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# The United Way Experience: An Internship Reflective

Renée Wiles

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# The United Way Experience

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An Internship Reflective

**Renee Wiles**

**Master of Public Administration**

**Kennesaw State University**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the spring 2009 semester I had the opportunity to intern with the United Way in Cobb County. United Way in Cobb is one of the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta's (UWMA) thirteen county offices, and their primary focus is to execute the mission and vision of UWMA to the residents of Cobb County.

United Way in Cobb selected me to be an intern in their Community Engagement Department, which is responsible for building and reinforcing the UWMA brand as well as communicating with – and serving as an advocate for – UWMA's key customers. My primary tasks as an intern were to support the Associate Area Director of Community Engagement and to help build the framework for UWMA's upcoming five-year strategic plan.

Over the course of the semester I participated in numerous community outreach activities, attended community and advisory board meetings, as well as created valuable partnerships within the nonprofit community. In addition, I did an extensive amount of work compiling, sorting, and analyzing reports and data to be used in UWMA's upcoming strategic plan. Moreover, I worked closely with the Associate Area Director of Community Engagement, Rashid Mosley, to create a comprehensive Microsoft Access Database containing UWMA's Cobb assets, resources, and current program outcomes.

Many of my classes proved to be particularly salient this experience. These were: Public Service Budgeting, Program Evaluation, Nonprofit Governance, and Philanthropy in the Nonprofit Sector. Through my internship, I was able to gain a better understanding of theories and principles learned in these classes.

This internship has been an extremely fruitful and rewarding experience, and if I could make any recommendation to my academic department, it would be to encourage more students to participate in an internship experience.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	ii
I. INTRODUCTION.....	2
II. DESCRIPTION OF THE ORGANIZATION .....	3
III. THE INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE .....	12
IV. CONCLUSION.....	28
APPENDICES .....	31

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The theoretical knowledge of organizations is important in understanding the fundamental concepts and ideas surrounding the creation and sustainability of the many organizations that exist within our societies. Through theory we are able to identify the models of why organizations were created, and how they continue to adapt and reform over time. Yet, even as theory is extremely insightful, it only helps to provide us with a starting point, and it is extremely important to remember that at some point there must be a practical application of these ideas and concepts. For university students, one way to apply the theories and concepts learned is by participating in an internship experience. Since there is no substitution for practical work experience, internships are an excellent way for students to apply what they are learning in real-life experiences, in hopes that they will have a greater understanding of their specific field of study.

This paper serves as an outline of my internship experience in my final semester as a candidate in the Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program at Kennesaw State University (KSU), Kennesaw, Georgia. During the 2009 Spring semester, I was afforded the opportunity to work as a Community Engagement Intern in the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta's (UWMA) Cobb County Regional Office. In this position, I worked directly with Megan Egan, Area Director Cobb County, and Rashid Mosley, Associate Area Director of Community Engagement for Cobb. In this position, my primary responsibilities included, but were not limited to:

- Providing technical assistance and support to currently funded investment partners in Cobb County.
- Assisting the Cobb County Development office with creating a plan to achieve its organizational goals and targets for advancing the region's 5 year strategic impact objectives in the issue areas of education, income, health, and homelessness.
- Analyzing an internal database of grantee organizations in order to identify service overlaps and service gaps and how the services provided align with the regional priorities of the organization.
- Assisting the Cobb County office with increasing its communication of organizational success both internally and externally.

Through this internship experience I was able to combine the theoretical knowledge of public administration and nonprofit organizations, along with KSU's global and specific learning outcomes (Appendix A), to create a hands-on, practical learning experience that gave me a greater understanding of the day-to-day structure and sustainability of one of the country's largest and most influential nonprofit organizations.

## **II. DESCRIPTION OF THE ORGANIZATION**

### ***History, Mission, & Core Values***

The United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta (UWMA) is a regional affiliate of The United Way of America, a national network of nearly 1,300 local organizations that work together to advance the common good by focusing on education, income, and health. Founded in 1905 by a group of residents eager to help in response to a crippling snow

storm, the organization was first known as Associated Charities and was led by a 27 year-old attorney, Joseph C. Logan. The group's immediate tasks were to raise money and distribute coal and funds to families in need. Over time, the group continued to support those in need, and eventually, became the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta in 1972.

Two years later, in 1974, the Cobb County Human Services Department conducted a survey, and found that there was an acute need for focused volunteer recruitment and management within Cobb County. In response to these findings, the UWMA created the Cobb County office, which was the first of the now 13 UWMA county offices.

Today, the core mission of the UWMA remains centered on helping people solve the issues that matter most. The UWMA focuses on uniting and mobilizing the strengths of Metro Atlanta's finest companies, nonprofit groups, faith-based organizations, government agencies and caring individuals to address the educational, homelessness, health and income issues that have infiltrated Metro Atlanta's cities and counties. It is UWMA's goal to work together, with its partners, to create a comprehensive unit of care for needy families, addressing both the individual and holistic needs (Appendix B).

Additionally, one of the UWMA's core values is its commitment to diversity. Seeking to utilize and value everyone's unique potential, the core values of the organization are<sup>1</sup>:

- Valuing all members of the community;
- Working on the issues most important to the community;

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved online from [www.unitedwayatlanta.org](http://www.unitedwayatlanta.org).

- Approaching all work with an objective and open point of view;
- Achieving measurable, lasting impact;
- Applying an asset-based approach to building communities;
- Encouraging civil action in neighborhoods and communities;
- Appreciating all contributions that people and organizations make to strengthen communities;
- Supporting volunteers, donors, partners and employees;
- Sustaining integrity and efficient use of resources; and
- Promoting accountability and transparency.

These values are extremely important because they serve as the guide for the UWMA's work, both internally and externally. For example, one of the ways that the UWMA values the community is by being a volunteer-led, volunteer-driven organization. From the board of directors to fundraisers, volunteer leaders are a valuable asset and an integral part of the UWMA.

### ***Leadership***

UWMA's Leadership Team is governed by a diverse board of directors that represents Atlanta's large multicultural population, creating the opportunity to facilitate discussions from divergent view points. In addition, many of the board's At Large Members include individuals and businesses representing each of the metro counties (Appendix C), allowing opportunities for two-way modes of communication to take place. Through these conversations, the board is able to bring UWMA to the community and the community to UWMA. Additionally, the board has two major

leadership responsibilities: visioning and direction setting, and ensuring results. In these roles, the board guides the UWMA in creating plans for the future, as well as creating effective tools on how to measure the organization's success.

Moreover, UMWA is governed by several volunteer committees that play a critical role in the organization (Appendix D). These volunteer committees are comprised of community representatives who are responsible for making critical decisions that directly impact the action and results of UWMA. For example, the Director's Committee plays a crucial role in promoting the accountability and success of UWMA. Operating as a subcommittee of the Board of Directors, the Director's Committee was created to ensure the effective governance of the UWMA. In this role the Director's Committee is responsible for reviewing governance policies, clarifying policy issues, and the oversight and assessment of finances and the office of the president.

Another important volunteer committee is the Community Investment Committee. This committee designs, implements, and oversees the investment process by making recommendations and evaluating funding allocations for the programs and services that are facilitated through UWMA grantee partners. Through its work, the Community Investment Committee supports UWMA priorities that are outlined by the Board of Directors and the Community Impact Council. This committee also works closely with the County and Regional Investment Committees, Opportunity Fund Committee, and Financial Review Committee.

