LETTERS

United Way supporters have their say on strategy shift

Regarding “Nonprofits anxious as United Way shifts focus,” (Front page, Dec. 7): Girl Scouts has partnered with United Way of Greater Houston and its predecessor organizations since 1922. We value the rigorous standards and resources United Way brings to its partner agency relationships, as well as the opportunities to collectively impact our community.

United Way’s financial support has enabled us to serve girls who otherwise may not have access to our services so they can grow into successful, self-sufficient adults.

In order to remain relevant and grow, an organization must continually assess its strengths and challenges and allow innovation to fuel its strategy. I appreciate the transparency of the United Way of Greater Houston's board of directors as it launches its new strategy and works with partner agencies to develop the skills and collaborative resources to continue serving those who need us the most.

Mary Vitek, CEO, Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council

Regarding “Nonprofits anxious as United Way shifts focus,” (Front page, Dec. 7): Budgeting for a nonprofit is always a difficult exercise. Having a relationship with funders that avoids surprises is the hope of every nonprofit agency. The United Way of Greater Houston has always valued its partnership with its funded agencies and has practiced a process of openness and transparency with them and the Houston community. As the wealth gap continues to expand and charitable giving declines, I appreciate the “heads up” of the United Way’s Second Century concept. We must remember that if donations go down, our communities suffer. I encourage the increased financial support of our United Way and embrace the Second Century vision to ensure those already struggling receive the assistance needed to help keep families safe and to give them hope and the skills to sustain.

Judson Robinson III, President of Houston Area Urban League and former Houston City Council Member
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Bold vision

Regarding “Nonprofits anxious as United Way shifts focus,” (Front page, Dec. 7): The United Way’s Second Century Vision is the acknowledgment of the most pressing issues faced by people in low-income communities aspiring to better their economic condition.

As a key provider of necessary resources to our most vulnerable community members, BakerRipley stands with the United Way of Greater Houston in an effort to imagine bold and innovative changes necessary to effectively deliver these services. The United Way’s mission of engaging people to improve lives and build a stronger community aligns with BakerRipley’s vision to disrupt and dismantle the inequities our more than 600,000 clients face annually.

Today, more than half of the working-class families we serve are living with financial insecurity. This demographic falls into the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) classification – people in our communities like retail store employees, teachers, and recent college graduates. They are our parents, grandparents, children, and neighbors.

In order to evolve with the aspirations of those we serve, we must expeditiously identify and implement the most proficient and robust programs and services that meet their needs.

Claudia Aguirre, President and CEO, BakerRipley, Houston