



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **United Way of Midland County welcomes Chris Gardner, the author of “The Pursuit of Happyness.”**

We are pleased to announce that our 2009 United Way Community Kick-off will feature the nationally acclaimed speaker Christopher Gardner, sharing his message of hope with Midland County. The author of the autobiography, *The Pursuit of Happyness*, Chris was the inspiration for the award-winning movie starring Will Smith.

The kick-off event will be held on September 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:45 a.m. at the Midland Center for the Arts. Ticket prices are \$15 per person and are available at the Midland Center for the Arts box office, by calling (989) 631-8250 or visiting [www.mcfta.org](http://www.mcfta.org). Tickets will also be available at the door, beginning at 7:00 a.m. the day of the event (if seats are still available).

Few stories are as moving as his. Beginning with a childhood marked by poverty, domestic violence, alcoholism, sexual abuse and family illiteracy, Chris wrote his first book to shed light on these issues and demonstrate that circumstances do not have to define you. His message shares the importance of coming together and the power of hope.

“So many in our community are in need of help and through United Way, our community is rising to meet that need,” shared 2009 United Way of Midland County Campaign Chair Bob Rathbun. “This man’s incredible message is sure to touch the heart of everyone, from the classroom to the board room.”

Chris Gardner’s newest book “Start Where You Are,” provides direction in a time of great uncertainty. “The power of the present offers each and every one of us that same

new beginning. It's doesn't matter how young, old, rich, poor, tall, short, or in between you are," states Chris. "You don't have to have lived on the streets or have traveled in high-powered circles."

Many people came into Chris' life to change it for the better. There are people in our community who make a difference in the lives of our friends and neighbors every day. Join us as we celebrate the great impacts that are taking place right here in Midland County.

This event is sponsored by our community partners: Chemical Bank, The Dow Chemical Company, Dow Corning Corporation, MidMichigan Health and supported through the generosity of Midland Center for the Arts and WHNN (Citadel Broadcasting).

United Way strives to create long-lasting change to prevent problems from happening in the first place, creating opportunities for a better life for Midland County residents. For more information about his event, contact United Way of Midland County at (989) 631-3670 or visit [www.liveunitedmidland.org](http://www.liveunitedmidland.org).

**NOTE TO MEDIA:**

Tickets go on sale to the public on August 19<sup>th</sup>. The information about ticket sales can be shared from that date, through September 18<sup>th</sup>. We have several pictures of Chris, his book jackets and movie jackets for your use that are attached

Special audio and visual trailers with excerpts from Chris Gardner are also available to help support promotions.