
Posted on Tue, Jan. 30, 2007

Sims resigns from post

Wants to devote time to raising awareness about the area's poor

BY LARRY GIERER
Staff Writer

Guy Sims knows poverty. He wants to do something about it.

That's the key reason he has resigned as president of the United Way of the Chattahoochee Valley.

Sims, who'll leave his position at the end of February, plans to be an advocate for poor in the area.

"Certainly, the United Way helps those in poverty," said Sims, 64, "but I have never been able to personally devote as much time as I would like, because this is a full-time job. I want to make the public more aware of the problem here and work with business leaders and others to form a strategy for dealing with it. This is an idea I have prayed about."

Whether that includes forming another nonprofit organization, he said, he's not sure. He is planning to work closely with the agencies already hard at work on the situation.

"This is something that, in his heart, Guy has wanted to do for a long time," said Sheree Mitchell, the chair of the United Way Board. "He's spoken to me about wanting to make a dent in the poverty problem and forming a coalition. Guy told me there are some 2,000 homeless here, including children. I can't think of anyone better to do it and I'm excited for him."

But, she said, United Way will miss him.

"I don't know of anybody who cares more about this community than Guy Sims. He has done a phenomenal job with United Way and leaves following a fundraising campaign that brought in an all-time amount of money. The United Way is in great shape for whomever follows, and his will be big shoes to fill."

A search committee will be formed in the next couple of weeks to find a successor.

United Way, which has raised more than \$6.4 million in this year's campaign, funds 50 programs in 22 agencies, including Second Harvest Food Bank, Open Door Community House, Stewart Community Home, Hope Harbour and the Urban League of Greater Columbus.

Sims became United Way president four years ago. Before that, he spent six years as Muscogee County Schools superintendent. It was during his 17 years as principal at Fox Elementary that he first saw the "face of poverty and how much harm it does."

"I've seen the poor and how difficult it is for them to get out of poverty," he said. "I've seen how difficult it is for people to get the job skills that will allow them to make the kind of wages needed to properly support a family."

He said it is difficult for the children of the poor to learn properly, because often the parents are not well educated and can't help at home.

"Teachers get blamed too often," he said.

There is a "great misconception" about the poor, Sims remarked. "These are not bad people."

Sims has enjoyed being head of the local United Way which for the second consecutive year in a row has surpassed its goal.

"Columbus is just such a caring community," he said.

Dealing with poverty isn't the lone reason Sims is leaving United Way.

His daughter, Anne Marie Vickers, is expecting twins and is going to need some help from Sims and his wife, Anne.

"These are our first grandchildren," he said, "and we want to be there to help in anyway we can."

Contact Larry Gierer at 706-571-8581 or lgierer@ledger-enquirer.com