

**Sheboygan & Plymouth Area United Way
Sheboygan Press Column
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By Nancy Jusky, Marketing Coordinator

“As One” Task Force Takes on Unemployment Issues

In January of 2009, United Way was integral in organizing a group to proactively address the needs of the growing unemployed families in the community. More specifically the group’s purpose was to help those who are facing foreclosure, food shortages and related short-term and long-term financial sustainability issues. This county-wide collaborative became known as the “As One Unemployment Task Force”. Armed with a mission *“To communicate, educate and empower families/individuals of Sheboygan County to help themselves before, during and after economic challenges”*, and a Block Grant from the City of Sheboygan for \$10,000 which was matched by the United Way, the group was in business.

As One’s first project was printing 25,000 brochures called “Help for Hard Times” filled with information on resources available for the unemployed and underemployed. With the assistance of Lakeshore Technical College and the City of Sheboygan Planning Department, these free brochures are available throughout the County. An educational DVD based on the brochure providing even more resources and information quickly followed. 10,000 DVD’s are now being distributed free to those in need at various locations in the community and are available at the United Way office.

Other services for the unemployed and their families that are a result of As One’s efforts are:

- Through a United Way allocation of \$5,000, Catholic Charities facilitates a Job Club/Support Group every Wednesday afternoon at their offices. United Way is also providing meeting space for an independent unemployment support group on Wednesday evenings and is also funding the printing of a brochure and flyers to publicize the group’s meetings and special guest speakers and programs.
- The United Way allocated \$5,000 which was matched by the churches affiliated with the Sheboygan County Interfaith Organization (SCIO) to develop a small no-interest loan fund to help people with unexpected crises which create barriers in getting to work such as car repairs and food security issues. These loans can be accessed through local participating churches.
- United Way allocated \$6,000 to offset the cost of the application fee of \$60 for the unemployed or underemployed to apply for BadgerCare Plus for health insurance coverage. The service was offered through Family Connections, one of United Way’s affiliated agencies. Over \$4,000 was used before the BadgerCare applications were wait listed.

We know our As One work here in Sheboygan County isn’t finished but with your continued support through the United Way campaign, we can continue helping the unemployed put their lives back together. Can we count on you in 2009?