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## United Way leaders say lessons learned from anti-merger vote

By Ed Richter, Staff Writer

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LEBANON — Leaders of the United Ways for Butler and Warren counties want to still look at ways to collaborate, but said lessons were learned at last week's merger vote.

Doug Magoto, board president of the Warren County United Way, said he learned to make sure when the community speaks, you hear them, and the need to keep communications open with the community.

"I think the membership was very clear," Magoto said. "Now we have to get the 100-plus who voted energized with the organization."

Last Thursday, Feb. 4, the Warren County United Way membership voted 92 to 27 to reject a proposed merger with the Butler County United Way.

Magoto said the anti-merger vote may be good thing as more people may become involved in the day to day operation of the Warren organization.

"We'll have quite a bit of challenges and transitions going on," Magoto said

Magoto said the board wants to help the Warren campaign and staff to be successful.

Dan Engen, Warren's vice president of allocations, said, "we've got a lot of work ahead of us to do... It was nice to see the overwhelming support and we'll have to step it up with the campaign."

Engen said the Warren board will meet on Feb. 16 to adopt its 2010 budget as well as the allocations budget for its partner organizations and programs.

Michael Schepers, Warren's executive director, said the 2009 campaign has raised about \$1.9 million of its \$2.4 million goal.

He said the final number will be announced at the organization's annual meeting on March 30.

"That goal was set high to convey to the community of the greater needs in this economic climate," he said. "That's a much higher goal that we've ever set and with the current economy, we're doing reasonably well."

Schepers said he doesn't foresee any staff changes and as for his position, he added serves

at the pleasure of the board. He has been the executive director for six years.

Maureen Noe, president and CEO of the Butler County United Way, said her organization “continues to remain focused on its mission.”

“We try to maximize resources and connect resources to community needs,” she said.

She said the 2009 campaign for Butler County has raised close to \$2.1 million after raising \$2.45 million the year before. Noe said the Butler United Way decided to go for the same amount in 2009 that it raised in 2008.

Noe said the Butler United Way will continue to keep the doors of collaboration open with Warren County, adding the 211 program is a good example of that collaboration.

Bruce Jewett, board chairman of the Butler United Way, echoed Noe’s comments about collaboration with Warren County.

“We’re going to focus on what we need in Butler County,” he said.

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