



Laurie DeRosa of Graham Architectural Products has served as the company's United Way of York County campaign champion since 2015. "I just love everything they do for the community," Laurie says. "As you go to campaign meetings, you learn more about the partner agencies, and it helped open my eyes to the type of generosity that occurs in York County."

Campaign Champion makes case for every nickel

by OUR YORK MEDIA

Laurie DeRosa stands in front of a room packed with employees every year and issues them a challenge: Give just 5% more to United Way of York County than you gave last year.

"If you gave a dollar a week the year before, give \$1.05 this year," she says.

One year, she remembers an employee interrupted her. "How is my nickel going to make a difference?" he asked.

Ever the optimist, Laurie responded, "With everyone's 5%, we all can make a difference."

The day before that year's campaign ended, Laurie sent a final email. The company was short of its goal, and she'd appreciate any help toward achieving it. That afternoon, several employees returned pledge forms – including two donors with four-figure donations. With the last-minute push, the company met that 5% goal.

"That day was extremely emotional for me," Laurie says. "I only expected to get a few extra dollars at best, but when I got much more than that, that was the icing on the cake. I couldn't have been more thankful for their generosity."

'It really impacts you'

Laurie joined Graham Architectural Products as a Human Resources manager in 2010 and became the Spring Garden Township company's United Way of



Laurie DeRosa's responsibility as the company's United Way campaign champion is to coordinate the campaign and showcase why it's important to donate.

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United Way of York County

York County campaign champion in 2015.

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At first, she started small. At the suggestion of another champion, she started asking employees for a portion of their lunch money. As she made the suggestion to employees, many began to open their wallets.

"I was overwhelmed by the people who just stood up and took money out of their pocket," Laurie says.

She grew Graham's campaign to include a day of meetings. The company brings in speakers from different partner agencies or people who used the services to show employees that, yes, even your nickel can make a difference.

"When you can see where those dollars go and where every penny is allocated, it really impacts you," Laurie says.

'That's how we help others'

In 2019, Graham's employee campaign continues to see increased participation. The speakers and incentives for donating — like a water bottle or a beanie — can help, but

it's about more.

"Our employees aren't focused on what they're receiving," she says. "It's about what they're giving to United Way."

Some employees give because they or someone they know used services from one of United Way of York County's 35 partner agencies.

One year, an employee asked Laurie to help him fill out a pledge sheet, and she saw he was donating a large sum of money. At one time, he told her, when he had nowhere else to turn, United Way was the organization that helped him.

"He had the ability to give back, and he wanted to make sure someone else who was in his shoes could get to benefit from United Way like he did," Laurie says. "When he told me his story, it was both heartbreaking and heartwarming."

When she has employees that question the impact of even a nickel, Laurie thinks about those who benefit from the campaign: the employee who, at his darkest time, turned to United Way; another employee who lost everything to a housefire; or the countless speakers who share their stories.

"Sure, a nickel or a 5% increase might not seem like a lot of money for one person," she says. "But when you put it all together, that's how we reach our goal. That's how we help others, and combined, we can make a huge difference in the community."

