

EXCLUSIVE: United Way Worldwide Delivers Otero County to the Gun Control Wolves



Posted at 8:40 pm on August 30, 2016 by Jenn Jacques

Do you donate to the United Way? You need to read this before you write your next check.

Who knew one law-abiding group of people trying to raise money for their community could be so hated?

When the Otero County (NM) United Way started their [2017 Calendar Gun Raffle](#) with the hopes of raising \$150,000 for their community, the backlash was swift... and highly suspect. Intent on shutting down a fellow New Mexico United Way campaign, the President-Elect of the Santa Fe United Way, [Miranda Viscoli](#), wrote a letter to the United Way Worldwide (UWW) urging them to shut down Otero County's campaign.

[Viscoli said](#), “It’s unconscionable. It has nothing to do with what United Way is about. They’re paving the road for other United Way branches to hold raffles.”

Interesting, since over a dozen other United Way chapters also hold gun raffles to raise money for their communities. Of course she *knows* this, but that doesn’t fit her agenda... so onto the spin we go.

After United Way Worldwide [suspended the Otero County gun raffle](#), Viscoli told [KRQE](#), “There seems to be a disconnect between their mission and their fundraising tactics. The very items that they are choosing to raffle will go back into the communities already hurt by gun violence against women and children.”

Ultimately, United Way Worldwide [reviewed the facts of the case](#) and concluded Otero County was operating within their bylaws and New Mexico state laws, prompting them to [lift their suspension](#) on August 13th.

“For Ms. Viscoli, jeopardizing funding for charity and wasting law enforcement resources were no hurdles to pursuing her own personal anti-gun vendetta,” a representative from the NRA-ILA commented.

United Way Worldwide spokesman [Ryan Powers](#) said, “It’s an internal membership discussion. I’ve seen the statement and we don’t have anything more to add to the statement. It’s an internal membership discussion and we’d prefer to keep it at that.”

But since this is a story of how gun control supporters won’t stop until they get their way, it doesn’t end there...

Ms. Viscoli seems less interested in protecting “the United Way brand” as she claimed publicly, and more interested in promoting the other cause she’s affiliated with personally: New Mexicans to Prevent Gun Violence.

This was not a brilliant place to pick a gun control fight. Even the Democratic Party in Otero County [used a rifle](#) as a rifle prize. *A rifle raffle*. And Democrats in New Mexico have generally been advocates for gun rights.

The United Way's own members, specifically Santa Fe United Way's Chair-Elect Miranda Viscoli, have since continued to make this "internal discussion" a public matter despite being instructed by UWW to keep a lid on it.

So let's just blow the lid off it, shall we?

One week after UWW lifted the suspension of Otero County United Way's gun raffle, Viscoli teamed up with her [NMPGV](#) Co-President Valerie Plame, who is among Hillary Clinton's September [fundraisers](#), to issue a very public response to UWW's decision.

Their August 20th op-ed "[When United Way's Mission is Incompatible With Their Actions](#)" was an all-out assault against both the organization and our constitutional right to bear arms.

"Many of us who have supported the United Way for years are deeply embarrassed by and for the organization. And, we pray that these violent weapons being unleashed on our communities by the United Way will not become instruments of mayhem in the 91 deaths that occur as a result of gun violence in our county every day."*

*I could find absolutely no data to support Plame and Viscoli's claim of "91 deaths" in their "county every day" as a result of gun violence as published in their op-ed against Otero County United Way's gun raffle. According to [FBI statistics](#), even if all murders committed with guns in 2014 had occurred in the state of New Mexico, that comes out to 22 deaths per day before dividing them up between NM's 33 counties.

UWW [issued a statement](#) from CEO Brian Gallagher to all chapters the next day to address the situation, which read in part, "These matters are always handled with sensitivity and confidentiality out of respect for the United Way involved; therefore we will share only what is needed to know at this time."

Although UWW's public response to the controversy stirred up by Viscoli has been to ask those concerned to respect their decision to address Otero County's fundraising efforts as an ongoing 'internal membership discussion', other chapters have been allowed to blatantly ignore that request.

As the Otero County United Way board honored the gag order issued by UWW, they became the silent target of countless disturbing voicemails, faxes, even emails – not only from people hearing the story solely from Viscoli’s biased view, but also from fellow United Way chapters shaming them [for their](#) “callous, ignorant decision to continue with this raffle”. In fact, in one (now deleted) [Tweet](#), the United Way of North Central Florida claimed Otero County was in violation of United Way bylaws:



Despite UWW’s [list of talking points](#) for chapters to refer to when asked about the Otero County matter both internally as well as in the media, one chapter just couldn’t stop talking: Santa Fe.

From feeding reporters at the Los Angeles Times to involving politicians like Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) and rallying groups like Betsy Riot and New Mexicans for Bernie Sanders, they formed a united front to take down Otero County's gun raffle.

