

# Q&A with United Way of Norman President Von Allen

Transcript Staff | Posted: Sunday, September 20, 2015 7:15 am

A lot has happened since Von Allen assumed leadership at the United Way of Norman on March 30. As president and CEO of the organization, he leads a team of volunteers and staff that works to improve the Norman area through funding for programs in education, health, income and independence. The Norman Transcript sat down with Allen to talk about the United Way's Unite & Strengthen community campaign and the organization's vision for the future.

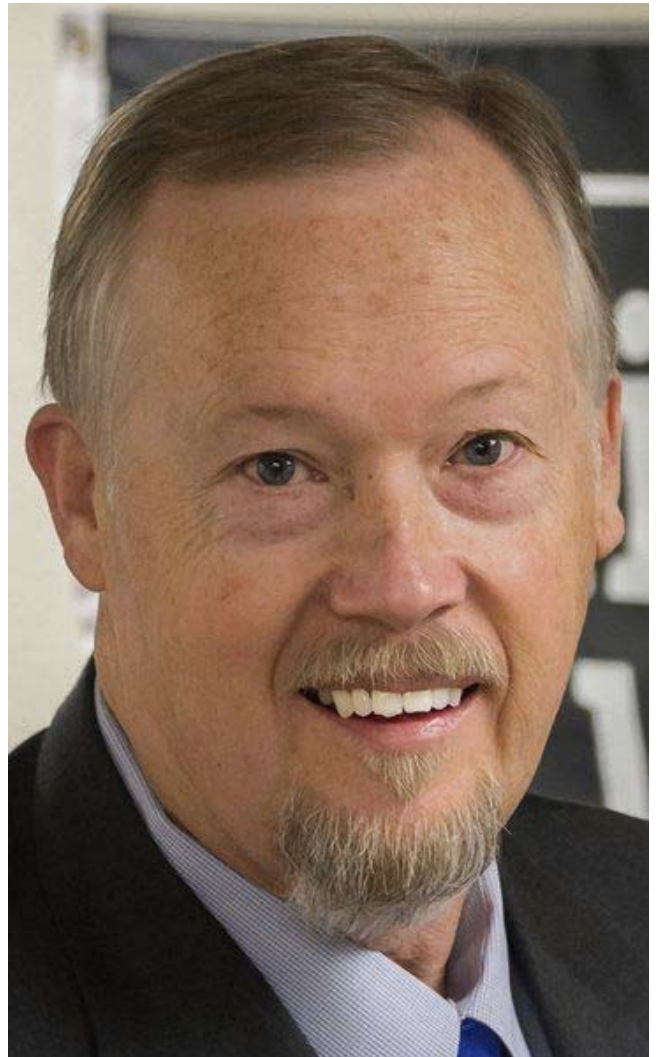
**Transcript:** How have the first few months at the United Way been?

**Allen:** It's been amazing. I've met so many people who are committed to making the Norman area a better place to live, work and raise a family. Coming in, I had no idea that so many people work on behalf of the United Way and our funded partner agencies. It's also encouraging to know that everyone is pulling for our success. My predecessor, Kristin Collins, left us with a wonderful team of volunteers and staff, and we're working to take every advantage of every possible thing to complete a successful campaign.

**Transcript:** Speaking of the campaign, can you update us on how it is going?

**Allen:** We are transitioning from our Pacesetters Campaign to the Community Campaign. Pacesetters are organizations that stand up first, conducting the earliest workplace campaigns so that when we kick off the Community Campaign, we have momentum and energy. We have been welcomed into nearly 60 Pacesetter organizations, including our funded agency partners but our work is certainly not done.

**Transcript:** What is the campaign goal this year?



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**Allen:** The United Way of Norman Board of Directors established a campaign goal of \$2 million this year, slightly more than we raised last year. We are working hard to exceed that goal, because there are needs in the area that are not being met. Last year, there were requests from our partner agencies for more than \$600,000 that we were not able to fund. That translates to approximately 9,200 people that didn't get served. Our campaign chairs — Kathey Drummond, Mariann Lawson, Randy Laffoon and Tyler LaReau — have established an unofficial goal of \$2.116 million, which would be a record. We are also looking at our goal in a different manner. We're focusing more on the number of people who we can assist. As you see our banners throughout the area documenting our progress this year, you'll see that we are measuring numbers of people we can serve — 32,000 — with that \$2 million.

**Transcript:** That's a lofty goal. What is United Way doing to reach it?

**Allen:** Yes, it is. And most of us don't relate to that kind of number. We've been stressing that if everyone will do their part — large or small — we'll be good. Your part might be different than my part, which is different from someone else's part. Every gift, though, adds up. And even modest gifts can make a big impact. For example, \$20 buys weekday meals for a month for a homebound elderly, sick or disabled person through Meals on Wheels. Our agencies do a great job of leveraging United Way funds to help as many people as possible.

**Transcript:** How can people help?

**Allen:** Our theme for the campaign this year comes from our mission statement — Unite & Strengthen — and many people are familiar with the United Way slogan of Live United. But to Live United, we must Give United. We've tried to making giving to the United Way of Norman easy. Many people obviously make contributions through payroll deductions with their employers. But you can mail us a check, visit our web site, [unitedwaynorman.org](http://unitedwaynorman.org), call our office at 329-2025 or text "30Days" to 41444.