The day- to-day operations of the UWMA are managed by a Senior Executive Team, which is comprised of the current president, Mr. Milton J. Little, and other senior

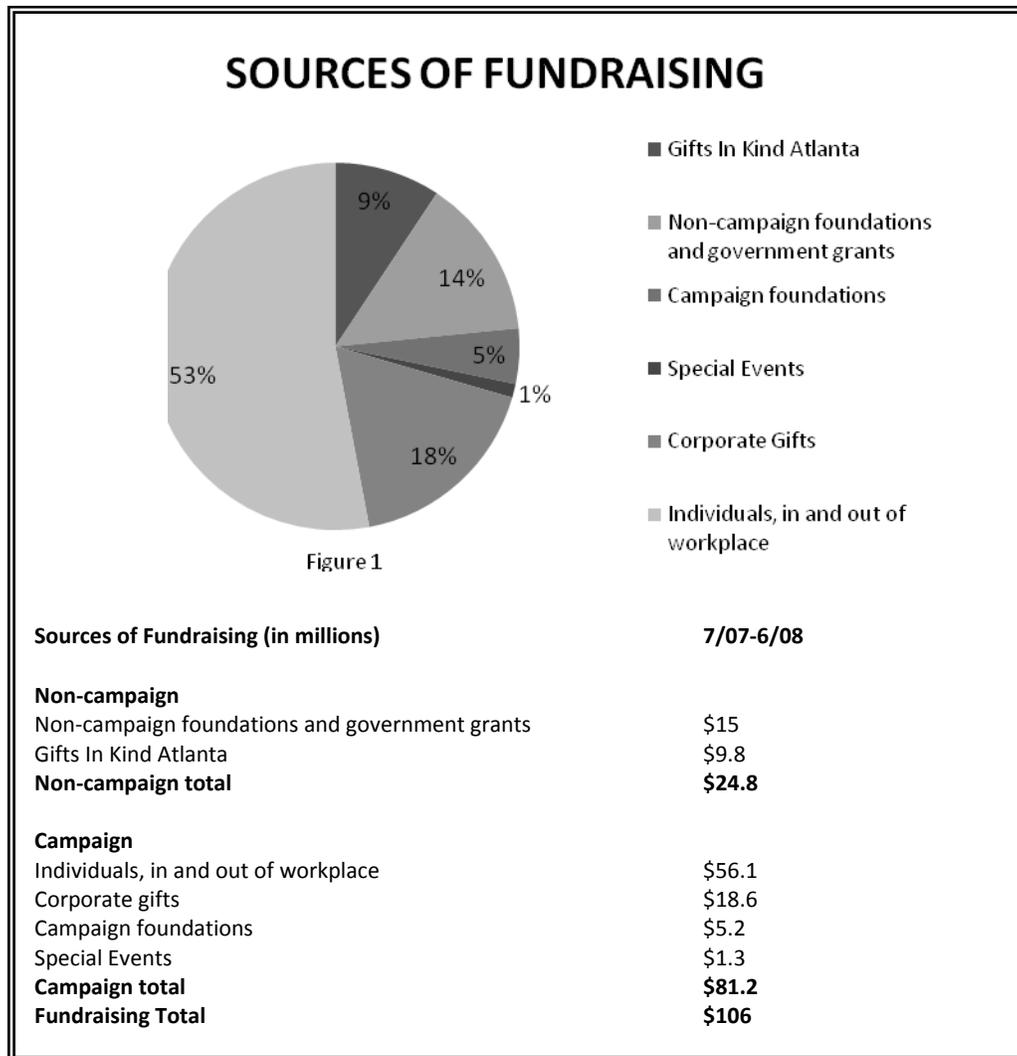
executives. Moreover, the UWMA is broken down into nine different departments, which are each responsible for its own individual tasks, and all of which are important parts in the success of the organization as a whole. The nine separate departments within the organization are: 1) Resource Development Department; 2) Area Development; 3) Community Engagement; 4) Early Learning; 5) Information Technology; 6) United Way 211; 7) Human Resources; 8) Finance and 9) Marketing and Communications (Appendix D).

### ***Fundraising and Technology***

The Resource Development Department is responsible for the development and implementation of specific strategies that will increase workplace, foundation and individual giving to the UWMA, which are the primary sources of UWMA's funding. This department manages and organizes annual giving campaigns involving companies with 1500 or more employees, individual giving at the \$10,000 + level, special event fundraising, year-round foundation fundraising, and other various programmatic activities that support fundraising. In addition, Resource Development is divided into two main functions: campaign – which focuses on company fundraising, and major gifts – which focuses on maximizing individual and foundation giving.

One of Resource Development's most successful fundraising programs is the *Heart of What Matters Program*. In this program, Resource Development places a person inside the company to serve as an employee campaign manager. This person works to assist the company in planning its UWMA campaign, and assist Resource Development with its goal to increase the giving by \$50K for each participating organization. For

Fiscal Year 07-08, the Resource Development Team was instrumental in helping the UWMA raise \$106 million through its fundraising efforts. Figure 1 shows a breakdown of the individual sources of fundraising for UWMA during FY 07-08<sup>2</sup>. Some of the largest contributors to UWMA are Publix Super Markets, AT&T, UPS, SunTrust, and The Coca Cola Company.



The Finance Department also plays an important role in the fiscal success of UWMA. This department is responsible for safeguarding the assets of the organization

<sup>2</sup> United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta Annual Report 2007-2008; retrieved online at [www.unitedwayatlanta.org](http://www.unitedwayatlanta.org).

by upholding those policies and procedures that are critical to the matters of finance. For example, the typical financial functions, such as accounts receivable, cash management and payroll processing, are all housed in this department. Also housed within the Finance Department are the UWMA's building operations, including the management of UWMA tenant office space.

In the same way that the Finance Department provides strategy and operational direction for UWMA's finances, the Information Technology Department provides direction for all of UWMA's technology. The primary functions of Information Technology are to: 1) manage the development, operations, and security of the systems which process, store, and retrieve UWMA's business information; 2) providing all technical support to all of UWMA's staff; and 3) performing help desk support and providing strategic technology training. Since the UWMA relies heavily on technology to run and support almost every aspect of the business, the Information Technology Department plays an important role in ensuring that UWMA meet its organizational and business goals.

### ***Human Resources***

Likewise UWMA's Human Resource (HR) Department is instrumental in helping the organization meet its business objectives. Through consistent maintenance of the day-to-day personnel operations and the continued application of sound human resource policies and procedures, the HR Department continues to promote employee training, development, and success. The major functions of this department are: 1) staffing; 2) compensation and benefits; 3) diversity; 4) employee relations; 5) performance planning

and appraisal; and 6) internal community service. Each one of these functions is vital to the operating success of UWMA, especially providing internal community service. By creating Lunch-N-Learns, producing newsletters, and providing ongoing training for employees, the HR Department is able to facilitate the UWMA philosophy of “giving back” within its own organization.

### ***United Way 2-1-1 & Community Engagement***

Arguably, one of the most significant departments within UWMA is United Way 211. This department provides direct services to people in need by supplying them with information on where to find help with issues such as financial assistance, job training and placement, counseling services, and substance abuse help. In addition, 211 also helps callers to find volunteer opportunities and ways to donate in-kind gifts. Housed within the 211 Department is a 24-hour call center of approximately 100 agents, whose primary responsibility is to answer calls, evaluate the caller’s needs and make referrals to agencies within the caller’s area. In some special cases 211 agents are able make referrals for callers to receive special case management assistance from UWMA or one of its partners. Other important functions of 211 are the collection and reporting of community resources for the 211 database, management and revision of the 211 database, and ongoing 211 training for 211 agents and other UWMA staff.

The Community Engagement Department also plays a major role in completing the mission and vision of the UWMA. The two primary responsibilities of this department are to: 1) build and reinforce the UWMA brand, and 2) communicate with and serve as advocates for UWMA’s key customers. One of the primary ways the Community

Engagement Department successfully complete these tasks is through messaging and brand development of key organizational messages. For example, one of the current brands that UWMA is promoting is “Live United: Give, Advocate, Volunteer”, and the Community Engagement Department is responsible for advertising and promoting that brand both internally, to UWMA’s staff, and externally, to UWMA’s community partners and grantees.

Another key function of Community Engagement is market research. This department is charged with conducting research to help UWMA understand and target key customers. This is a key element because effective market research helps to ensure that UWMA is effectively completing its mission and serving its target population. Moreover, this information is extremely helpful to other departments, such as 211 and Resource Development, and it helps Community Engagement focus efforts on tasks such as public relations, advertising, and special events.

Area Development, Early Learning, and Marketing and Communications are the other major departments of UWMA. Although they are listed on the corporate organizational chart, each of these departments is currently undergoing a restructuring and reorganization of responsibilities. Due to the current organizational changes in each of these departments, it would be disingenuous to discuss their primary tasks and responsibilities.

Each of these departments working together has allowed the UWMA to create a cohesive and efficient organization. By doing this the UWMA has become a vital part of the nonprofit world and over the years has emerged as one of the largest funders of

nonprofit organizations in the country. Each year the UWMA supports over 400 programs throughout the metro Atlanta area that in various different ways support the four major UWMA impact areas of education, income, health and homelessness.

