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Michael Reilly / DN-R

"It will be disastrous," said John Whitfield, executive director of Blue Ridge Legal Services in Harrisonburg, about the diminished fund drive. "We'll have to reduce staff."

United Way Can't Reach Goal

As Drive Ends, Agency Only At 80 Percent

By DAN WRIGHT
Daily News-Record

With the United Way short of its goal, agencies that depend on the organization for funding are apprehensive.

Some will cut staff. Others will have long waiting lists for their services. First-time applicants may be left out entirely.

"It will be disastrous," said John Whitfield, executive director of Blue Ridge Legal Services in Harrisonburg. "We'll have to reduce staff, and we'll be turning away people who

need legal help."

At Hand-In-Hand Resource Mothers Program, which operates at Rockingham Memorial Hospital, plans to hire staff and expand services will be put on hold without help from the United Way.

"It's our first time seeking United Way funding," said Nan Sharpes, a resource mother with the program. "If we don't get funds, we'll continue the way we have with a waiting list of 25 pregnant teens."

Both programs have a stake in the success of the United Way's fund-raising campaign.

20 Percent Short

With most of the campaigning com-

pleted, the United Way of Harrisonburg & Rockingham County is at 80.7 percent of its \$1.1 million goal.

On Friday, the agency had raised \$888,000, said executive director Betty Hay.

The Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign, which includes 2,800 employees at James Madison University, is projected to raise another \$25,000 for the agency, Hay explained.

"While this may be short of goal, it represents over \$900,000 of investment in the community," Hay said. "It's still a tremendous outpouring of support for United Way programs."

The local United Way funds 33

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A Funding Crunch

United Way

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agencies, including adult daycare, mediation, literacy programs and transportation services.

The agency's board of directors will meet on March 18 to make funding recommendations. Community investment teams will determine how much money goes where, Hay added, and make the announcement on April 27.

Funding And Staffing

Whitfield's office has four full-time attorneys, and another that's part-time.

"We're down two attorneys from two years ago," he said. "And we're facing a \$54,000 deficit — that's assuming level funding from the United Way."

Whitfield struck out in his attempts to get funding increases from the state and federal government. He approached local governments, asking for \$1 for every low-income person in that locality as determined by the U.S. Census Bureau.

If Harrisonburg funded Blue Ridge Legal Services at that level, it would mean an additional \$5,000 for the organization, Whitfield explained.

Sharpes has a similar dilemma — how to add staff and expand services. With two people on staff and 10 volunteer mentors, Hand-In-Hand serves about 30 percent of the area's pregnant teens.

A statewide program to help teenage mothers cope with the demands of motherhood and stay self-sufficient, Hand-In-Hand cites positive outcomes. Under the resource mother program, 5 percent had repeat pregnancies. That compares to a 30-percent repeat pregnancy rate for teens not in the program.

In the three months since she took over as head of the United Way, Hay has tried to see all the partner agencies in action.

"It's amazing the difference the community's investment makes," she said. "But the fund-raising campaign has been a challenge this year."