

United Way breaks fundraising record

The United Way of Canadian County announces that it has raised over \$176,000 during its 2014 fundraising campaign, a record for the organization

By Traci Chapman
Contributing Writer

United Way of Canadian County again broke fundraising records as it raised \$176,869 during its 2014 campaign.

"The dollars raised by United Way help fund our partner agencies' programs, improving the lives of many citizens in our community. United Way Board Chairman Eric Anderson said. "It is very gratifying to see the level of commitment we have in Canadian County."

The Feb. 19 annual luncheon, held at Mustang Town Center, celebrated not only the funds raised, but also the people who worked to amass them. Anderson said. Those efforts would make a difference to about 84,000 county residents through the services offered by 17 partner agencies, he said.

"It's amazing to realize how much all of these organizations do for the people of Canadian County," Anderson said. "So many people benefit from the funds raised and the work that's done by the United Way partner agencies — far

more than many people realize."

This year's efforts came after a record-breaking 2013 milestone, achieved when companies and individuals put \$170,831 into United Way partner agency coffers in the wake of the May 31, 2013 tornado that swept across Canadian County. Donors stepping up and contributing enough to surpass that record illustrated the generosity of those who see community needs — and act on them, campaign cabinet chair Lisa Gigstad said.

"We are very blessed to live in a county that helps each other, people who are about the people around them," she said.

Pacesetter companies annually kick-start fundraising campaigns, which are targeted primarily in the fall, between Labor Day and Thanksgiving. Those 13 Canadian County Pacesetters in 2014 raised \$68,948, and officials said those efforts then spur on other individuals and companies who get into the "fundraising spirit," Gigstad said.

"Our Pacesetters really lead the way by running their United Way fund-



The United Way of Canadian County presented its Pacesetters Award to Bill Bradley, Richard Steanson, Chase Tippens and Eric Anderson.

raising campaigns early in August," Gigstad said. "They truly are a case of leading by example."

That type of leadership has always been a characteristic of a long-time United Way volunteer honored during the celebration.

Lewell Dickerson of Bank of Commerce's Mustang branch was named Volunteer of the Year and praised by organization and partner agency officials alike for his dedication and service to

county residents. Dickerson always worked "behind the scenes," avoiding taking credit for his many accomplishments through the years. United Way President Elect Pam Shelton said.

"He's one of those people who just gets the job done, but he's more inspiring than he realizes," she said.

Corporate Spirit Award winner Bandi Int and Gayle Coker with Intergis Canadian Valley Hospital were also honored during the Feb.

19 celebration. Coker was named employee campaign coordinator of the year.

United Way's 17 Canadian County partners range from children's advocates to efforts to feed the hungry, national organizations and county organizations that help families. Those agencies participate in an annual review process and are constantly working to expand their service areas, officials said. In turn, United Way's Canadian County office

maintains an agreement with the larger central Oklahoma branch, which helps provide marketing, accounting, fundraising and other services to help keep the county's overhead expenses down, they said.

"It's a great partnership and it works," Gigstad said.

More information is available online at www.unitedwayokc.org or www.unitedwaycanadiancounty.org or by calling (405) 523-3580.

(Staff photo by Traci Chapman)