

Ohio's First Lady, Ohio United Way Chief, and Benesch's Martha Sweterlitsch Visit United Way of Greater Cleveland

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CLEVELAND (February 9, 2007) - Frances Strickland, Ohio's first lady and wife of Governor Ted Strickland, and Barbara Sykes, Ohio United Way newly appointed president and chief executive officer, visited the offices of United Way of Greater Cleveland on Friday, February 9. They were accompanied by **Martha Sweterlitsch, J.D. of Counsel at Benesch Friedlander Coplan & Aronoff LLP and Ohio United Way chairwoman**, and Samantha Herd, Ohio United Way's director of public policy. All were welcomed by United Way of Greater Cleveland president and chief executive officer Mike Benz and executive vice president Bill Plato.

Mrs. Strickland, an avid supporter of health and human service causes, showed a particular interest in United Way's 211/First Call For Help. She and Mrs. Sykes were given a tour of the department by Steve Wertheim, 211/First Call For Help director, and a demonstration of the online access to First Call for Help information. The health and human services Web site provides information for over 10,000 services at nearly 2,000 agencies in the Greater Cleveland area. In 2006, the site received over 100,000 visits.

Ohio's new first lady and the new Ohio United Way president met and observed 211/First Call For Help call specialists in action. Wertheim noted that with the combination of the 211 online database and call specialists working from home, the United Way of Greater Cleveland 211 program is capable of functioning 24 hour a day, seven days a week, even in an extreme emergency situation that might close the downtown office, such as a disease pandemic or power outage.

At a luncheon in United Way's downtown headquarters, Mrs. Strickland, Ms. Sykes and United Way executive volunteers and staff members discussed Lead Paint Eradication activities in Cleveland, Early Childhood Programs, Core Services Planning and Community Vision Council initiatives.

Christine Haley Medina, City of Cleveland Department of Health Lead Program project director, spoke about the Lead Safe Living Campaign to eliminate lead poisoning of children in Greater Cleveland. Arthur W. Treuhaft, Keyes-Treuhaft Co. president and CEO and Community Vision Council co-chair of the Strong Families = Successful Children Vision Council, gave an overview of his council's priorities and spoke of the success of the Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) initiative, which enabled the enrollment of 236 individuals in college-level early child care classes. Lois Goodman, Senior Success Vision Council co-chair, talked about the Senior Transportation Connection initiative and the importance of reliable, countywide transportation options for seniors in Greater Cleveland. Judith Simpson, United Way of Greater Cleveland Community Investment vice president, reviewed the Core Services Planning process.

Other community leaders attending the luncheon included Robert H. Rawson Jr., Jones Day Cleveland partner-in-charge and United Way of Greater Cleveland 2006 Campaign co-chair; Paul Clark, National City Bank president and 2007 Campaign co-chair; Erskine Cade, KeyCorp senior vice president, government relations and United Way Community Government Relations chairman; Steven R. Borstein, Cleveland Financial Group financial advisor and Community Investment Committee chairman; David Weiss, Greater Cleveland Better Business Bureau president and 211/First Call For Help Advisory Committee chairman; Suzanne M. Howe, Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland vice president; and Bernard P. Henri, Ph.D., Cleveland Hearing & Speech Center executive director and Council of Agency Executives Executive Committee president.

At the conclusion of the visit, Mrs. Strickland praised the tour of United Way of Greater Cleveland, as well as the presentations, and said, "I've enjoyed my visit here and learned much about United Way. Even your organization's name has special meaning for Ted and me-the Governor is definitely concerned about mending divisions between people, and your work here is a good starting place. You're trying to find ways to solve problems through partnerships. I look forward to a continuing relationship with United Way."

Mrs. Sykes thanked United Way executive volunteers and staff members for their efforts and remarked, "Ohio United Way is absolutely going to be more active in public policy in state government."

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