And still, UWW continues to turn a blind eye to the fact that Ms. Viscoli's position with New Mexicans to Prevent Gun Violence is a clear conflict of interest with her duties as Chair-Elect of the Santa Fe United Way chapter, especially since she's using her positions to attack both another chapter and the United Way as a whole.

Here's proof: the NMPGV Facebook page is oozing with allegations and flat out attacks against the United Way.

From claiming "the United Way bought the guns" for an AR-15 raffle to raise money for a fallen Hatch, NM officer ([they did not](#)):

New Mexicans to Prevent Gun Violence
23 August at 07:34 · 🌐

Raffle for Hatch officer shot and killed includes an AR-15. #GunCrazy



Efforts begin to support family of slain Hatch officer
Raffles, donations, other fund raisers, cards and letters of condolences now being collected
LCSUN-NEWS.COM

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10 Top comments

Jane Schreiber Insane. Who is in charge of this raffle??
Like · Reply · 1 · 23 August at 22:09

New Mexicans to Prevent Gun Violence United Way bought the guns....
Like · Reply · 23 August at 22:11

To claiming “the winner will sell that firearm for cash” and insinuating the firearms will be sold to criminals with “unsafe hands”:



New Mexicans to Prevent Gun Violence

18 August at 20:57 · 🌐

United Way Worldwide just approved a firearms raffle that would raffle off over 100 firearms into this community. One of those firearms is a Barret m95.50 worth over \$5000.00. My guess is the winner will sell that firearm for cash. We don't have background checks on private sales in New Mexico. Hope that gun does not end up in unsafe hands. Go United Way Worldwide?



Sheriff's Office deputies probe fatal shooting on Riata

Otero County Sheriff's Office deputies continue their investigation of the fatal shooting death of Christopher Wood.

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👍👎👤 18

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To posting UWW CEO Brian Gallagher's information in a call-to-arms, telling people the "pressure is working" and directing them to "keep calling and emailing" the United Way:



New Mexicans to Prevent Gun Violence

26 August at 19:25 · 🌐



WOW! President of United Way World Wide actually admits to the Los Angeles Times that the Otero firearms raffle goes against the United Way license agreement. Yet, United Way Worldwide is still allowing the firearms raffle to continue? Pressure is working. Keep calling and emailing United Way World Wide.

CALL: 703-836-7112

EMAIL: Brian.Gallagher@uww.unitedway.org

TWEET: @BGallagherUW




Things you never expected to see: The United Way is raising money by raffling assault-style rifles

The United Way's mission statement is pretty straightforward: It "improves lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities around the world to advance the..."

LATIMES.COM | BY LOS ANGELES TIMES

Interestingly enough, she's bold enough to list herself as the owner of the New Mexicans to Prevent Gun Violence Facebook page.



New Mexicans to Prevent Gun Violence
@NewMexicansForGunSafety

- Home
- About**
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Create a Page

Page Info

Milestones

PAGE INFO	
Start date	Founded in January 2013
Short description	New Mexicans to Prevent Gun Violence(NMPGV) is a 501(3) non-partisan organization whose sole purpose is the prevention of gun violence in New Mexico.
Long description	New Mexicans to Prevent Gun Violence does not promote gun ownership or shooting sports. WE DO strongly advocate that all those who own a gun be trained, sober, and focused on safety at all times.
General Information	New Mexicans to Prevent Gun Violence does not promote gun ownership or shooting sports. WE DO strongly advocate that all those who own a gun be trained, sober, and focused on safety at all times.
Mission	New Mexicans to Prevent Gun Violence is a 501(3) non-partisan organization whose sole purpose is the prevention of gun violence in New Mexico. We work through grassroots mobilization to promote reasonable gun violence prevention laws as well as to educate the public about gun safety and the high emotional and financial costs of gun related violence against children and adults.
Awards	Muchas Gracias Award
Email address	mviscoli@yahoo.com
Website	http://www.newmexicanstopreventgunviolence.org

Ouch.

Can you imagine how long you'd keep your position if you did this to *your* boss? Unless he was a willing participant in the big picture goal of the agenda, of course.

Continuing to Speak Out of Both Sides of Their Mouth

As Viscoli continued to push her gun control agenda personally, professionally she saw the Santa Fe chapter issue yet [another statement](#) on August 26th, this time claiming to be innocent victims in the battle against Otero County, claiming, "Recently, we have been thrust into the discussion of guns in our community." This is an interesting claim, considering Miranda Viscoli is solely responsible for igniting this "discussion" where there was none previously.

“A United Way organization in southeastern New Mexico has launched a fundraising event that includes raffling over 100 firearms, including a military-grade assault rifle and a sniper rifle. We adamantly oppose United Way fundraising efforts that include this type of raffle. Increased access to guns, especially military-grade weapons, is in direct conflict to our mission.”

