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### **The Idea Takes Form**

On June 24, 1958 the Columbus Junction/Columbus City United Fund took its first steps as an organization. Over the past half decade this entity has come to touch the lives of thousands in and around Columbus Junction. The original ideals that motivated the founders to create the fund have changed some over the years however; the fruits of their original efforts still benefit this community.

The birth of our United Fund was part of a national trend. The idea of “United Funds” can be found as far back as the 1880’s. At that time, many different charitable organizations worked hard to help those less fortunate. The competition for donations left American workers deluged with constant requests. With the hopes of stopping the competition between organizations, the idea of a single yearly fund drive, which would split profits between all the participating groups, had its birth around the country.

When America entered WWI, the movement was stepped up. The war created a need for community organizations to collect money to help with the war effort. After the war, many of these groups decided that the idea that worked so well to raise funds for the war efforts could also be used to help the communities in a time of peace. “Community Chests” were created around the country, using the yearly drive to provide funds for charitable organizations that would service the community. Larger national charitable organizations did not see the need to participate in these community chests, and so kept up their usual practice of soliciting money year round.

As this practice moved farther into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many workers started to become more and more annoyed at the constant barrage of requests for helping and giving. The problem had become so bad in the federal workforce that in 1957 President Eisenhower formalized a program of giving by Executive Order 10728, which consolidated charitable drives into three on-the-job campaigns a year. He also created tough eligibility criteria for organizations wanting to participate in the campaigns.

By mid century, several communities in our area had been using the United Fund or Community Chest idea for a number of years. Folks in the Columbus Community saw the advantages of trimming the time and waste off of fund raising for the community’s charitable programs. Another big benefit of this idea was the ability to give money to organizations they felt needed it the most: the sense of the community directing the use of its own monies to where it was most needed to. The Columbus Community Club discussed the idea of creating a United Fund to serve the Columbus area. It was soon decided that for the effort to be successful many organizations within the community would need to be involved. Members of the Community Club reached out to other organizations in the area, to see if they would like to sponsor individuals to help in creating the Fund.

### **Organization and the Original Board of Directors.**

Paul Smith, who at the time was chairman of the Community Club, led the effort to assemble the organizational meeting and group. It was decided that a public meeting would be held at the V.F.W. Building on June 24, 1958, at 8 PM. An announcement went out in the Gazette, in the June 19<sup>th</sup> issue inviting everyone to the meeting. This announcement tried to explain the purpose of the new group, and why it was so important for the community:

“It's a once a year campaign to include most local youth, health and welfare agencies, and to do away with many appeals and door-bell campaigns throughout the year.”

“Constant solicitations for charities are fast becoming a plague to almost every community and it is to remedy this situation that the new local organization is being set up.”

On that June evening fifteen individuals representing twelve different community organizations, set forward in creating The United Fund of Columbus Junction. The organizations represented were as follows: The Columbus Community Club, represented by Paul Smith and Lee Huston; The Columbus Business Women, represented by Wilma Roundy and Nel Weber; The Jaycees, represented by Raymond Hendrickson and Robert Fulton; The American Legion, represented by Earl Schlutz; The American Legion Auxiliary, represented by Wilma Henson; Veterans of Foreign Wars, represented by Robert Crooks; Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, represented by Jane Gabriel; The Half-Hour Club, represented by Connie Ford; P.E.O., represented by Hope Dunn; TTT, represented by Jocelyn Pederson; Today's Club, represented by Anne Lowe; and the Columbus City Improvement Club, represented by Vera Coon. These fifteen community minded individuals would all serve as the original board of directors, only Raymond Hendrickson is still with us today.

The officer elections of the first meeting would see the following slate of officers elected: President, Paul Smith; Vice President, Lee Huston; Secretary, Jane Gabriel; Treasurer, Raymond Hendrickson. As a little side note of the importance to always showing up to meetings (Quoted from the original minutes):

“Nominations for treasurer: Raymond Hendrickson nominated by Hope Dunn. Raymond Hendrickson unanimously elected as treasurer. Raymond not being present, he will be notified.”

Attorney Russell Newell presented the new board with Articles of Incorporation and a set of by-laws. Within the by-laws it was explained how the new organization would function. Three main committees were created to keep the organization along its main path:

1. The Budget and Admissions Committee, whose job it would be to recommend charitable organizations to the fund and also to decide how much would be allocated to those organizations in the up-coming year.
2. The Public Information Committee, whose job it would be to be the public face of the committee: Writing press releases and all information distributed about the committee to the public.
3. The Campaign Committee, whose job it would be to organize and conduct the annual fund drive.

### **The First Fund Drive**

With all the major components in place for the organization to operate, the task of deciding who would benefit from the first fund drive was turned over to the Budget and Nominations Committee to review and report back to the group in August. A call was put out to the charitable organizations, operating charitable drives in the community that the new United Fund would begin fund raising efforts soon. All who wished to receive support were asked to submit a request to be part of year's fund drive. When the August meeting arrived, it was discussed which organizations would benefit from the fund's efforts in the coming year. It was decided that night that ten organizations would be the beneficiaries of the Fund's initial efforts: The American Red Cross, The Girl Scouts, The Boy Scouts, Y-Teens, Salvation Army, Sister Kenny Fund, Iowa United Fund, Muscular Dystrophy, Cerebral Palsy and The Iowa Retarded Children Fund.

Also it was decided that a miscellaneous fund should be set in reserve, for local charities and administration costs related to the group's activities. It was determined that a budget of \$2,500 should take care of all the needs for the first year. This now meant the new group had a goal. The next step would be to make sure they could raise the money that would allow them to fund all the groups they wanted to help for the year. Heading that Committee was Mrs. Wilma Roundy.

When September rolled around the Campaign Committee was hard at work preparing people in the community for this new fund raising drive, letting them know what was about to happen. They emphasized how important it would be to so many different groups for folks to show as much support as they possibly could. October 20, 1958 kicked off the effort with the campaign slogan of "GO" (Give Once). Articles in the paper each week reminded folks that giving had just become easier. It was declared this new method of fund raising would cut down waste and the cost of previous year-round campaigns.

In an October 9, 1958 article in the Gazette, it is recorded that the Fund's first contributor was Mrs. Jennie Blake, who was from Columbus Junction but was living in Muscatine at the time.

"In a letter to Mrs. B.O. Roundy, accompanied by a very generous check, she writes in part:

Dear Sime: Am sending you some money for your community drive as I feel I still belong with you folks in Columbus Junction, more than any place."

As the first drive of the new United Fund came to a close organizers were pleased not only to meet the goal that had been set, but to surpass it. This allowed for checks to be written to area organizations as well as for a reserve fund to be set up for natural disasters or unexpected relief efforts that might come up locally. The idea of the community coming together to create one fund for various efforts was off to a successful start.

Fifty years later it can be stated that the idea of a United Fund for Columbus Junction has passed the test of time. The current board: Phil Kaalberg, Tessa Pugh, John Carpenter, Carlotta Ramirez and Sue O'Donnell with help from Mallory Smith and Nitza Lopez Castillo encourage community members to give once (or 12, 26 or 52 times through payroll deductions). Because of the generosity of local businesses and individuals United Fund distributes over \$20,000 annually to community groups.

United Fund has touched many lives over the years and will continue to do so well into the future. The foresight and initiative of the founding board members is greatly appreciated.