### **III. THE INTERSHIP EXPERIENCE**

Over the course of the semester I had the opportunity to attend meetings, interact with clients, and work on several different projects, all of which gave me a better understanding of the UWMA and the nonprofit world as a whole. On my first day, January 12, 2009, I had the opportunity to attend a general UWMA Staff Meeting. These meetings are held on the second Monday of every month, at the downtown UWMA office, and are intended to keep employees informed on the most current and pressing issues affecting the organization. These meetings are open to all UWMA management and staff; however, they are not mandatory and it is the employees that want to stay the most connected that attend the general staff meeting.

The meetings are conducted in a standard business meeting format, with a simple agenda that outlines who will be presenting at the meeting and the topic of the information they will be sharing. One thing I enjoyed most about the general staff meetings is that there was always an update from the Executive Office. In my opinion, this showed that UWMA was interested in making sure that everyone felt a part of and was connected to the leadership of the organization. Moreover, there was always some sort of employee recognition given within the meetings and from the first day I got the sense that the “spirit of giving” existed inside UWMA.

Another meeting that I had the opportunity to attend was a Town Hall Meeting addressing the current challenges facing the nonprofit sector. This was really a great opportunity and I learned a tremendous amount from the presenters and the participants. Organized by UWMA, this meeting served as a sounding board for UWMA grantees to come together and discuss their organization's fourth quarter revenue results against their planned income goals, and how this information impacted their service delivery and their potential prospects of raising resources through June 2009.

The meeting included an expert panel of leaders from different nonprofit organizations, including UWMA President Milton Little, who shared best practices from their organizations, addressing issues such as downsizing and fundraising. After the panel spoke, participants had the opportunity to break out into individual discussions that were centered on one of the four UWMA impact areas of education, health, income and homelessness. Some people selected the impact area that aligned with their organization's focus, while others selected the impact area where they were in the need of most growth and assistance. UWMA representatives then led the small groups in a question and answer format discussion.

In total, there were approximately two-hundred grantees and partners in attendance at the Town Hall Meeting, and there were a number of best practices that were shared with the group. The individual discussion that I helped co-facilitate was focused on the impact area of income and the participants were from a wide-range of nonprofit organizations both large and small. The group communicated very well together and everyone was open to sharing his/her ideas in hopes that they would be helpful to someone else. As expected, the majority of the concern was centered on

fiscal success and sustainability, and the group engaged in some great dialogue on how to become more creative with marketing and communication strategies in order to increase volunteer activity. For the majority of the group keeping operational costs low, especially personnel, was a major concern and they believed that an increase in volunteer involvement would produce savings in this area. I believe participants left rejuvenated and encouraged, making valuable connections for future collaborations.

Overall, I found this Town Hall meeting to be very enlightening and it was a very real indicator of the various different challenges currently facing the nonprofit sector. I was able to get a first-hand look at how the country's economic challenges were affecting a sector that relied heavily on donations and fundraising, and after participating in The Town Hall Meeting I was encouraged to see that Atlanta's nonprofit leaders were not simply going to give into the economic situation, but that they were eager to find solutions to benefit both themselves and their clients.

I also had the opportunity to attend meetings of the Cobb County Advisory Board. The Advisory Board consists of community leaders whose responsibility is to oversee the activities of the Cobb United Way. The current Advisory Board Chair is John Clark – Publix Super Markets. The board is charged with implementing and aligning activities with long-term community initiatives, investing in community support outcomes, raising resources, engaging the community, and developing corporate and community partnerships and relationships. These meetings allow the Cobb Office to provide the board with updates regarding current projects and fundraising efforts. In addition, the board is able to make recommendations and vote on new projects.

Moreover, many of Cobb's Advisory Board members also serve as volunteers on Cobb's Community Investment Committee (CCIC). The CCIC is a volunteer-based board that designs, implements and oversees the investment process by recommending and evaluating funding allocations for UWMA's grantees. During my internship I had the opportunity to sit in on the CCIC's deliberations regarding the 2009-2010 investment process and then document and record the notes and final decisions in UWMA's Online Database Management System (ODM).

Being a part of Cobb's investment process was an extremely enlightening experience that gave me an inside look into the complexities of UWMA's funding process. The investment process first begins when a grantee organization fill out UWMA's grant application in ODM. Each organization is given an account login and password to complete and electronic grant application. Usually, grantees have six weeks to complete the grant applications once UWMA makes them available; however, due to changes in the ODM system grantees were given an additional two weeks, for a total of eight weeks, to complete their applications. In addition, United Way in Cobb hosted two separate training sessions to go through the ODM changes with grant administrators. These training sessions were extremely comprehensive and grant administrators were able to ask questions and give feedback regarding the new grant process.

Once UWMA's grant application deadline passes the completed applications are reviewed and flagged for any incorrect or missing information. After the initial review grantee applications are then passed on to the Area Director for review and follow-up if necessary. In some cases the Area Director can call the grantee and resolve the

application flags over the phone. For example, one of this year's grant applications was flagged because they reported a 90% increase in program funding from last year. With the organization reporting such a substantial amount of increase in funding its account was flagged for review. However, when the Megan Egan, Area Director, called the grantee to review its application they found that there was a typo on the grant application, and that a decimal was placed in the wrong position.

Unfortunately, not all flagged applications can be resolved so easily and in some cases it is necessary to conduct site visits and meet with the organizations in person. The site visits are conducted by three volunteers from the CCIC and supervised by one of the Directors from the Cobb Office. CCIC usually conducts site visits with the organization's Executive Director and/or Grant Administrator, and during the site visits the volunteers ask questions to help them resolve concerns that may exist with the grantee's application. Once all the site visits are completed, the entire CCIC meets together with the United Way in Cobb to make recommendations regarding funding for the grantees. In the grant application grantees are required to place the amount of program funding they are requesting; therefore, in the final recommendation meetings the CCIC only have to decide whether to fund or defund the program.

Overall, the CCIC volunteers were pleased with the grantee organizations and their programs. In a few cases, a more detailed description of the program helped the volunteers have a better understanding of what the organization really did, and allowed them to be confident in their funding decision. For example, The Edge Connection is a nonprofit organization that provides assistance to small business entrepreneurs. One of the CCIC volunteers was not clear on the programs that The Edge Connection offered;

however, after a thorough discussion they were fully supportive of granting funding to their programs.

In the end, all but one of United Way in Cobb's grantee applications was approved for 2009-2010 funding. There were two primary reasons Young Family Center was recommended for defunding. One, without any substantiating evidence the organization requested three times as much funding as they received last year. Two, the CCIC had questions regarding their grant application and wanted to do a site visit; however, Young Family Center did not cooperate with the CCIC request. Due to their lack of cooperation the CCIC voted to defund the organization.

Again, the opportunity to be a part of United Way in Cobb's Investment process was an enlightening experience. Having an inside look at the complexities of the funding process allowed me to see just how intricate the grant process is and how important it is for an organization to have a grant administrator that fully understands his/her job. One minor error can cause an organization to lose its chance at obtaining funding. Moreover, I enjoyed observing and listening to dialogue among the CCIC volunteers. Through their discussions, I was able to see how committed they were to the UWMA's mission and vision, and how much they really were concerned with ensuring that the community's needs were being addressed. Seeing these interactions made me feel much more confident about the work that goes on behind the scenes of the nonprofit sector in my community, and as an intern I was inspired to continue working in the nonprofit environment.

In addition to attending different UWMA meetings, as a Community Engagement Intern I had the opportunity to interact with some of United Way in Cobb's grantee partners by attending and participating in community meetings. One program I had the chance to work closely with was the City of Marietta's Weed & Seed Program. The Weed & Seed Program was created to address the high criminal activity and social decay of Marietta's Franklin Road Community. Currently, over 12,000 residents live within the Franklin Road Community, and more than 1,000 of these residents are school-aged children.<sup>3</sup> The focus of the Weed & Seed Program is to encourage residents to work with law enforcement agencies to deter crime, identify resources and restore the community. Through valuable collaborations Weed & Seed is able to provide a variety of educational, housing, recreational and lifestyle programs and services to support the residents of Franklin Road.

I was first introduced to the Weed & Seed Program, during my undergraduate studies at KSU, through one of my professors who served on the evaluation committee for the Weed & Seed Program. Having first-hand knowledge of the Franklin Road Community and seeing the decline it had undergone over the years, I was extremely impressed by the agenda and initiatives that Weed & Seed had created for the Franklin Road Community. Additionally, this prior knowledge provided me with a greater understanding of the collaboration between United Way in Cobb and the Weed & Seed Program.

