



On Friday, April 18, 1997 United Way Staff met at the Demers Ave. office around 7:30 am. They quickly went to work stripping the offices of computers, fax machines and some files. With 3 ½ feet of water on the main floor, it would not be until early October that United Way would again be operating out of its downtown location.

After the flood waters receded, United Way literally split its office in two. It hired 5 additional employees and maintained a desk at the FEMA headquarters at the Civic Center where the early volunteer clean-up efforts were coordinated. The rest of the office staff moved into temporary quarters at the UND Rural Technology Center. Through August, United Way ran three Distribution Centers (located in Grand Forks schools) where citizens could find everything from cleaning supplies, food, clothing and even small appliances.

A Flood Recovery Coordinator was hired by United Way to develop and coordinate the nonprofit recovery efforts that eventually became known as R.A.F.T. (Resource Agencies Flood Team).

The United Way is maintaining a data base of all the individuals and families that have been assisted through R.A.F.T. A grant from the St. Paul Foundation has provided new washers, dryers, stoves and refrigerators to those people who were unable to pay for them.

People from all over the country opened their arms and gave food, clothing, and cash donations to victims of the flood of 1997. At the temporary United Way offices checks started arriving in the mail. Throughout the summer and into the fall donations continued to come in and by years end \$710,202 had been received by United Way to help United Way agencies recover and to aid individuals as they rebuild their lives.

Before the flood waters had actually receded, James Colville, President of the United Way of Minneapolis Area and Lauren Segal, President of the United Way of the St. Paul Area were coordinating a campaign to raise funds from the Minnesota and regional United Ways to aid Grand Forks agencies as they rebuilt their offices and provided services to aid in the flood recovery efforts. This is now known as the United Way Red River Valley Flood Fund.

The United Way also played an important role as the fiscal agent for the Grand Forks Mayor's Task Force on Business Redevelopment and the Grand Forks & East Grand Forks Chamber of Commerce Business Recovery Fund.

