

AKRON BEACON JOURNAL

Program to train local leaders

United Way planning
neighborhood institute
with groups in Summit

By **Bill Lilley**
Beacon Journal staff writer

The United Way of Summit County is kicking off a new program in March to help develop community leaders.

The Neighborhood Leadership Institute of Summit County has been in the works for nearly two years and will debut March 6-7 with a retreat at the Quaker Square Inn at the University of Akron.

The United Way of Summit County's Attaining Independence Impact Council used the Neighborhood Leadership Institute of Cleveland as a model, but included features from 10 other neighborhood training groups around the country.

"We wanted to take what would work best here in Summit County from the other model programs and develop the best program possible," said Michael G. Gaffney, vice president of marketing for United Way of Summit County. "And we'll further refine the program to use what works best in each specific neighborhood that we are training the leaders for.

"Each leader will get a template, but you don't have to follow the formula specifically. The formula that works best for one neighborhood might not be exactly best for another.

"Our goal is to build the next set of community leaders."

The Neighborhood Institute of Summit County will be directed by Devoe Johnson, the United Way of Summit County's senior manager of community impact.

The targeted communities and areas are University Park, Summit Lake, Buchtel, Barberton, Twinsburg and Lakemore.

Gaffney said that the program would take only 26 leaders in training and 16 people have already expressed a strong interest in participating. Potential leaders outside the targeted neighborhoods are welcome to apply.

Tuition for the program, which includes 11 three-hour

Leaders

Participants sought
for training program

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meetings on Thursday evenings from March 12 through May in addition to the two-day retreat, is \$550. The 11 Thursday evening sessions will be held at the University of Akron.

Those sessions will include assessing your neighborhood, strategic planning, problem solving, managing funding, communication engagement, government and neighborhoods, and group project presentations.

There also will be special Saturday sessions when the trainees tour neighborhoods.

Gaffney said tuition for trainees from the targeted neighborhoods will be taken care of by scholarships.

The University Park Alliance, Akron Urban League, city of Akron, East Akron Community House, Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority, Akron Area YMCA, Summit 2010: Quality of Life Project, Summit County executive's office, University Park Development Corp., Summit County Department of Job &

United Way update

The United Way of Summit County reports that more than 80 percent of its fundraising goal has been reached for its current drive.

The United Way's goal is \$11,600,900. It has raised about \$9.5 million.

The drive will continue until the end of the United Way's fiscal year March 31.

Family Services and the University of Akron are helping to sponsor the scholarships.

"Our goal is to get the right people around the table," Gaffney said. "When you have the right people, you have a chance to create dynamic leaders. The leadership aspect is most important."

He said the program is looking for individuals who "naturally want to help to make changes to make their neighborhood" a better place.

"It's all about making better neighborhoods and making better leaders who will make their neighborhoods better," he said.

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