Speaking of the United Way’s mission, within the statement UWW CEO Brian Gallagher issued to all chapters is a very telling line. In it, he said:

“Through our discussions with Otero and others, it became apparent to us that this issue was perhaps occurring in a few other isolated instances throughout our network. We are therefore taking the necessary, but immediate, steps to further clarify the bylaws around this issue so that we can operate with consistency network-wide moving forward.”

That’s right, the United Way Worldwide Chief Executive Officer claimed he had no prior knowledge of any other United Way ever using firearms in their fundraising efforts. No knowledge of this. None. Nada.

Now, let’s use Google, shall we?

- The Kennett Chapter of the United Way in Dunklin, Missouri routinely holds [gun raffles](#) as part of its fundraising efforts.
- The Nolan County United Way in Sweetwater, Texas has also [raised money](#) this way [for years](#).
- Southwestern Energy conducted a firearms raffle for Wyoming County United Way in connection with its “Marcellus Sporting Clays Shoot” [in 2013](#).
- The Danville Plant of Caterpillar raised \$32,000 for the Danville, Kentucky Chapter of the United Way, at least partially [through the auction](#) of a “Golden Boy Rifle”.
- Currently, the United Way Volunteer Center of the Greater St. Louis United Way promotes, and encourages sponsorship for, [a firearm raffle](#) for one of its recipient agencies, Emmanus Homes.
- In 2015, the United Way of Randolph County announced that it had reached its \$155,000 fundraising goal from events “[such as a gun raffle](#) and community fundraising challenge”.

- Marathon Petroleum conducts an annual trap shoot in Robinson, Illinois called, most recently, the “10th Annual United Way Trap Shoot” in which participants “bid on live and silent [auctions to win hunting items](#),” and “vied for ownership of a new gun” to benefit the local United Way. They have also sponsored many other firearms-related fundraisers for the United Way including a [four-day skeet shoot](#) in Texas.

Does anyone truly believe United Way Worldwide had no prior knowledge of any of these events before the Santa Fe Chair-Elect put Otero County in her crosshairs?

Not likely.

Their Way Is United Against Gun Rights

It's no coincidence that Ms. Viscoli's gun control group's co-president is an [avid Hillary supporter](#) and it's no secret Mrs. Bill Clinton is running her presidential campaign on gun control. Viscoli and Plame are clearly jockeying for a possible position with the administration if Clinton wins in November, and United Way Worldwide is a willing backseat driver in their race to the White House.

If you're a gun owner, a Second Amendment supporter or a Constitutionalist, I strongly urge you to not only take the United Way Worldwide's actions here in consideration the next time your local United Way asks you for a donation, but to tell others how they're allowing one of their own to be served up as a sacrificial lamb to the gun control agenda. I'll leave you with my open response to the United Way Worldwide:

Hi Jenn-

Hope you are well. Per your note below, we are not able to do an interview, but can offer this statement:

"At this time, this continues to be an internal discussion about membership guidelines between United Way Worldwide and its member organizations."

Best regards,

Ryan Powers
Vice President, Communications
United Way Worldwide

Thank you Ryan,

I appreciate your response and respect your position, however it's difficult to accept it knowing that others, specifically Miranda Viscoli with the Santa Fe United Way, are spoon-feeding reporters information for articles like the one published with the Los Angeles Times while continuing to spread libelous claims via social media through a third party. Does UWW condone these actions? Your own members are continuing to make this "internal discussion" a public matter despite what you say in a canned response; therefore I feel it is necessary to press you further for clarification of what they're putting out in the world.

What about the tweets from the North Central Florida United Way claiming Otero County violated UWW's bylaws? Is this how you conduct "internal discussions"? Your CEO was tagged on that tweet by the chapter who tweeted it. Is this common practice?

Do you feel Ms. Viscoli's position with the gun control group New Mexicans to Prevent Gun Violence poses a conflict of interest with her duties as Chair-Elect of the NM chapter, as it pertains to the assault she started through SFUW against Otero County?

What about the other 12+ chapters who have and continue to have gun raffles for over a decade, is UWW attempting to deny all knowledge of this behavior?

Does the United Way support Ms. Viscoli's NMPGV Facebook page claiming the United Way provided the guns for a raffle benefitting a slain Hatch, NM police officer? Not Otero County, "***the United Way bought the guns....***" is written beneath an article posted on the wall of a Facebook page your Santa Fe chapter's Chair-Elect runs.

Your response to members of the media is that this is an internal matter, however by allowing your own members to continue to blanket social media and news articles with whatever information they feel like putting out there, it is *clearly* the UWW's intention to keep this issue in the public eye. I'm not expecting a response from you on any of my questions, but I do hope you see the gross hypocrisy of it all.

I see it, and I think other people definitely need to see it as well.

Sincerely,

Jenn Jacques
Editor, Bearing Arms

