

This mom knows: Schreiber meets United Way's bold goals

KATHY TRIPPE-McREE SPECIAL TO LNP | Posted: Monday, May 4, 2015 6:00 am

The LNP Editorial Board and the United Way of Lancaster County erred in their assessment that Schreiber Pediatric Rehab Center's mission doesn't fit the "bold goals" announced by United Way ("United Way's new approach sets a challenge for all of us," In our words, April 23).

By 2025, United Way envisions 100 percent of county children achieving kindergarten readiness, 100 percent of adults obtaining postsecondary credentials, poverty falling by 50 percent, and 100 percent of residents having access to medical care.

Schreiber's work with my son, who was born with an intellectual/developmental disability, is proof that Schreiber's mission supports United Way's vision and deserves funding. Now 21, he wouldn't be where he is today without Schreiber services.



mcRee headshot

Kathy Trippe-McRee

Kindergarten readiness: Children born with disabilities and children born into families with limited resources all face challenges to early learning. Schreiber's dedicated therapists provide rehabilitation services that enable children to be ready to learn as they enter school. It was Schreiber therapists who helped my son learn to speak. Therapists also helped my son learn to write his name and to navigate stairs safely among his typical peers at school. These skills prepared him to be a learner in kindergarten and beyond — and to go on to academic success. He graduates high school this year — diploma in hand.

Postsecondary credentials: From his late teens to age 21, Schreiber helped my son improve his coordination of hands and fingers, lengthen his attention span and follow multistep instructions — all skills he needs for employment. He now participates in a job-training program at Goodwill that continues after graduation. Doesn't this qualify as the "postsecondary credential" that United Way wants 100 percent of Lancaster County adults to have by 2025?

Fifty percent reduction of poverty: Has United Way considered that poverty and unemployment add to the challenges faced by people with disabilities — and that they are more likely to be unemployed and live in poverty than the rest of us? The U.S. Census estimates the unemployment rate among Lancastrians with disabilities at 17.7 percent, compared to 6.7 percent for the county as a whole. The census also estimates that 16.9 percent of Lancastrians with disabilities live below poverty level, compared to 10.5 percent of the total county population. Academic success and job

skills can help all Lancastrians avoid poverty — whether they have disabilities or not.

As part of United Way's public relations campaign for innovative "funding collaboratives," Adrienne Washington, United Way's chief operating officer, said that Lancaster's nonprofits have been doing "wonderful things" but with "blinders on" to the big-picture view ("United Way shakes up nonprofit world," Jan. 25).

I suggest that United Way has lost sight of what has been working for Lancaster until now and is blind to the problems of unemployment and poverty among those already challenged with disabilities. Since 1936, Schreiber has helped thousands of children with disabilities overcome obstacles and achieve academic success, enter postsecondary training, and improve their chances of gaining employment — and therefore avoid poverty. Schreiber's services strengthen our community by helping reduce the supports children with disabilities might need as adults.

United Way offers a decidedly hopeful vision of a resilient community in which everyone has a chance to obtain the benefits of education, employment and good health. Services for Lancastrians with disabilities are essential to achieving this vision by 2025. Isn't \$100,000 for services for 400 children with disabilities a wise investment of community dollars ("Schreiber funds cut by United Way," April 22)?

Has United Way considered how to include Lancastrians with disabilities in its bold vision for our community? How can United Way achieve kindergarten readiness in 100 percent of Lancaster County children, ensure that 100 percent of county adults receive postsecondary credentials, reduce poverty by 50 percent, and ensure everyone has access to medical care without funding services for children with disabilities as well as for children in low-income families? In the race to 2025, does United Way intend to leave children with disabilities in the dust by the side of the road?

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