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National Beef Packing employees have pledged \$210,000 to the Seward County United Way for the 2014 campaign. 2014 Campaign Chair Ryan Valencia is shown with some of the employees who worked on the campaign. From left are Biak Thawng, Leticia Flores, Nohemy Leyva, Charlie Osborn, Luz Hernandez, Jessica Granados, Shafea Abdi, Ryan Valencia, Nancy Gallegos, Melina Gutierrez and Valeria Sanchez. Courtesy photo

- Special to the Leader & Times

National Beef Packing employees have pledged \$210,000.44 to the Seward County United Way for the 2014 campaign. National Beef's employee contribution this year has enabled the local United Way to reach its goal of \$340,000.

"National Beef employees are the backbone of our United Way campaign. They've just contributed 61 percent of our goal. I would hate to imagine what we would do without the National Beef employees," said Kay Burtzloff, executive director, Seward County United Way. "We appreciate the hard work that it takes to run such a large campaign. A strong National Beef campaign makes all the difference."

Currently the campaign totals \$344,816 with some additional payroll deduction results still expected. The final results will be announced during the Seward County United Way's Campaign Celebration.

In the past 23 years, National Beef employees have given more than \$3 million dollars, according to Burtzloff. "At the end of 2013, they have given about \$3.1 million. When you add in this year's giving, by the end of 2014, they will have given a little over \$3.3 million total to the United Way. That's just an incredible level of community support."

In 2006, the National Beef campaign came in at \$137,768. Burtzloff pointed out that the campaign has increased more than \$80,000 in the last eight years. "When you have dedicated people at a business that have been able to increase giving by that much, you know that they are able to see what the United Way and its agencies are able to do in the community," she said.

"What impresses me is that National Beef donates the staff time and incentives to help make this a successful campaign," said Ryan Valencia, 2014 Campaign chair. "If you could add that to the total, then their gift this year would probably exceed \$250,000."

The National Beef team for the United Way campaign is headed up by Charlie Osborn and team members include Jennifer Barnes, Nohemy Leyva, Valerie Sanchez, Anahi Valenzuela, Jesseca Granados, Leticia Flores, Regina Chrisler, Melina Gutierrez, Nancy Gallegos, Patricia Torres, Nora Moore, Eba Rodriguez, Romina Garcia, Luz Hernandez, Biak Thawng, Shafea Abdi, Glenda Rojas, and Mohamed Mohamud

A vast majority of the National Beef employees participate in the campaign. "We are deeply grateful to all the employees at National Beef who support our campaign," said Burtzloff, "I wish I could thank them all personally."

The public is invited to attend the Seward County United Way's 2014 Campaign Celebration and Annual Meeting on Thursday, Jan. 30, in the Community Room at First National Bank, 1700 N. Lincoln. A free "chuck wagon" lunch will be served including hot dogs, chili, turkey and

noodles, chips, cake and drinks. The buffet line for lunch will open at 11:30 a.m., the annual meeting will start at 12:10 p.m. and then the campaign celebration will take place with plaque presentations.

During the celebration, the final campaign total and the Volunteer of the Year will be announced and volunteers and donors will be recognized. At the annual meeting, new Seward County United Way Board of Director members and officers are elected. Nominations may be made from the floor. "According to our by-laws, all donors, agencies and volunteers have a right to vote on the board members," Burtzloff said.

The Seward County United Way supported 27 agencies in 2013. For more information, contact Burtzloff at 624-5400 or scunitedway@sbcglobal.net. The mailing address for donations is Seward County United Way, P.O. Box 273, Liberal, KS 67905.

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