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In a squeaker, United Way tops its goal

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United Way of Greater Battle Creek announced Thursday it had exceeded its \$5.1 million goal for 2007, but just barely.

The total amount of pledges celebrated at the organization's wrap-up event at the Battle Creek Holiday Inn was \$5,106,930.

The all-time record pledge total includes a \$2.7 million contribution from Kellogg Co., its employees and retirees. Kellogg's gift was its biggest ever.

Erick Stewart, campaign co-chairman and co-owner of Stewart Industries, said the big gift was great, but just part of the whole.

"The truth of the matter is that we have great campaigns by what we consider 'top five' or bigger organizations," Stewart said. "But the real truth of the matter is those campaigns go very well — those folks do a very good job — but it takes the entire community as a whole. ... If those smaller companies didn't do well, we wouldn't be here celebrating what we're celebrating right now."

Stewart headed this year's campaign with Gene Miyamoto, chief operating officer of Battle Creek Health System.

While this drive just cleared the bar, it raised \$1.1 million more than the campaign just four years ago.

Teresa Durham, executive director of the Nonprofit Alliance, which gets some money from United Way, said grant recipients see the growing pledges as an affirmation of the agency's strength.

"What it means as a recipient is that the United Way of Greater Battle Creek is really effective at making sure that they're making great connections in the community, with donors, with businesses and with programs and agencies that serve the community," Durham said. "They are an outstanding organization that has very strong board leadership and a strong management team that is able to deliver on its promises ... of fulfilling needs for the community and changing lives for the better."

The 2007 Community Solutions Campaign ran Sept. 6 to Nov. 15. United Way is the fundraising organization for 50 local programs run by more than 30 nonprofit organizations.

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