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<sup>3</sup> Franklin Road Weed & Seed Project Fact Sheet; retrieved online at <http://www.mariettaga.gov/community/weedseed/factsheet>

I had the opportunity to attend the Weed & Seed Advisory Board Meeting where I was able to meet many of the community leaders who participated in the program. In addition, I helped coordinate volunteers for Weed & Seed's participation in Global Youth Service Day (GYSD). GYSD is a national project, organized by Youth Service America, and created to mobilize the youth to meet the needs of their community through community service projects. For this year's project, Weed & Seed's youth co-organized a youth and law enforcement symposium to create open discussions that will hopefully bridge the gap between the youth and law enforcement.

Furthermore, I am currently working on a project with Coca-Cola Enterprises (CCE) to sponsor a Community Field Day on Saturday, June 13, 2009. CCE reached out to the United Way in Cobb with a desire to do a community outreach project in a Cobb County area that was in repair and beautification that would benefit a large number of residents. United Way in Cobb decided to present CCE with Franklin Road Community and the Weed & Seed Program. This area was chosen because of the close partnership United Way in Cobb has with the Weed & Seed Project, and the Franklin Road Community is a large impact area for CCE to make a difference.

The Community Field Day Project will have two primary parts: 1) restoration, repair, and clean-up of community playgrounds, and 2) a field day where youth will participate in recreational games and activities. While the Franklin Road Community does not have a community center or a sports complex, it does have several apartment communities that serve as hosts for youth sports and recreational activities. In light of this, United Way in Cobb created a proposal for CCE containing two different sites where the Field Day can be held. The proposal for both sites includes repair of an

outdoor playground, soccer field, and basketball courts as well as sports equipment and other supplies.

In order to present an accurate proposal for CCE, Rashid Mosley and I have been conducting meetings with the property managers and owners for each apartment community. In addition, we have taken pictures, recorded field dimensions, and gathered information regarding the details of the work that needs to be completed at each site. Moreover, we have been conveying the message to property owners that the CCE sponsored field must be a community field that is open to all the residents of Franklin Road to use and enjoy. At this time, The Weed & Seed/CCE project is still in progress, and CCE has yet to make a final decision about which site will host the Community Field Day Project.

I also had the opportunity to attend meetings of the Austell Community Taskforce (A.C.T.). A.C.T. is an organization that is similar to Franklin Road's Weed & Seed program; however, its catchment area is the South Cobb Community. Similarly, A.C.T. focuses on improving the quality of life and education for its residents, and many of the activities it conducts are centered on providing educational resources for youth. For example, A.C.T. partnered with another local nonprofit to sponsor Criterion-Reference Competency Test (CRCT) workshops for middle school children. The workshops took place over the course of two weekends and included reading and math tutoring as well as CRCT practice tests at the end. I had the opportunity to represent the United Way in Cobb by serving as a volunteer at one of the weekend workshops, and I had an opportunity to interact with the children and see the community in action.

Although interacting with the community and attending meetings was an important part of my internship responsibilities, a larger part of my responsibilities was working on UWMA's strategic plan and the role of the Cobb Office in that plan. One of UWMA key focal points is identifying "opportunity zones" and "collaborative networks" in order to facilitate the strategic planning process. UWMA defines Opportunity Zones as specific geographic locations that may have a facility for co-located services or a local concentration of services that have resources to provide holistic services to residents in selected disadvantaged neighborhoods or geographically defined communities. Similarly, Collaborative Networks are organized around a common goal and provide standardized quality services and assistance to people in support of that goal. Collaborative Networks operate without geographic restriction in the thirteen county areas, and they are structured as peer groups around one of the key outcomes within the four major impact areas: education, health, income, and homelessness.<sup>4</sup>

UWMA believes that this new strategic process will help the organization determine where the families and individuals who require comprehensive care in the human care areas of education, health, income and homelessness reside, and which community partners are available to engage in strategic partnerships. UWMA's strategic process has been shaped to include: 1) an Internal Inventory of programs receiving funding from UWMA; 2) an External Inventory of initiatives not receiving funding from UWMA, but are receiving technical assistance; 3) a Community Assessment to provide a snapshot of current conditions from which the organization can later measure the success of its efforts; and 4) a process to identify the needs of

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<sup>4</sup> The United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta 5 Year Strategic Business Framework FY2009-2013 (Draft).

families and individuals who require comprehensive care and reside in particular neighborhoods. The entire Area Development staff, including Advisory Board Members, as well as donors and other key stake-holders will benefit from this strategic assessment.

In order to successfully develop this process the following research questions were created by UWMA's Leadership Team: 1) In which neighborhoods are the program and initiatives, whether funded or receiving technical assistance, from the UWMA located?; 2) In which neighborhoods or zip codes are the needs requested from residences?; 3) Is there a service gap or service overlap in a particular zip code?; and 4) What is the current state of those neighborhoods? By answering these questions, the UWMA would have a more accurate and clear understanding of where its current resources were being allocated, and what services and community partners already existed. In addition, UWMA would be able to see where it might be able to reallocate existing resources, especially in those areas where service overlaps exist, and introduce new resources to those areas where there were existing service gaps.

After developing the research questions it was important for the Leadership Team to identify what indicators were of the most concern to UWMA. Using the four key impact areas of education, health, income, and homelessness the following items were identified as the most important; however, because this process is still being developed there are not specific markers to measure in each category:

- On-time promotion rate of kindergarten through 12th grade students
- Babies born meeting the Healthy Start Index

- Middle school youth who are involved in risky behaviors
- Adults and children who have access to affordable sources of primary medical, dental and mental health services
- Low-income and working families who become financially self-sufficient
- Housing opportunities for the homeless

These indicators served as a point-of-reference for the beginning of the data collection and allowed for some narrowing in on the data collection. Additionally, these indicators will make it much easier to sort and analyze the data.

Next, UWMA wants to take into consideration which areas to concentrate its efforts. Currently, UWMA provides services that reach the entire thirteen counties located in the Metro Atlanta area, and the Leadership Team has made the recommendation that efforts be concentrated on zones where families and individuals who require comprehensive care reside. The United Way in Cobb has been working on creating an assessment to determine the location of “zones” located among the counties streets, neighborhoods, cities or towns, and zip codes. This identification of “zones” will allow UWMA to indentify those individuals where help can be provided to address as many needs as possible to every member of the family. In this way, the UWMA is able to provide comprehensive, or holistic, care, and help to create a system of care with individual providers working together to create strong healthy families.

Gathering as much information as possible is vital to understanding the true demographics and needs of the County’s population. According to Ginneh Baugh, Director of Evaluation and Measurement, “a small cross functional data team should be

created to examine the local and regional data which integrate the best thinking of staff volunteers with the authority and leadership to drive decision-making”.<sup>5</sup> In this way, the UWMA will be able to objectively analyze and include recommendations from its volunteer staff which is a fundamental part of the organization’s structure.

One of the tools available to the United Way in Cobb during our preliminary data collection was an online mapping tool that provided census data about the Cobb County community. This tool allowed us to see the people who were most likely to serve and live in the Cobb community, and it showed us what Federal resources were already available in the community. However, this one single data source could not provide a complete picture of what was happening in the community, so we employed the data from several different sources. Some of the additional sources that we used in our data collection were: Cobb County Community Profile, Cobb County Government Comprehensive Plan, A Guide for Family Resources Centers, and Family Resources Centers: Strengthening Our Community Neighborhoods by Neighborhood. Using these reports has proved to be extremely helpful and time-saving, as we have been able to utilize data that have already been summarized and are readily available for public use. By doing this, we have been able to spend most of our time compiling the information together in one central database, making it easier to get a clear picture of exactly what Cobb County looks like.

For example, Figure 2 is a snapshot of one of the Access Databases that we created to compile the information.

