 2-1-1 Maryland at United Way information and referral service.

3. **United Way of Central Maryland's overhead is too high.**

Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance states that fundraising expenses should not exceed 35%. At an average overhead rate of about 18.5% annually, we fall well below the guidelines. We fulfill a very unique and important role funding other nonprofit organizations and programs. We perform fundraising, marketing, accounting, collection and customer service functions on their behalf. In doing so, we lower their costs and allow them to focus on better serving their clients. We're responsible for educating and soliciting hundreds of thousands of potential donors at over 680 work sites in central Maryland. We handle more than two million accounting transactions per year. However, our expenses are front loaded and United Way often loses pledged revenue when companies are merged, acquired or closed the following year.

4. **United Way of Central Maryland is a national organization.**

Not true! United Way of Central Maryland operates as an independent 501C(3) governed by up to a 46-member board of directors that approves all funding decisions. We do license our name from United Way Worldwide (UWW) and less than 1% of revenue goes to UWW for licensing fees and dues.

5. **United Way is not needed because the government takes care of health and human service problems.**

In recent years, there has been a dramatic reduction in federal and state government funding for human service needs. All indications suggest that the cuts are deeper than ever. Yet at the same time, there are more people needing assistance. As a result, your gift through United Way is increasingly more important because it stays in our community,

helping stabilize families. In addition, United Way works with local and state government to coordinate efforts and improve delivery services to those who need help,

6. United Way of Central Maryland is just a middle man.

No one agency or organization can make changes alone. For more than 80 years, we've been a trusted leader across the region – in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford and Howard counties and Baltimore City. Giving to United Way of Central Maryland means you are directing much needed dollars towards the root-causes of some of today's (and tomorrow's) most pressing issues – like education, income and health. Our trusted experts and knowledgeable staff work with hundreds of partners across the region and know how your funds can do the most good for the most people. United Way of Central Maryland makes nonprofits more efficient by assuming fundraising, marketing and customer service expenses for them. We also offer the highest level of accountability – for ourselves and our partners.

7. United Way of Central Maryland partners serve only the poor.

Dollars contributed through United Way are distributed where they will do the most good for the entire community. Partner agencies provide services aimed at helping everyone in need. Perhaps you, a member of your family, one of your neighbors or co-workers has benefited from services supported by United Way. The United Way process supports services such as quality child care, afterschool programs, disaster relief, shelters for the homeless and abused, agencies that provide information and support to those dealing with cancer and mental illness and many others.

8. United Way encourages arm twisting when it comes to asking for pledges.

United Way of Central Maryland has a policy against coercion, and under no circumstances should an employee be threatened or coerced into contributing. Giving is a personal matter and a personal decision; whether people give and how much they choose to give is up to each individual. The purpose of United Way is to offer people an opportunity to care so that others can receive the help they need. We hope you will give because you are able to and because you feel good about it. The size of the gift does not matter, whatever you can give, gives hope.

9. United Way of Central Maryland has had many scandals in its history.

Not true! Although there have been issues at other United Ways, United Way of Central Maryland has always had a clean record. Since all 1,300 United Way's in the county are separate and autonomous, the troubles at other United Way's do not affect United Way of Central Maryland. Our local board of directors has ultimate responsibility for our financial condition. By way of our finance committee, the board retains an independent auditor who then reports the findings to the board. Financial statements are audited annually by Ellin & Tucker, Chartered. United Way of Central Maryland consistently receives an unqualified audit. United Way of Central Maryland has also earned the Standards of Excellence credential from the Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations for the last seven years, recognizing the highest standards of governance, ethics and accountability.

10. When you give your money to United Way it goes into a black hole.

Not true! You can designate your gift to any nonprofit health & human service 501C(3) or you can give your gift to United Way of Central Maryland where it will be invested where it can do the most good. This year, United Way of Central Maryland is investing in programs and services that address people's most essential needs. We stabilize families by subsidizing quality child care and family support for toddlers and provide afterschool activities for youth, so that parents can afford to work knowing their children are safe, learning and mentored. We provide resources that help people survive, working to ensure families have safe, affordable housing and the means to keep it. United Way also helps provide shelter, legal protection and other core services to victims of domestic violence and child abuse, problems that tend to rise in families facing economic pressure. United Way also helps those individuals and families respond to immediate crises, through funding of several partners like American Red Cross, American Cancer Society and Catholic Charities (among others). All of our work is guided by local experts in the fields of basic needs, family safety, school readiness and youth achieving potential. And we receive quarterly reports from funded agencies measuring the progress of their work.