



Campaign 2009-2010

Name  
Address  
city, SC zip

Dear ,

As the chairman of the 2009-2010 United Way of Pickens County annual campaign, I want to personally thank you for your generous support of United Way of Pickens County. I'm proud to be your neighbor, and especially proud that you and I are working together to change the quality of life in our county.

In my role as City Executive/Community Vice President at Carolina First Bank, I know that for too many of our hard-working families, the basic ingredients of a good life are increasingly beyond reach. Almost one in four working parents doesn't earn enough to provide for their families. An alarming 25% of teenagers will not graduate from high school on time, limiting their chances to make a successful transition to adulthood. We can't accept these conditions if we want our community to grow and thrive.

But my knowledge goes far beyond statistics. **Let me tell you why my involvement in United Way's work is deeply personal and why I've increased my personal contribution this year and am asking you to do the same.**

I am the second oldest in a family of eight children. My parents were young, uneducated and poor when they married. My father was physically abusive, repeating the abuse he experienced with many different "fathers" entering his life. As a child, I always hoped that if I could just be a better boy, I would not be hit, but I never could be good enough. Every chance I could get to escape, I would. Fortunately I chose an escape with friends who had a stable home life and spent much of my time with their families. Not a great student, I was slated to the special education classes...but my 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Mr. Brunner, saw potential in me. He realized that my struggle was due to vision problems and helped me get glasses. He stressed academics and encouraged reading, which became another escape. My favorite book was Oliver Twist – here was a character that also wanted to escape, just like me. Mr. Brunner was the first positive role model in my life, the first man who convinced me that I was in fact a good boy. Because of his recommendation, I was placed in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade gifted and talented class.

At 14, I got a job washing dishes at a local cafeteria. Over the next four years I learned every position in the restaurant. Although work was another escape, I learned that this was NOT the type of work I wanted for the rest of my life. Although my manager told me that I would be a good candidate for the manager program, he pushed me to do more. With his encouragement and my friends and their parents' influence, I set my sights on college. With the help of so many, and with scholarships, grants and school loans, I became the first in my family to graduate from college. This allowed me the opportunity for a professional career in banking and led me to Pickens County.

My life could have gone down two very different paths. Because of early intervention of so many in the community, from my 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher to my early employer, I was shown something different from

what I was shown at home. Unfortunately, not all of my siblings made it down the same path I did. My three brothers have especially struggled, finding different escapes than mine, including drugs and alcohol, which have led them to the criminal justice system and unstable personal and work lives. One of my brothers has just had a child with his girlfriend, and I worry that the cycle will just continue. **The only thing I can attribute to the difference between me and them is that someone grabbed my hand early, and led me down the right path.**

So, I know first-hand that we need to challenge our systems – to create opportunities for a better life for everyone. To move more aggressively in this direction, United Way of Pickens County drew on research and sought input from a broad range of partners to gauge where progress has – and has not - been made over the last five years. This information is the foundation for our Community Impact Plan, which act as our roadmap on how to address the most urgent needs and their root causes.

We've focused on education and financial stability—the basic building blocks of a good life. Everyone in Pickens County needs a chance to succeed, starting with a quality education that leads to a stable job and enough income to support a family. We also need to support the community's basic needs and safety net services that are essential for a caring community.

I'm excited, because United Way's Community Impact Plan focuses everyone in Pickens County on intervention - getting to the root problems in our community. **As I know well, a Band-Aid just simply isn't enough.**

Your commitment to our work has been extraordinary, especially last year when so many people struggled to survive the economic crisis that enveloped our community. I am so grateful for your partnership in helping people who are in need and I hope you know the enormous difference you are making in our community.

Sincerely yours,

Nate Barrett  
2009-2010 Campaign Chairman

PS: I've just renewed my 2010 support at a higher level than ever before and I am going to leverage my financial contributions with my time, energy and commitment to working to better our community. (Name), please join me and step up your support this year, just as United Way is stepping up its investment in and leadership for Pickens County's future.