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<sup>5</sup> UWMA Briefing Paper: Setting Our 5-Year Goals

Organization	Impact Area	Executive Director	Organization Street Address
Active Parenting	Education K-12	Michael Popkin, Ph.D.	1995 Vaughn Rd., NW Suite 108
Acworth Government	Income	Tommy Allegood, Mayor	4415 Senator Russell Avenue
American Lung Association of Southeast Region, Inc.	Health PC	Starla Hairston, Regional Director	2452 Spring Rd
Argyle Elementary	Education K-12	Robert Babay, Principal	2420 Spring Road
Association for Retarded Citizens Cobb	Health PC	Jerrie Paschal	615 Roswell Street, Suite 150
Austell Government	Income	Joe Jerkins, Mayor	2716 Broad Street, S.W.
Austell's Tiny Tots Day Care Center & Kindergarten	Education CC	Tiffany Bentley	5730 S Gordon Rd
BCG Learning Center	Education K-12	Dr. Bonnie Cohen-Greenberg	1855 Piedmont Road, Suite 100
Blind and Low Vision Services of North Georgia	Health PC	Joan M. Stuart, CFRE	3830 South Cobb Drive, Suite 125
Celebrate Life	Education K-12	Lori Salierno	6060 Lake Acworth Dr NW Ste N
Center for Children & Young Adults, Inc., The	Health PC	Les Cole	221 Austell Road
Center for Family Resources The	Income	Jeri Barr	995 Roswell Street, Suite 100
Cherokee Family Violence Center	Homeless	Meg Rogers	210 Cherokee Street
Chestnut Ridge Christian Church	Income	Bryon Wells, Pastor	2663 Johnson Ferry Road
Child & Adol Mental Health Substance Abuse Serv	Health PC	Cheryl Holt, Director	6133 Love St
Cobb Adult Ministries	Income	Oleta Herron	1083 Allgood Road
Cobb Chamber of Commerce	Income	Bill Cooper	240 Interstate North Parkway
Cobb Community Collaborative	Health PC	Joan O'Connell	995 Roswell Street, Suite 326
Cobb County Center for Children and Young Adults	Income	Dr. Les Cole	2221 Austell Rd. Suite A
Cobb County District Attorney's Office	Income	Pat Head	10 East Park Square
Cobb County Habitat For Humanity	Income	Tavia Pauling	1625 Spring Rd.
Cobb County Head Start	Education CC	Carolyn Turner	461 Allgood Rd.
Cobb County Juvenile County	Income	Michele Marchant-Wellmon	1738 County Services Parkway
Cobb County School District	Education K-12	Fred Sanderson, Superintendent	514 Glover Street
Cobb Housing, Inc.	Income	Ralph H. Knight	268 Lawrence Street, Suite 100
Cobb Literacy Council	Income	Judith Griffin	463 Commerce Park Drive, Suite 100
Cobb Microenterprise Council (CMC)	Income	Patricia Harris	3333 Busbee Drive, Suite 415
Cobb Pregnancy Services	Health PC	Lori Parker	47 Gramling Street

Figure 2

As can be seen, listed in the database is information on the names, addresses, Executive Directors and their contact information for each organization. In addition, we looked at the type of services that each organization offers and we have used that information to categorize the organizations into one of United Way's four primary impact areas. For example, Figure 2 shows that Blind and Low Vision Services of North Georgia is listed in the Health PC (primary care) impact area, whereas Cobb County Housing is listed in the Income impact area. This additional "Impact Area" category has proved to be extremely helpful as we began searching for data within specific areas.

Subsequently, if we want to know which organizations currently exist within Cobb County that have services aimed at assisting the homeless, we are able to run a query by selecting only the “homeless” impact area and only those organizations would come up.

Moreover, in order to be more strategic in collecting and sorting the data we identified all the individual zip codes represented in the Cobb County area (Appendix E). Once we had gathered all the information pertaining to each impact area, and we had a clear direction as to what specific indicators we were targeting (Appendix F), we were able to run queries for each impact area within each zip code. Table 1 shows a snapshot of the “Education” impact area within Marietta zip code 30062.

<b>(Table 1) Education</b>					
<b>Zip</b>	<b>School/Institution</b>	<b>school type</b>	<b>CRCT %<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Drop out rates</b>	<b>graduation rate</b>
30062	Sawyer Road Elementary	Elementary School	79.17	NA	NA
30062	Lockheed Elementary	Elementary School	82.73	NA	NA
30062	East Side Elementary	Elementary School	96.43	NA	NA
30062	Garrison Mill Elementary	Elementary School	96.97	NA	NA
30062	Murdock Elementary	Elementary School	97.57	NA	NA
30062	Shallowford Falls Elementary	Elementary School	97.69	NA	NA
30062	Tritt Elementary	Elementary School	98.63	NA	NA
30062	Dodgen Middle	Middle School	95.43	NA	NA
30062	Hightower Trail Middle	Middle School	96.14	NA	NA
30062	Pope High School	High School	97.40	1.50	96.30
30062	Walton High	High School	98.72	0.50	97.10

<sup>1</sup> 2007-2008 from The Governor’s Office of Student Achievement; retrieved online at [www.gaosa.org](http://www.gaosa.org).

Since the breath and depth of this research project is enormous, it is unrealistic to expect that it would be completed over the course of twelve weeks. It will take many more weeks to fully sort and analyze the data in each of the different opportunity zones, collaborative networks, impact areas, and zip codes. In addition, more specific indicators will need to be established by UWMA’s Leadership Team so that United Way in Cobb will have guidelines for accurately analyzing the data.

However, as the initial data is being compiled and sorted the United Way in Cobb has begun to review, analyze and make some preliminary judgments and recommendations. For example, referring back to Table 1 we can easily see that all but one of the schools located within the 30062 zip code have CRCT scores above the 80%, which is the State’s successful passing percentage. This information is helpful in that CRCT scores are one of the indicators that United Way uses when determining how to allocate resources towards educational impact areas. In this case, we can see that the schools located within zip code 30062 are doing well, and that this may not be an area that is in need of money for educational impact. Although UWMA has not specifically identified what CRCT indicators they are interested in, it would be my recommendation that UWMA consider using education impact funds in a zip code other than 30062 that may have a greater need. For example, Table 2 below shows the educational impact area of zip code 30008.

<b>(Table 2) Education</b>					
<b>Zip</b>	<b>School/Institution</b>	<b>school type</b>	<b>CRCT %<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Drop out rates</b>	<b>graduation rate</b>
30008	Milford Elementary	Elementary School	75.49	NA	NA
30008	Dunleith Elementary	Elementary School	77.7	NA	NA
30008	Hollydale Elementary	Elementary School	78.69	NA	NA

In this table we can see that there are only three schools within this zip code and that each of these three schools has CRCT scores below the 80% state standard. This area comparison shows that zip code 30008 is in greater need of educational dollars.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The UWMA is a sound organization that possesses numerous strengths, yet weaknesses as well. My time as a United Way in Cobb intern has provided me with the information and experience necessary to conduct a SWOT (strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats) Analysis of the organization, and Table 3 illustrates the results of my analysis.

<b>TABLE 3</b>	
<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weakness</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Collaborations</li> <li>• Strong Constituent Support</li> <li>• Sound Leadership and Staff</li> <li>• Established Fundraising Abilities</li> <li>• Recognizable Brand</li> <li>• Growing Demand for 2-1-1 Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of a focused Strategic Plan</li> <li>• Declining Revenue</li> <li>• Limited Relationships with Constituents</li> <li>• Lack of Internal Transparency</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Trust</li> </ul>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved Relationships with Key Community Influencers</li> <li>• Expansion of 2-1-1 Services &amp; Collaborations</li> <li>• Ability to Establish Stronger Community Infrastructure</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability</li> <li>• Decrease in Community Integration</li> <li>• Internal Infrastructure Breakdown</li> </ul>

Looking at Table 3, it is evident that UWMA has numerous strengths from which to draw from. Its history of sound leadership and community collaboration has made UWMA one of the quintessential organizations within the nonprofit community. Yet, while UWMA has an established history of success, if it wants to continue being a vital part of Metro-Atlanta’s nonprofit community it must take a realistic look at the challenges facing the organization. This is especially important now as Metro-Atlanta, as well as the rest of the country, is facing extremely challenging economic times.

Moreover, I believe that UWMA has done a good job of creating a value-driven organizational culture where employees find it easy to support the vision and mission of the organization. For example, I was extremely impressed by UWMA’s commitment to volunteering and giving back to the community. Every month UWMA’s provides multiple opportunities for employees to give back to the community. Furthermore, UWMA’s commitment to excellence, innovation, and integrity make them stand out among their peers.

