



February 11, 2010

Dear Community Leader:

When the **COMPASSION** community roundtable launched last spring, everyone had a simple goal: to unite all who are caring for needy people in our community and try to find ways we can work together to do the job more effectively. Some were skeptical; but from the very first day, we started to make some progress.

Just getting so many ministries, nonprofits and governmental agencies together was a victory. As we broke into working groups focused on our most significant challenges — providing food, housing, employment, financial help and dropout prevention — we heard the same thing over and over. Organizations working so hard to provide similar services often didn't know each other existed!

That first roundtable produced tangible ideas and some of the working groups have continued meeting throughout the year to put plans into action. One small example is that local food pantries are now sharing freezer space. As a result, more families received a free holiday turkey last year than could have been served before.

This critical effort continues this month with **COMPASSION '10**, scheduled for Thursday, February 25, from 1 to 5 p.m., at the McSwain Center in Sanford. This is no “throwaway” conference. It's the kickoff of an extended effort to serve our neighbors better. Susan Pennock, a respected speaker and trainer, is coming to help everyone understand poverty and how it affects the way people learn, work, communicate and make decisions.

Then, she will return to Sanford several times in the coming months to work in-depth with each of our working groups. After learning what specific situations our ministries, nonprofits and governmental agencies are facing, she will help them apply their new understanding of poverty and find solutions catered to our specific needs.

We need your help to make this year's effort a success. Please send a representative from your organization to **COMPASSION '10** and consider attending yourself! Helping us publicize the kickoff event also would be helpful. A flyer, registration form and additional information are available at LeeCountyUnitedWay.org.

With your help, we can serve our neighbors more effectively and make our community a better place for everyone.

Sincerely,

Jan

Jan Hayes

Executive Director

United Way of Lee County