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Posted: 02/11/2012 11:33 PM

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United Community and Family Services Inc., one of Norwich's largest employers, is advancing on many fronts and wants to tell the public more about it.

"We need a public relations campaign right now," President and CEO Chuck Seeman said Tuesday while making a presentation to United Way of Southeastern Connecticut volunteers considering agency allocations.

UCFS received \$471,001 last year from United Way, making it the No. 1 outside recipient. In the prior year, UCFS got \$498,558, ranking it No. 2 on the list of United Way outside recipients.

Although UCFS' budget has grown from \$16.4 million in 2006-07 to \$21.8 million in 2011-12, funding continues to be challenging, Seeman said. The agency lost \$32,000 in a recent round of budget cuts made by Gov. Dannel P. Malloy. State government is UCFS' largest source of money, Seeman said.

"Much more work, much more demand and fewer resources," is how Seeman summed it up during the United Way meeting held at the UCFS Edward and Mary Lord Family Health Center.

UCFS, which has 350 employees, hired Jennifer Granger as chief operating officer in December. In January it surprised real estate market analysts by purchasing The Meadows Center, the shopping plaza that's home to the health center, for \$4.25 million.

"It doesn't make sense to invest in this facility and not control it," Seeman said. UCFS plans to expand the health center by taking over an additional 3,500 square feet, space he expects to be vacated by a tenant later this year.

**Electronic records**

UCFS signed a contract with Georgia-based Greenway Medical Technologies Inc. in January to convert all of its medical files into electronic records, a process Seeman expects will be completed in 18 months.

It is collaborating on business development plans with The William W. Backus Hospital geared

toward outpatient services, Seeman said.

Seeman, who has a Master of Business Administration, regularly reviews his agency's revenue streams. Fee-for-service payments comprise 59 percent of revenue, which includes dollars from federal Medicaid and Medicare programs, while 31 percent comes from government grants, he told United Way.

"The goal remains efficiency and self-reliance," Seeman said. "Grants have become much more competitive. Grants have not grown much."

United Way volunteers were not shy about questioning some UCFS programs. A 60 percent utilization rate of the agency's adult day care center was seen as too low by United Way volunteer Ray Stanley. Jan Davis, vice president of adult day services, defended the program, citing funding problems and lack of publicity.

"We're the best-kept secret in the United States," she said.

The state Department of Social Services is taking an average of 3.5 months to process Medicaid applications, Davis said.

United Way money is used to make a matching goal of 100 percent on a U.S. government elderly care services program conducted with Norwich-based Senior Resources Agency on Aging, Davis said.

"It's very important for us to continue to receive these funds," she said.

UCFS did follow United Way's advice in merging three programs into one behavioral health services cluster, said Lily Gill, director of outpatient behavioral health.

### **Gambling addiction**

Behavioral health covers the agency's gambling addiction treatment. UCFS is one of eight sites statewide that offer services through The Better Choice program. On Tuesday, Fred Fetta, UCFS' Better Choice coordinator, announced the formation of a college internship program in which five students will work alongside three professional clinicians. The announcement drew approving nods from the United Way volunteers.

The new structure logically fits the nature of behavioral problems, which are often intertwined, Fetta said.

"Why is the gambling guy up here talking about depression?" he said. "Gambling is linked to other behavioral problems."

The intern program will start March 4 during National Problem Gambling Awareness Week. The timing should help get the added exposure Seeman and his staff desire to forward their mission.

Getting the attention of tech-savvy young people by taking on problems prevalent in that age group is a fast avenue to exposure, said Mary Drexler, director of the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling.

"There are definitely some (gambling) issues on college campuses," she said. "Young people are increasingly concerned. UCFS has a good ear in responding to that."