As an MPA Candidate I chose to focus on the nonprofit sector because of my belief in empowering people to become a part of the successful solutions that will bring awareness, safety and self-sufficiency to their communities. Like the Government Failure Theory, it is my opinion that many nonprofits are created because government has not been successful in producing successful solutions to society's needs, and when this happens people are forced to produce solutions to meet their own needs. This idea of government failure has both a positive and a negative side. From a positive perspective the lack of government response forces people to become more independent and self-sufficient, in many cases realizing that they have the ability to create positive opportunities for themselves and their community. On the downside when government failure does exist it usually impacts a large group of people, making it hard for individuals and communities to address such a large amount of needs.

Moreover, through my work at UWMA I have had the opportunity to observe that many nonprofit organizations have been created by people who possessed a passion for a specific issue and were usually dissatisfied with the quality of existing services being offered. Using this dissatisfaction as a catalyst, these individual stakeholders have created organizations that are having a tremendous amount of impact on the lives of individuals as well as the successful sustainability of their communities.

Having the opportunity to serve as Community Engagement Intern and the United Way in Cobb has been an extremely fulfilling educational and professional opportunity. Prior to this experience, my knowledge of the nonprofit sector was limited to volunteer experiences and classroom instruction. While these experiences were both very fulfilling they could not provide the hands-on practical application learning

experiences that I engaged in through this internship. UWMA has afforded me the opportunity to have a greater understanding of the complexities of the nonprofit world, and at the same time reinforced my desire to continue to work in this field.

## Appendix A

### ***General MPA Learning Outcomes***

GLO 1: Students will demonstrate knowledge and skills essential to operate in a complex network of public agencies, nonprofit and for profit organizations (K, S, A)

SLO 1.1: Students will describe the nature, structure and formal and informal institutional arrangements that exist within a political setting (K)

SLO 1.2: Students will analyze and evaluate how the network of agencies is organized and the interrelationships between and among them and their larger social context (S, A)

SLO 1.3\*: Students will present material clearly, grammatically correct, and cogently in oral and written communication (S)

GLO 2: Students will demonstrate understanding of administrative procedures and policy making and analyze their impact on the agency, their clientele, and society (K, S, A)

SLO 2.1\*: Students will explain policy making, implementation, and administrative procedure (K)

SLO 2.2: Students will apply rules, regulations, and administrative laws to new situations and formulate new information from that effort (S)

SLO 2.3: Students will analyze agency procedures and operations to determine their impact upon the agency, the clientele, and society in general (S, A)

GLO 3: Students will demonstrate understanding of theoretical constructs and analytical methods in policy making (K, S)

SLO 3.1\*: Students will explain theories of government organization, structure, management, and leadership within a democratic, legal/constitutional framework (K)

SLO 3.2\*: Students will use analytical methods to create research designs and to engage in scholarship (S)

SLO 3.3\*: Students will evaluate public policies and programs and write reports (S, A)

GLO 4: Students will demonstrate understanding and appreciation of the role that ethics plays in an administrative setting (K, S, A)

SLO 4.1: Students will explain the roles of codes of ethics for professional practice (K)

SLO 4.2: Students will evaluate ethical dilemmas in public administration and nonprofit settings and apply ethical principles to solve these dilemmas (S, A)

GLO 5: Students will demonstrate commitment to the democratic administrative ethos (K, S, A)

SLO 5.1: Students will lead and manage administrative situations in the workplace or in hypothetical settings in an ethical manner (S)

SLO 5.2\*: Students will evaluate concepts like efficiency, equity, empathy, responsiveness, and effectiveness to public service and society within a democracy (S, A)

***Learning Outcomes for Community Services/Nonprofit Administration Concentration***

GLO 7: Students will understand the nature, operation, and culture of community services and nonprofit organizations (K, S, A)

SLO 7.1: Students will apply theories of nonprofit management and leadership to nonprofit settings to solve problems and design programs (K, S)

SLO 7.2: Students will assess the value of non profit administration to the public setting and the impact of nonprofits on society (A)

## **Appendix B**

### **Mission**

to mobilize the caring power of our community to help one another by making lasting improvements on human care issues.

### **Vision**

United Way helps people from every part of our community work together on important human care issues. It is committed to making lasting improvements on those issues. It works to strengthen the everyday support systems of community life – how individuals, families and neighborhoods work to support one another – and is prepared to assist people when those systems alone are not sufficient.

## Appendix C

### The United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta - 2008-2009 Board of Directors

*\*=Director's committee*

**\*BOARD CHAIR**

Tim E. Bentsen  
KPMG LLP

**\*BOARD CHAIR-ELECT**

Larry D. Keys  
Mercer

**\*COMMUNITY IMPACT CHAIR**

Michael Z. Kay

**COMMUNITY IMPACT CHAIR-ELECT**

Molly Burke

**\*FINANCE & PROPERTY CHAIR**

L. Craig Ramsey  
Accenture

**FINANCE & PROPERTY CHAIR-ELECT**

Susan Bell  
Ernst & Young LLP

**\*STRATEGIC PLANNING CHAIR**

Molly B. Burke  
GE

**STRATEGIC PLANNING CHAIR-ELECT**

Roberto (Bob) I. Jimenez  
Cox Enterprises, Inc.

**IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR/NOM. COMM**

Lee Torrence  
IBM

## **AT-LARGE MEMBERS**

Paul Barnes (at-large - '09)  
Social Security Administration

Lisa Borders (Fulton - '10)  
Atlanta City Council

Guy Budinscak (at-large - '09)  
Deloitte

Dennis Burnette (Cherokee - '10)  
Cherokee Bank

Anna Cablik (at-large- '10)  
Anatek, Inc.

\*Dorothy Cochran (Clayton/Henry - '10)  
WORKTEC

Mike Eskew (at-large - '08)  
UPS

Mike Garrett (at-large - '10)  
Georgia Power Company

Peter Genz (at-large - '10)  
King & Spalding LLP

Mark Haney (Audit Comm. Chair / Paulding- '09)  
WellStar Health System

Leroy Abrahams (at-large - '11)  
SunTrust Bank

Sylvia E. Anderson (at-large '11)  
AT&T Georgia

Paul Barnes (at-large - '09)  
Social Security Administration

Lisa Borders (Fulton - '10)  
Atlanta City Hall

\*Dennis Burnette (Cherokee - '10)  
Cherokee Bank

Anna Cablik (at-large - '10)  
Anatek, Inc.

Raymond Cobb, III (Gwinnett - '11)  
JB Media Holdings, Inc.

Peter Genz (at-large - '10)  
King & Spalding LLP

\*Dorothy Cochran (Clayton/Henry - '10)  
WORKTEC

Patricia Harris (grantee liaison - '10)  
The Edge Connection

Phil Jacobs (at-large - '08)  
AT&T - Southeast

Joanne Kelley (Douglas - '09)  
Kelley & Associates

Larry D. Keys (at-large - '08)  
Mercer Human Resource Consulting

Charlotte King (at-large - '09)  
Snowden & King

Samuel T. King (Rockdale - '09)  
Rockdale County Public Schools

William K. (Pete) Malone (Butts - '08)  
McIntosh State Bank

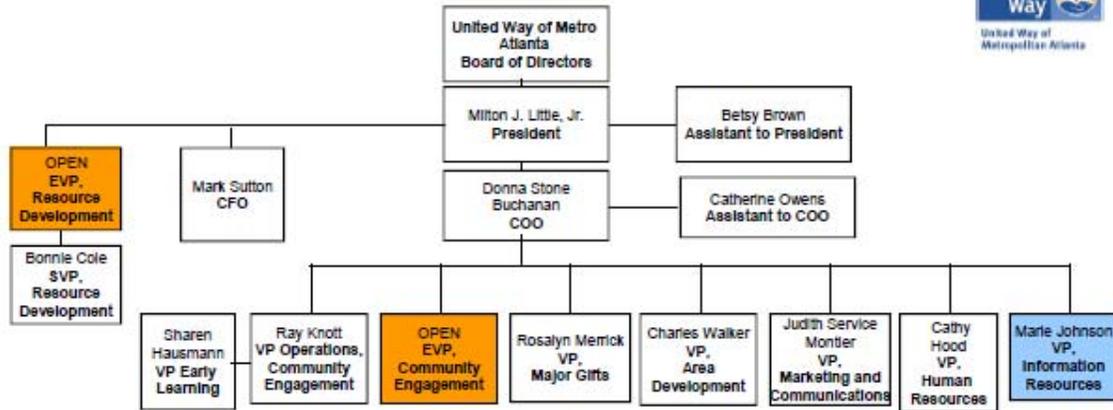
James A. "Jim" Mothorpe (Fayette - '09)  
National Financial Services Group

