

News Release 2011

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For more information, contact:

Peter Theisen, United Way of Whatcom County, ptheisen@unitedwaywhatcom.org, (360)733-8670

UNITED WAY OF WHATCOM COUNTY REACHES CAMPAIGN GOAL, THANKS COMMUNITY FOR SUPPORT

United Way of Whatcom County celebrated another successful campaign year by honoring both new and returning supporters for raising over \$2.045 million, the 3rd largest amount in United Way of Whatcom County's history. The goal was \$2 million. In addition, a new program, The Community Builder Program, raised \$80,000 prior to the Campaign to specifically cover Campaign costs.

Award nominees and campaign supporters gathered for the annual Campaign Celebration and Awards Banquet held on April 21, 2011, at the Best Western Lakeway Inn. The evening gave thanks to the many people and organizations that made this great feat possible.

Overall, United Way increased donations by \$140,000 compared to last year's campaign, and had over 4,800 participating donors.

"The results speak for themselves. We had a really good campaign this year, and the community really stepped up," said Peter Theisen, President of United Way of Whatcom County. "Demand for services is at an all-time high and state funding is under pressure, so it's nice that we can fill in the gap."

At Thursday's Awards Banquet, a total of 26 organizations were honored with awards for exceptional participation and contributions. Jane Tromburg was honored for volunteering her time as Campaign Coordinator for the Bellingham School District, she visited all 23 schools encouraging participation and increased their campaign dollars by 33%. For Patron of the Year US Bank was honored for their achievements and above and beyond support.

PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center was given the award for Excellence in Sustained support. Their campaign is annually in the top 3, their level of support ranges from volunteers on United Way's Fund Distribution Committee to a large level of Leadership Donors (individuals who contribute over \$1,000 per year). The most prestigious award of the evening was the Joseph and Ann McClain award, named after long-time benefactor and retired UPS employee Joseph McClain. This award was given to BP Cherry Point Refinery who engaged a large group of their employees to volunteer, raised more than any other participating organization, acted as a Campaign Sponsor, and increased their average gift by 17.5%. For a full list of the award winners, please visit www.unitedwaywhatcom.org

A major success in the Campaign was a new program introduced to increase the amount of United Way of Whatcom County funds that go directly to the community. The Community Builder Program engaged local businesses to sponsor the Campaign. Companies were invited to loan out an employee, or donate funds enabling United Way of Whatcom County to hire temporary employees to run the Campaign. Through this program the costs of the Campaign are covered, more money is able to go back to the community, creating a more effective and efficient fundraising effort.

“Keeping our overhead low and distributing the most possible funds to make positive impacts in our community is our top priority. The Community Builder Program will allow us to stretch dollars, support important opportunities, and create a healthier community,” said Theisen.

The two-month long campaign that took place last fall raises funds for the Community Safety Net, a fund overseen by 60 experts, leaders and volunteers in our community. This committee of citizens reviews programs and makes funding decisions based on: the agency's use of allocated funds, assurance that funding meets real community needs and that the programs deliver long term measurable results.

Over 45 programs at 30 non-profit Partner Agencies are funded by Community Safety Net dollars. All programs address important current needs in Whatcom County by supporting education, income, and health. Funds from the Campaign will help 1 in 4 Whatcom County residents. Here are just a few examples of how these dollars will make difference:

- Help over 400 homeless families obtained housing through the Opportunity Council's Homeless Housing program
- Support the 829,000 lbs of food that will be distributed at the Bellingham Food Bank
- Help the Boys & Girls Club serve over 750 youth and teens in Power Hour, a program designed to expand the educational opportunities of low-income and minority students and students who are reading below their grade level
- Ensure that over 50,000 individuals are provided with support group resources from the Heath Support Center
- Support over 1,000 visits from Interfaith Community Health Center's Mobile Dental Clinic

It has been overwhelming and heartwarming to see how our community has once again stepped up in a time of need and in spite of tough economic times, Jeff Pitzer, 2010 campaign chair, said. “I know I speak for all the Partner Agencies when I say ‘Thank you Whatcom County’.”

United Way of Whatcom County is a proud 4 star rated charity on Charity Navigator that has worked for over 50 years to increase financial resources for local health and human service needs, and to seek and invest in community-building opportunities to improve the health and welfare of Whatcom County residents.

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