

THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

United Way seeks \$259,000 - fast

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The local United Way must raise another \$259,000 by Thursday to reach its \$6.9-million goal.

But CEO Len Lifchus says it's doable, despite the fast approaching campaign deadline.

"This community raised \$500,000 in a telethon (for Haiti) in one day. It's not impossible," he said. "Hamilton has demonstrated that in a time of need, the community steps up ... and it does it in short order."

The United Way of Burlington and Greater Hamilton is \$250,000 short of its \$4.8-million Hamilton goal and \$9,000 short of its \$2.08-million Burlington target.

Volunteers are leaving no stone unturned in trying to raise the last \$259,000. They are calling donors and former donors and last Friday and again today they are "e-mail blasting" 9,000 United Way supporters asking them to take the Take 20 Challenge.

The challenge asks people to take 20 seconds to think of the needy and then make a \$20 online donation. Lifchus is also still waiting to hear from a corporate sponsor who, near the campaign's end last year, provided \$60,000 through the Take 20 Challenge.

Lifchus expected to be much closer to the Hamilton target by now but said some expected money did not come through, including six workplace campaigns that came up short -- "\$5,000 here, \$4,000 there, and \$10,000 in one case," he said.

The economic downturn that hit Hamilton hard, local layoffs, and donations to Haitian relief efforts have combined to create the shortage, he said.

He said no one can compare the devastation in Haiti with the needs of the poor here, but "we must also remember there are people in our community who also need support, people who cannot help themselves."

On the bright side, Lifchus said a few donors who have already given have called the United Way in the past few days to double their original gifts.

"I had a \$1,000 donor give us another \$200, and a \$2,000 donation was doubled to \$4,000," Lifchus said.

And in Burlington with only \$9,000 left to raise "there's been a lot of movement there."

Lifchus said although the \$250,000 still needed for the Hamilton campaign seems like a lot of money, it's not if one considers that in the cities' combined population of 656,000, it amounts to about 40 cents per person.

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