Sam Olens (Cobb County - '08)  
Cobb County Board of Commissioners

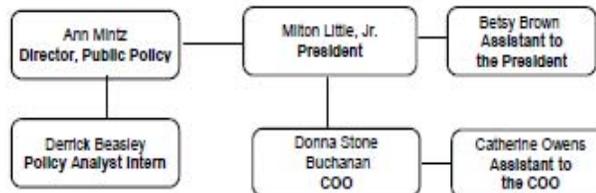
Douglas Polley (at-large - '09)  
North GA Building Trades Council

## Appendix D

### Leadership Team

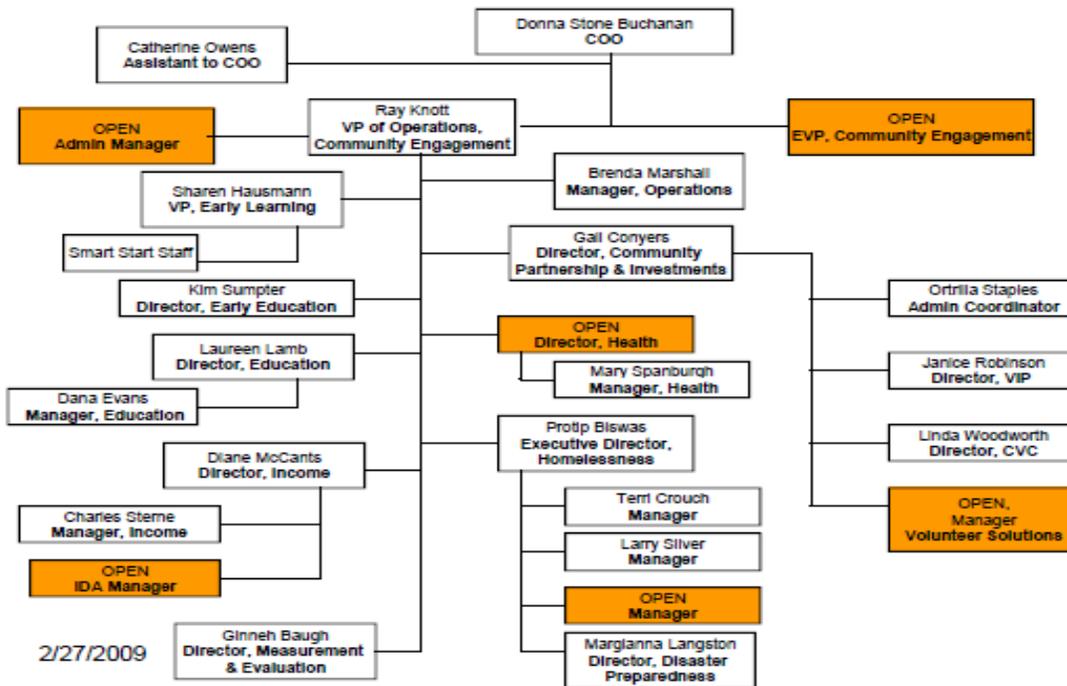


### Executive Office



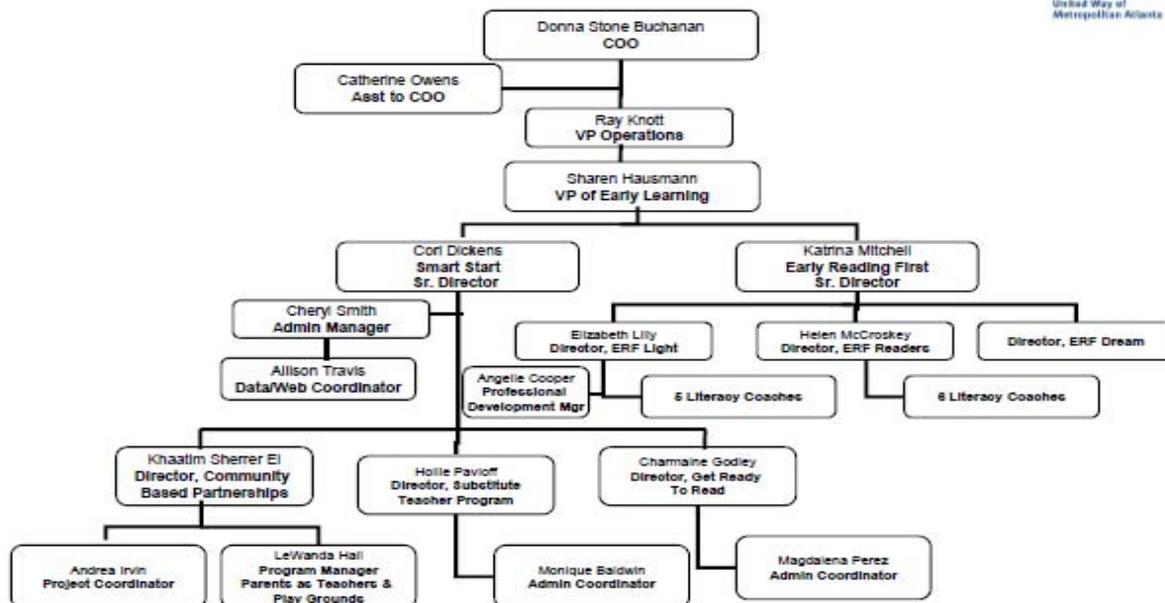


## Community Engagement



2/27/2009

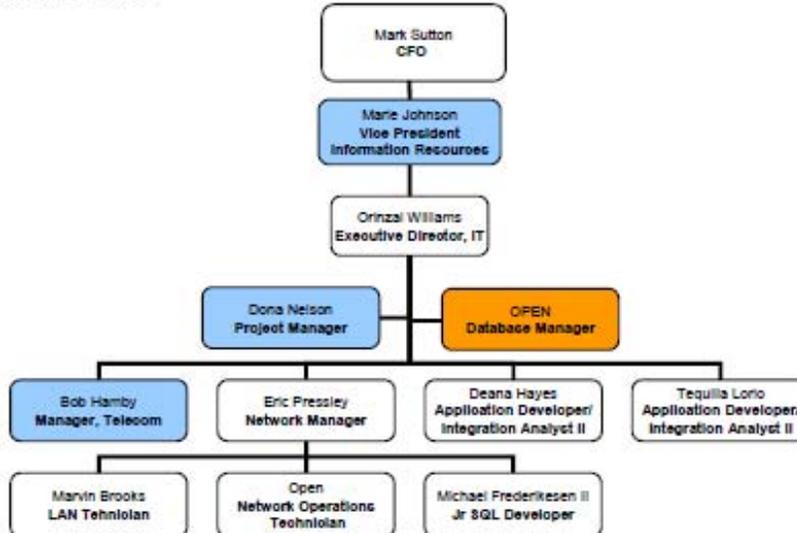
## Early Learning



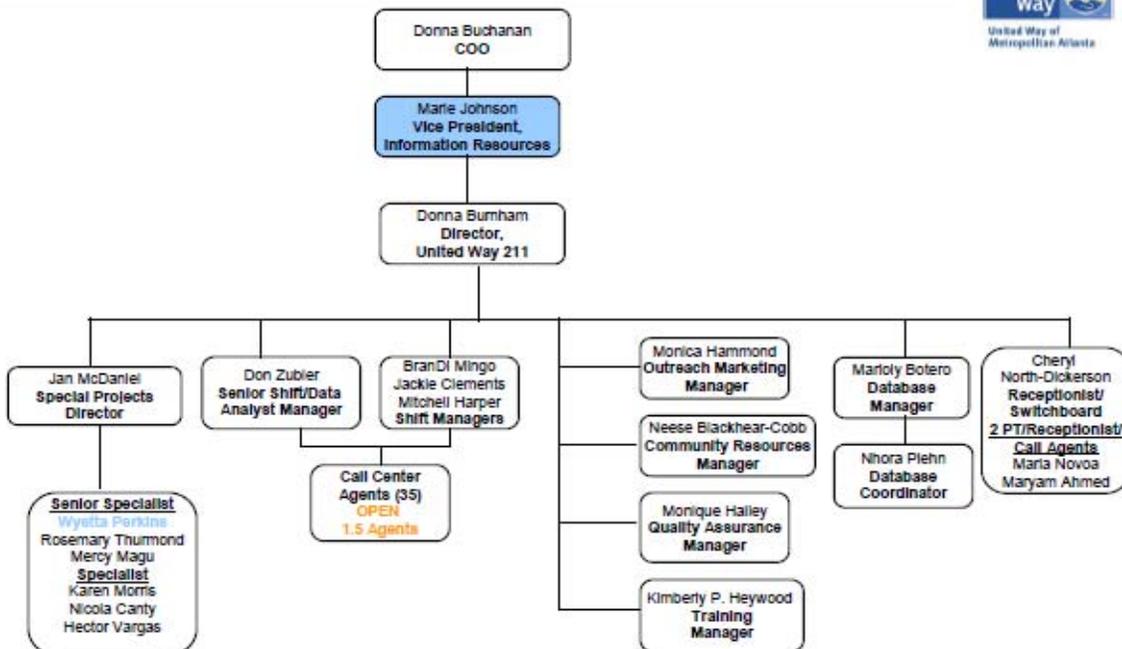
2/27/2009

## Information Technology

Information Technology's role is to provide strategy and support in technology and knowledge management systems.

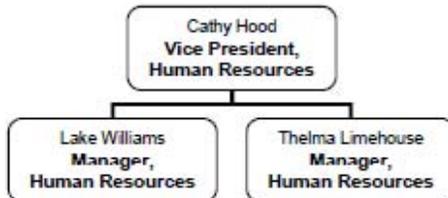


## United Way 211



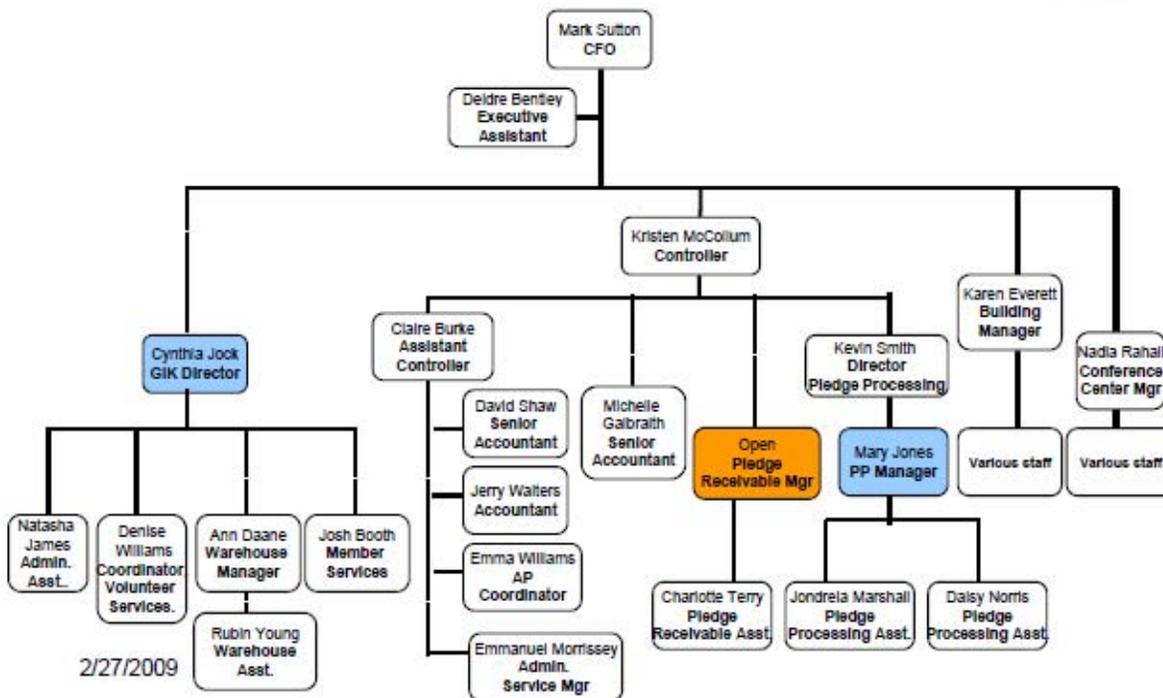
## Human Resources

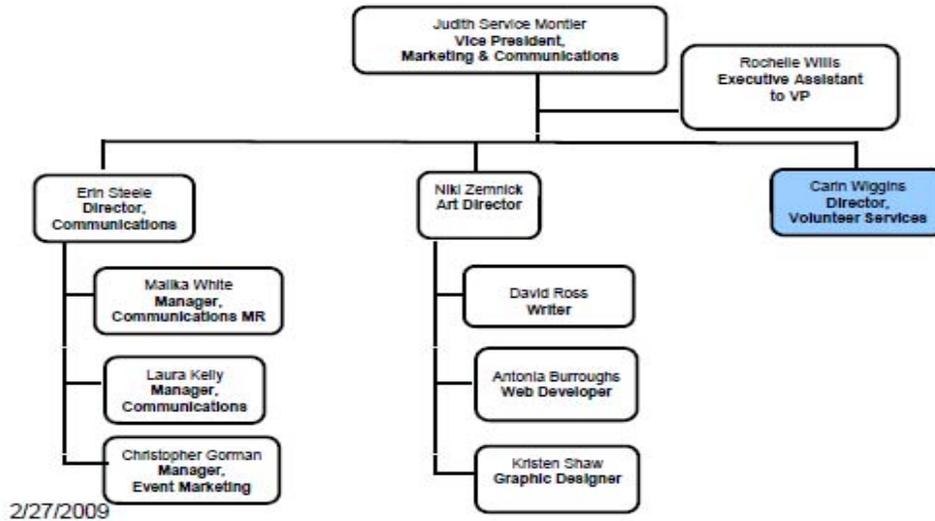
The role of Human Resources is to support managers and employees in a way that enhances the ability of the organization to achieve its business goals. This includes, among other functions, staff development /training, performance management, and benefits /compensation.



## Finance

The role of Finance is to oversee the organization's assets and provide financial accounting.





## Appendix E

### ZIP codes in Cobb County – sorted by City

(Some zip codes may cover multiple counties and cities)

#### **Marietta**

- 30008: general
- 30060: central and south - (Marietta main on Lawrence Street)
- 30062: east - (Gresham Road branch)
- 30064: general
- 30066: northeast - (Sprayberry branch in Sandy Plains)
- 30067: southeast - (Windy Hill Road branch)
- 30068: east-southeast - (Mount Bethel branch on Lower Roswell Road)

#### **Kennesaw**

- 30144
- 30152: new

#### **Acworth**

- 30101

#### **Smyrna**

- 30080
- 30082

#### **Mableton**

- 30126

#### **Austell**

- 30106
- 30168

#### **Powder Springs**

- 30127

