

# UNITED WAY OF GREATER DULUTH

# OUR HISTORY



United Way  
of Greater Duluth

## IN THE BEGINNING...

### UNITED WAY OF GREATER DULUTH

It's 1922 . . . you are in the Spalding Hotel ballroom at a noon meeting of the Duluth Community Fund. Five hundred women gather here daily to report the results of the last 24 hours of solicitation during the annual fund drive which raises money to support Community Fund agencies. Down the street at Third Avenue West, attached to a lamp post at the corner of the old American Exchange National Bank, is a thermometer which illustrates the current progress of the drive.

In the Hotel ballroom, hanging behind the podium, is a banner with the Community Fund's slogan:

***If Duluth is worth living in, then it's worth living for.***

The music starts up to the tune of "There's a Long, Long Trail" and voices are raised:

*"There's a great big town called Duluth,  
It has a great big open heart,  
And its people are united,  
Each to do his part.  
There's a great big town called Duluth,  
The town we all love best,  
And we'll never stop 'til to the top  
We fill the Community Chest.*

Times have changed. The voices don't ring out at daily meetings, but the same spirit is there. Volunteers by the hundreds work each fall to raise money for Duluth's health and human service agencies.

Today it's a far cry from the humble beginning of the Community Fund, whose first fund drive in 1922 raised \$208,560 . . . to present campaigns which boldly look at goals over 2 million dollars.

The first Community Fund president was A.M. Marshall of Marshall-Wells Hardware Company. People who remember him say that he was a man full of ideas. Before the first fund was in full swing, he paid the year's office rent so there would be a headquarters from which to operate. Besides Marshall, several original directors remained active on the board from 1921 - 1932. At a 1932 annual meeting, some were honored for their continuous service - banker I.S. Moore, Duluth Boiler Works president Francis J. Dacey, mining



Spalding Hotel, 1920s

engineer George H. Crosby, and Duluth Labor World founder and editor W.E. McEwen.

There were no women on the first Community Fund Board of Directors. At that time women's suffrage was just becoming the law of the land. Around 1925, women started to make their presence felt. One such woman was Duluth author Margaret Culkin Banning, who headed both the Women's Advisory and the Residential Drive for the Community Fund.

There were no 4-to-6-week drives in those early days. The first drive in 1922 lasted only a week. Funds were raised for 20 agencies by enthusiastic volunteers, and by noon of the second day, \$35,000 was already in the till.

Organization of that first drive was as thorough as it is now. Although payroll deduction was not a big factor back then, it now accounts for a large portion of the annual campaign.

1928 was the first year in which a campaign goal was reached. Hundreds of volunteer campaigners raised 100.7% of their goal. It became almost routine during the depression to raise more than 100% of the goal. When times were tough and the public was convinced that people really needed help, purse strings were loosened. The highest percentage of goal was raised in 1947, when the \$295,000 goal was overshoot by 19.7% under the leadership of advertising executive Don M. Bellows.

# UNITED WAY OF GREATER DULUTH HISTORY - CONTINUED



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A look at the list of agencies for which the first drive was conducted illustrates the changes in services delivered by Duluth nonprofit organizations over the years. Girl Scouts, Goodwill Industries, YMCA and UWCA are the only agencies from that first year that still receive a portion of the funds raised each fall in the Duluth area. In many cases, the programs of the early agencies have been replaced by St. Louis County Social Services and other government programs.

Gone from the list are orphanages, the Linnaea Society (help for families of patients with tuberculosis), the Human Society (for both children and pets), the Corpus Christi Center (for unmarried mothers), and the Bethel Home for Men.

Gradually, other agencies were accepted into the Community Fund. There were three criteria for affiliation: 1) no duplication of services, 2) proven need great enough to warrant support, and 3) the agency's finances and operations must be approved.

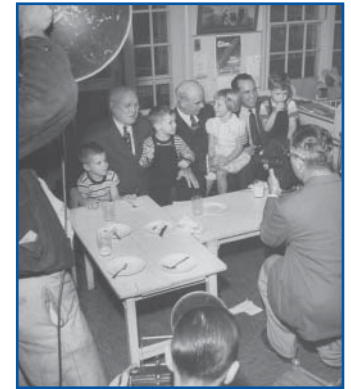
In the early days, when immigrants made up a large portion of the Duluth community, the Americanization Committee was an important recipient of Community Fund monies. It assisted in developing the best vehicle for attaining American citizenship. In 1925 the Community Fund furnished dollars which helped 1,400 people of 28 nationalities attend citizenship classes.

Early campaign publicity (e.g. in Duluth newspapers) was paid for with individual and corporate donations. In 1924, when the campaign urged Duluthians to "Take the Time to See What Your Dollars Are Doing," the Duluth News-Tribune reported that 1,000 solicitors would canvass the city.

It was the national economic downturn that made human service agencies glad to turn over fund raising efforts to the Community Fund, freeing their own staff to concentrate on programs. Furthermore, the Community Fund in 1927 had reduced fund raising costs to 3.2%, compared to the average of 30% among Community Funds in other cities. From the beginning, private giving to human service agencies greatly increased with the combined fund drive.

The year 1928 saw the national organization of the Association of Community Chests. This led the way for establishing consistent criteria (e.g. member agencies needing Community Fund permission for holding individual capital fund drives). The Association also helped develop the "Fair Share" giving guide.

In early campaigns, designated gifts were allowed. Major recipients were the Children's Home Society of Minnesota, Lighthouse for the Blind and the YWCA. At that time, uncollected pledges caused financial problems. Volunteers soon learned, though, to factor uncollectibles into their allocation projections.



*Community Chest charity drive, 1948*

In 1948, the Community Fund was renamed the Community Chest, following a national trend, and adopted the Red Feather as its symbol. This name was used until 1962, when a committee spearheaded by the Duluth Women's Institute recommended that agencies providing health services also be included in one comprehensive United Fund. The United Fund was later renamed United Way. Today, over two thousand communities have a locally autonomous United Way which works to address critical community health and human service needs.

Over the years, agencies have maximized their allocations. Regular program and budget analyses and agency interviews, which help volunteers determine allocations, have encouraged efficient money management. The volunteer Fund Distribution Committee objectively studies each agency budget and determines recommended allocations. The Fund Distribution Committee works through volunteer review panels that study each agency's request for funding.

Historically, United Way of Greater Duluth has lived up to its responsibilities as outlined each year in its Annual Report to the community. As needs become greater and government monies are shifted away from health and human service programs, local dollars raised by United Way of Greater Duluth have become more important than every.

**United Way of Greater Duluth's mission:**  
Lead a united effort to strengthen our community by mobilizing resources to improve people's lives.