



## United Way leaves some nonprofits off funding list

By [Shelia M. Poole](#)  
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Myra Saboor wasn't content punching a clock.

So, a few years ago, she enrolled in a microbusiness training program at the Center for Black Women's Wellness and eventually she became a boss.

"Without that program, I would probably still be working for someone else," said Saboor, who owns a home child care business. "That program has been the backbone of my business. I still go back and read the sessions we completed."

Others may not have the same opportunity, at least not anytime soon.

The center was among 49 organizations that sought but won't receive funds through the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta's Community Impact Fund, the discretionary fund volunteers control to invest in various agencies.

"I'm really at a loss for words," said Jemea S. Dorsey, chief executive officer of the center, an Atlanta-based nonprofit that primarily helps low-income, unemployed and uninsured African-American women.

Last year, the nonprofit received \$30,740 in grants, which it used to fund its women's microbusiness training project. The program trains women in business development and financial literacy.

Orientation for the next class, which has a waiting list of 43 women, was scheduled to start at the end of the month. Now, that's unlikely without a new source of money, Dorsey said. The center will still receive other funds from the United Way, she said.

The United Way changed its process for making grants through the fund. The new, more competitive model stresses performance and results in the core areas of education, income, health and homelessness.

This year, grants totaling \$15.2 million will go to 124 community agencies in the 13-county service area. About 170 agencies applied for CIF grants, which are just one way the United Way invests in the community. Programs that were denied funding were determined by volunteers to be the furthest removed from the community's targets or weren't as competitive as other applicants.

The agency received funding requests in excess of \$20 million above the available amount, meaning that even some of those who competed well saw a drop in funding.

"Unfortunately, many agencies saw a reduction in their grant awards this year, and 49 agencies will not be funded at all, but these are the tough decisions our board and community volunteers had to make based on the current climate," President Milton J. Little Jr. said in a statement.

That's confusing, however, to Edward Powers, executive director of Travelers Aid of Metropolitan Atlanta.

Last fiscal year the nonprofit, which has an annual budget of more than \$4 million, received \$244,245 to serve homeless men, women and children.

Powers said he was told he would still get United Way funds. "Which makes this more of a disconnect," he said. "Why in the world would our proposal rank so low?"

He said the loss of funds could affect services to about 1,000 needy people. "We'll have to send them somewhere else or, if we can, stretch our existing resources," he said. He said the loss of the CIF grant, couldn't have come at a worse time. Demands for its services are increasing and resources are growing scarce.

Some nonprofits like Chamblee-based Senior Connections received funds, although 10 percent less than it sought.

That means less money, particularly for meals, CEO Debra Furtado said.

"That's a lot of food and it makes a big difference for us," she said. "But I also understand. Like a lot of businesses, we're going to have to be more efficient ourselves. We can't rely on the same funding sources anymore, and I think that's what the United Way wants us to do. "

She said the organization also receives corporate support and proceeds from its restaurant and catering business.

Additionally, money United Way donors specifically designated for Senior Connections increased.

It was also positive news for CHRIS Kids, which saw an increase from \$67,371 to \$215,593 for the current fiscal year.

"We're overjoyed, this is going to really be important for the clients we serve," CEO Kathy Colbenson said. "The United Way was really trying to make sure donors who invest in the United Way are getting the bang for their bucks."

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