

United Way in high gear

BY KRISTIN MACKEY
Special

After a slow start, York Region's United Way campaign has hit high gear.

"York Region has never let the United Way down," said campaign director Daniele Zanotti, who is confident the \$5.8 million goal will be met and exceeded.

"We have raised more than \$3.5 million to date. Usually it's the final month or six weeks of campaigning when the majority of donations comes in," he explained.

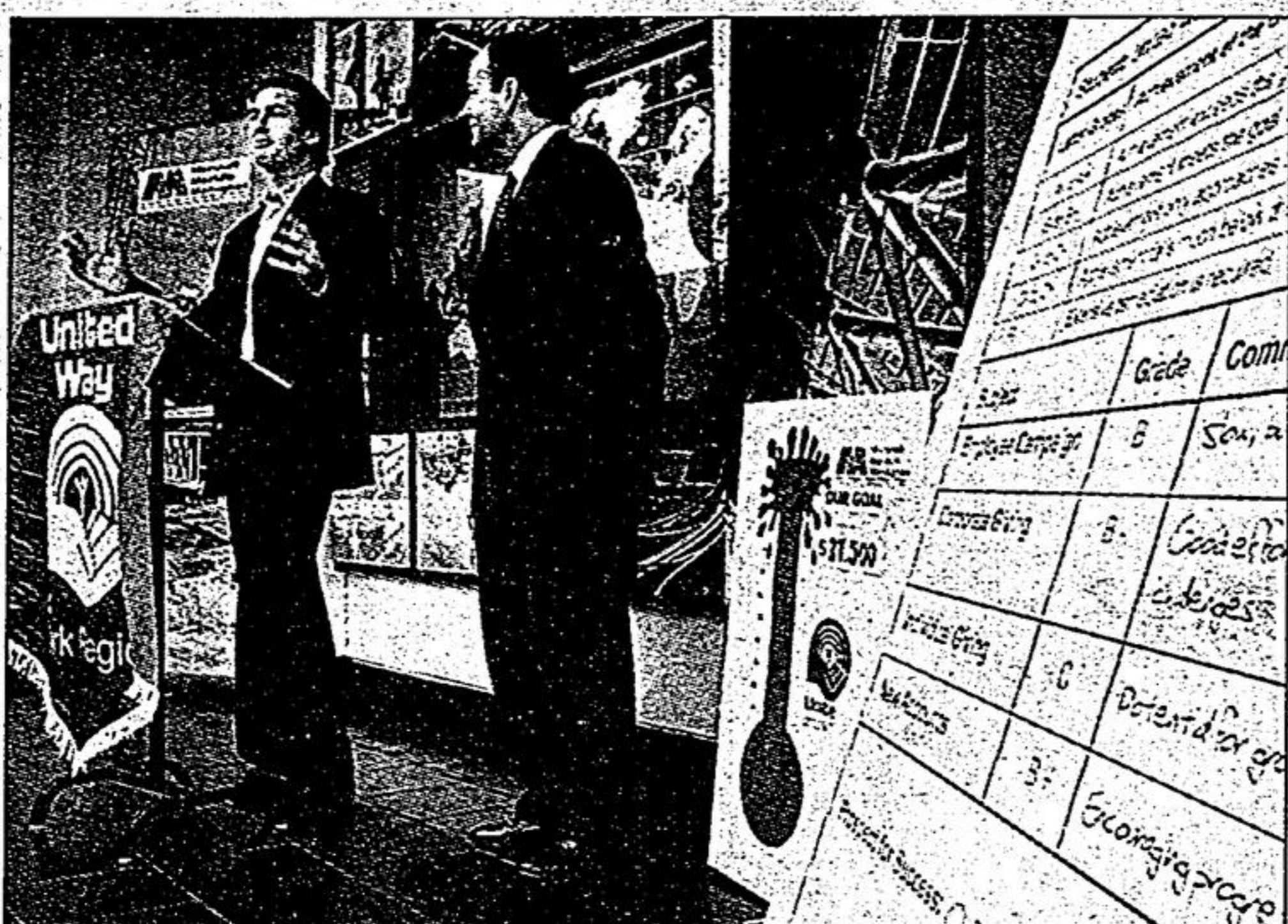
Fundraising kicked off Sept. 1, but many campaigns started later that month. Mr. Zanotti said, and many donations haven't been sent in to the UWYR for processing.

More than 200 businesses in York Region are involved with the United Way through employee campaigning. A committee of workers prepares and organizes fundraising events.

Other employees contribute by donating a money from their paycheques.

Thornhill-based engineering consultant Marshall Macklin Monaghan promised to match the amount raised by its employees. So far, more than \$50,000 has been donated by the firm.

Municipalities of York Region are also setting goals. The Town of Markham aims to raise



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Marshall Macklin Monaghan Employee Campaign Co-ordinator Jamie Bennett (right) and Doug Cummings, United Way of York Region Campaign Chairperson, go over the campaign report card during an event at the engineering firm's Thornhill offices.

\$110,000 and the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville \$3,700.

United Way staffers say donations are needed more than ever after a 1996 census revealed one in 10 York Region families is poor.

At that time, a reported 22,000 families made less than \$30,000 annually, which Statistics Canada considered the minimal income to avoid the poverty line.


And Mr. Zanotti is certain the numbers have continued to rise.

"We are seeing huge increases of two-income families in our homeless shelters," he pointed out. "They can no longer afford their home in York Region."


UWYR campaign chairperson Doug Cummings noted, "York Region was recently named one of Canada's most affluent areas, and at the same time recorded the highest increase in poverty in Canada."

Over the past 30 years, the UWYR has supported 124 programs and 37 local agencies, serving 250,000 area residents.

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