

Her whole
year is
a season
of giving

United Way's **RENEE MOE**

By Amanda N. Wegner

Renee Moe's smile gives her away. It also eases tension, brings people together, elicits dialog, unites thoughts and hearts.

And that's a superb natural asset, given Renee's work. As United Way of Dane County's vice president of resource development and marketing, Renee, 33, is all about "unifying," bringing together diverse partners to achieve the seven lofty goals that comprise the organization's Agenda for Change (see sidebar).

And despite 2009's economic turbulence, Dane County residents continue to give their time, money and talents to support the community. That simple fact brings the biggest smile to Moe's face: "I get to have a season of giving all year-round."

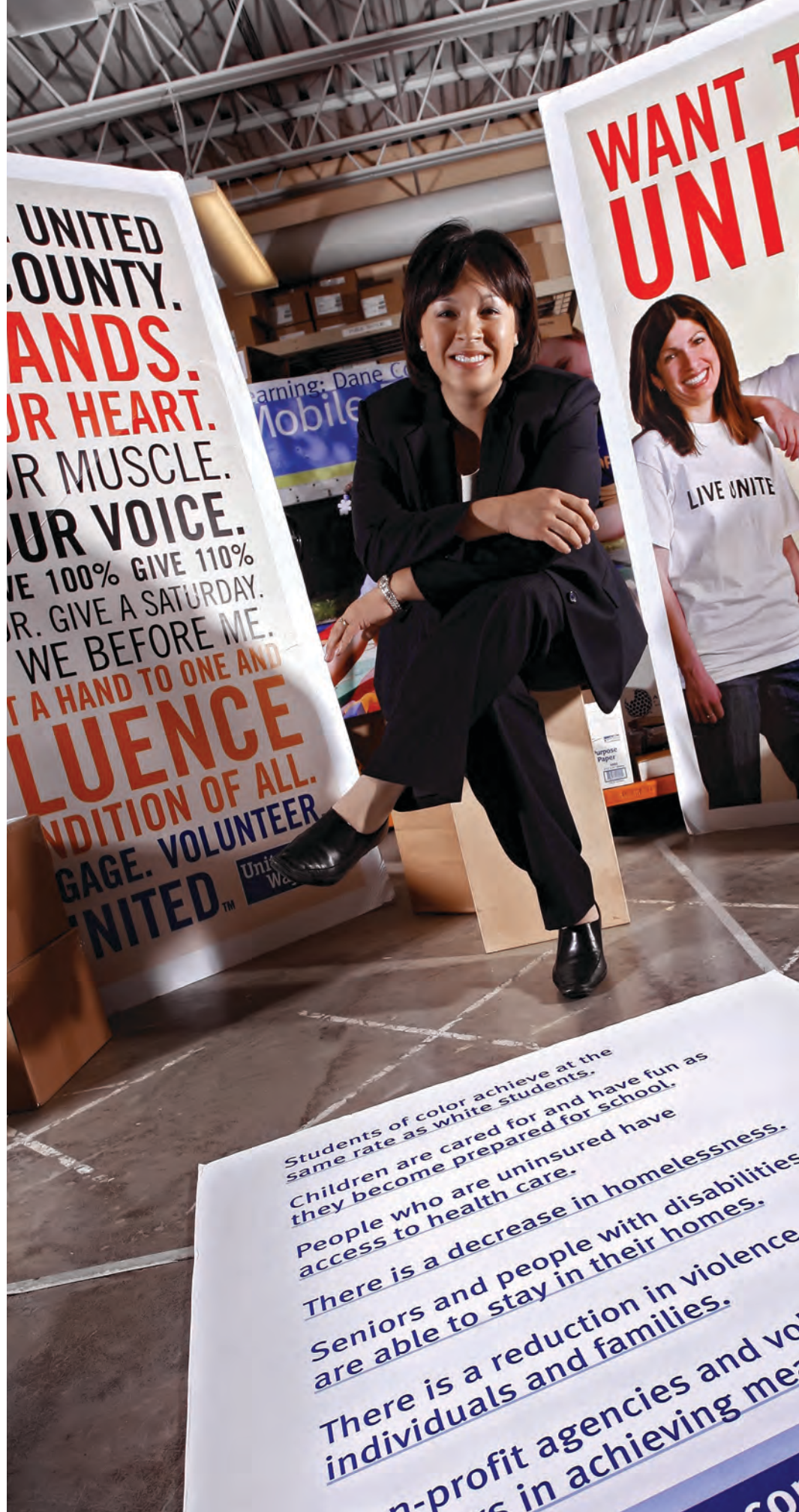




Photo by C & N Photography

An agenda for change

Renee's job is more than just fundraising. On any given day, she's working with government agencies, nonprofits, schools, police departments and businesses on the issues that face the community, particularly the seven goals of the Agenda for Change.

"I'm excited to be in the middle of that," she says. "We can make a real difference when we all come together and collaborate. A large part of my job is helping our partners understand the needs within each goal and raising resources."

The goals in Agenda for Change were identified about six years ago, says Renee, through an intense round of surveys, engagement sessions, discussions and more. Ultimately, they are the seven most critical issues facing Dane County. Through these specific goals, United Way is breaking negative cycles and tackling the root causes of problems to create lasting change.

