

Small Cambridge firm gives big to United Way

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RECORD STAFF

CAMBRIDGE

Eleven employees at Alco Ventures have already raised \$3,225 for the United Way this year -- three times what they raised last year.

It may be a drop in the bucket for the Cambridge and North Dumfries United Way's goal of \$2.6 million, but employee donations like Alco's account for 61 per cent of the campaign.

If corporate donations are added in, they amount to 88 per cent, said Heidi Duarte, manager of development and marketing for the United Way of Cambridge and North Dumfries. "These workplace campaigns are huge for us," she said. "It's the bread and butter of our campaign."

Alco, a company based in Langley, B.C., that makes aluminum railings, is a big believer in the United Way, said Darlene Davidson, co-ordinator of their Cambridge-based campaign.

All of Alco's Cambridge employees contribute payroll deductions to United Way of \$5 or \$10 per paycheque. The company provides incentives such as draws for holiday time or a flat-screen television for contributing employees, she said. They also have silent auctions and pay-to-play bingo games across the company.

"Everybody's really interested to help," she said. When you take a moment to think about the people who use the organizations United Way serves, "it changes you," she said. "It could be anyone."

Another outstanding contributor to the Cambridge effort is Art Wilson, an 85-year-old athlete who has undergone two knee replacements and survived prostate cancer. He is gearing up for his seventh climb of the CN Tower on Oct. 25. Wilson thought 2007 would be his last year but with improved health and permission from his doctor, he's delayed a trip to Scotland to climb one more time.

Wilson accepts donations at the YMCA of Cambridge. He hopes to raise \$10,000 --his biggest goal to date.

So far, the Cambridge and North Dumfries campaign has raised \$589,525, close to a quarter of its goal.



PHILIP WALKER, RECORD STAFF

In Kitchener and Waterloo, \$1,396,063 has been raised, with a goal of \$5.3 million. Campaigns wrap up at the end of November.

"It feels good. There's lots of momentum -- lots of energy," said Erin Armstrong, campaign director for the United Way serving Kitchener, Waterloo and the townships of Wilmot, Wellesley and Woolwich.

The local United Way campaigns support agencies such as Catholic Family Counselling, St. John Ambulance and Big Brothers and Big Sisters.

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