## Appendix F

### Community Issues

#### Education

- # of non accredited childcare center
- # of elementary schools that did not meet AYP
- # of middle schools that did not meet AYP
- # of high schools that did not meet AYP
- # of private/alternative/charter/academies schools that did not meet AYP

#### Health

- Lack of Primary care facilities (health clinics and/or other): government included
- Lack of Mental health service providers and resources: government included
- Birth outcomes (birth weight less than 5.5 lbs; mom smoked during pregnancy; did not receive prenatal in first trimester)
- Youth are involved in risky behaviors

#### Income

- # of Schools with 40% or more students are receiving free or reduced lunch
- # of families with income below poverty level (x % population and above)
- # of families 50% below poverty level (x% population and above)
- # of Title 1 schools that did not meet AYP

#### Homelessness

- Lack of Supportive Housing
- Lack of Emergency and Transitional Housing
- Lack of Outreach/Intensive Case

### Community Assets

#### Education

- # and location of Childcare centers with a high % of children ready to start school or accredited
- # and location of Youth serving programs in school and/or community
- # and location of Parent support and leadership groups

#### Health

- # and location of Primary care facilities (health clinics and/or other): government included
- # and location of Mental health service providers and resources: government included

#### Income

- # and location of Workforce development program: adult and youth; government included
- # and location of Homebuyer education, Foreclosure prevention, section 8 programs and/or programs that offer low-income or subsidized rent: government included

#### Homelessness

- # and location of permanent homeless agencies