Some problems, says Renee, aren't pretty. United Way takes a pragmatic approach, doing research and breaking down the numbers to make sure their solutions are on course with the root causes. Continual monitoring and measurement throughout their Agenda for Change work gives feedback on what is and isn't working to ensure the campaign dollars are well spent.

For instance, through the organization's Schools of Hope program, United Way is working to close the achievement gap between white students and students of color. The initial numbers were discouraging: In 1995, there was a 21-percent difference between white students and students of color in Madison in third grade literacy; by the end of the 2004

school year, that gap was down to two percent. Those gains were made, in part, through Schools of Hope. There is a direct correlation between a student's ability to read at grade level by the end of third grade and graduation rates. Recognizing the best way to increase literacy was to simply sit down and read with children, United Way began a literacy program using a strong, trained volunteer force.

"We were overwhelmed by calls when we kicked off this initiative," says Renee. "It was great how the community came together for change."

Mobilizing the community is, in large part, what allows United Way to be so successful. The annual Day of Caring in August brought together over 3,000 people. Workplace campaigns and a unique volunteer-fundraiser structure that utilizes the strength of community leaders also helps get the job done.

"As the lead fundraiser," says Renee, "I rarely ask for money. That's how we are able to be so efficient, because we have so many volunteers."

Greater giving

Creating collaborations is also important; United Way couldn't fulfill its mission without its partner agencies.

Which begs the question: Why give to United Way versus directly supporting individual organizations?

"What a great question! The value United Way brings is the conversation and focus of giving at a higher level," says Renee. "If you want to increase the graduation rate, you can't do it when you give to one organization. United Way is about systemic change, improving processes, pulling together the data and research. That's difficult to do at the level of a nonprofit."

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JUST GIVE

Renee Moe's advice on personal philanthropy is simple: "Find something that aligns with your passions, do some research and give. Just give. Every bit matters."

Want an even easier way to give? Check out United Way's annual Holiday Wish Book. It lists the needs of the organization's partner agencies. Find it at www.unitedwaydanecounty.org.



United Way of Dane County's Agenda for Change

Education: Students of color achieve at the same rate as white students.

Children: Children are cared for and have fun as they become prepared for school.

Health: People who are uninsured have access to health care.

Housing: There is a decrease in homelessness.

Independence: Seniors and people with disabilities are able to stay in their homes.

Safety: There is a reduction in violence toward individuals and families.

Volunteers: Nonprofit agencies and volunteers are strong partners in achieving measurable results.

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Business Spotlight

High-style fashion and beauty available to all

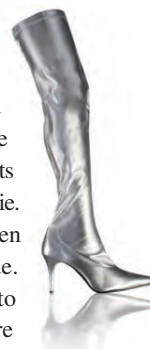
Larger women looking for high-quality, high-fashion footwear and lingerie no longer have to travel to Chicago or shop online. Total Image Hairdesign on Madison's west side has added a retail component to its established beauty services and now offers LaDame Footwear and TiaLyn Lingerie.

LaDame Footwear, based in Verona, makes high-fashion shoes for women starting at size 10 wide and running all the way to 16 double-wide. Fashion-conscious women with larger feet will find styles from flats to classic pumps in a range of heel heights, plus two boot styles. All heels are reinforced, along with the shank, for support, stability and distribution. All shoes have padded insoles for ultimate comfort.

TiaLyn Lingerie comes from New York, offering romantic, feminine, stylish lingerie, with made-in-the-U.S.A. quality. The line includes must-have camisoles, with sizes running from small to 3XXX.

Total Image Hairdesign's beauty services include hair color, hair extensions and a full line of human and synthetic wigs. In business for 23 years, you can trust Total Image to help you project your best image.

All services are offered by appointment to insure one-on-one service. To make an appointment, call Total Image today.



That's not to say that those individual partner organizations aren't as important.

"They do the on-the-ground work for us," adds Renee. "We are partners. We just try to make the most difference with the least amount of money by being efficient, through connection, analysis and accountability."

A gift

Renee vividly recalls telling her mother that she'd only be with United Way of Dane County for two years. But she recently celebrated her eleventh year with the organization.

And it's been an "amazing adventure."

Renee began an internship with the organization the summer prior to her senior year of college; that internship morphed into full-time employment before Renee even had a college diploma in hand.

"I was their first flex employee," says Renee, proudly. "I was taking 17 credits, running student organizations, working 30 hours a week, had a boyfriend. It was pretty insane. It was the best academic semester of my life."

Since then, Renee's time has been less hectic, but still full. She became the vice president of resource development and marketing five years after moving up through a variety of positions. In that time, she met her husband, Jason, finished her MBA and had her first child, a son, in July.

"Yes, it does all seem crazy," says Renee, "but I've met so many great people who've made this all worth it. I see people at their best, because they feel good to be associated with such good work. It is a gift to be in this environment."



Amanda N. Wegner is a freelance writer in Madison and believes the greatest gift of being a writer is meeting so many amazing people.

4 more on Moe

Surprise! She's a people person!

She has two mini dachshunds, Velma and Roxie.

She's from a military family. Her parents met when her father (Air Force) was stationed in Taiwan, and she's lived in Florida, Germany and Japan, and on a farm in Northfield, a tiny town in northwestern Wisconsin.

She loves the arts.

Total Image Hairdesign & Boutique

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