

News Release 2016

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UNITED WAY GETS AHEAD OF THE ISSUES WITH THREE NEWLY FUNDED PARTNERS – 700 MORE PEOPLE TO BE SERVED

Pictures from programs available upon request – see below

Bellingham, WA - United Way of Whatcom County announced that they will be serving 100,000 people this year with the addition of 700 more people through newly funded projects in order to get ahead of crucial issues in our community.

Three years ago United Way of Whatcom County began switching their alignment to focus efforts and funds towards projects and programs that get in front of the issues to ensure all children are prepared for school, that teens graduate, that families have food on the table and a roof overhead, and that all individuals are healthy and avoid risky behaviors. This opened the door to partner with new and innovative programs while still continuing long-term relationships with proven legacy programs that are all working towards the same goals. United Way recently announced that they will be investing in a total of 35 programs, many of them long-term proven partnerships.

Decisions Were Based on Helping ALICE and those in Poverty

Current research through United Way's ALICE (Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed) study shows that 18% of Whatcom County households are living below the poverty line and 24% of households are in the ALICE category, working but still unable to make ends meet. That means that 42% of our community is struggling, which impacts all of us. When those below the ALICE threshold are doing better, we all benefit from a stronger economy, less crime, and healthier and better prepared children and families. United Way is focused on lifting up ALICE and those in poverty to create a stronger community for us all. Based on this focus, a total of 35 programs were chosen by local volunteers to receive grants, including three programs that have never before been funded by United Way of Whatcom County. Grants were decided based on the program's ability to be preventative and get ahead of the issues, giving children the best start possible, and breaking cycles of poverty. Newly funded programs include: Lydia Place's Parent Support Program, Mercy Housing Northwest's Service Enriched Farmworker Housing Program, and Rebound of Whatcom County's Rebound Roots Program.

Parent Support Program – Lydia Place

The Parent Support Program was launched in 2015 by Lydia Place and has been so successful that it has had a waiting list since its inception. United Way of Whatcom County has been a long-time partner with Lydia Place, supporting other programs run by the organization, and was excited at the opportunity to be part of expanding this new and successful program. The Parent Support Program focuses on strengthening the parent-child relationship, providing parent coaching and hands-on tools, developmental screenings, and tailored resources. The objective is to increase positive childhood outcomes such as physical and mental health, positive self-image, and success in educational programs. Studies have shown that children receiving these types of services show greater school readiness when compared to their peers. Many of the clients have experienced homelessness and other difficult situations and the tools and guidance provided by the Parent Support Program is crucial to reducing trauma for the children and breaking the cycles of abuse and poverty. United Way funds will help expand this program from 20 participants to 55.

Service-Enriched Farm Worker Housing through Mercy Housing Northwest

Mercy Housing Northwest's Service-Enriched Farm Worker Housing Program provides a wide range of supportive services designed to promote affordable housing, education, healthy lifestyles, and overall skill building. By providing farm worker families an affordable home Mercy Housing Northwest helps give their children the stability they need to succeed in school and is able to offer a variety of other services on-site. For the past four years, 100% of the youth at Sterling Meadows (the local Whatcom County site) have graduated on time. This year, not only are they all graduating but they are all moving onto higher education. Recent studies like United Way's ALICE study and the Prosperity Project show that low-income residents of Whatcom County continue to struggle to find safe, affordable housing. According to US Census data, 56% of renters in Whatcom County are burdened by the high cost of housing, spending more than 30% of their household income on rent. This makes it more difficult for them to meet other basic needs, such as food, healthcare and education. Through this new partnership, United Way will help 240 clients achieve stability and be lifted out of poverty.

Rebound Roots through Rebound of Whatcom County

The third newly funded program, Rebound of Whatcom County's Rebound Roots, provides parents and their children side-by-side support to encourage positive behavior, classes that teach positive coping skills, anger management, self-awareness techniques, and communication skills for children and families dealing with behavioral and emotional issues. They have a very high success rate with 90% who attend the parent classes showing a modest to significant increase in parenting confidence. Multiple studies show that trauma early in life can lead to a variety of issues later on such as depression, substance abuse, and anxiety. In fact, more than one-in-four youth in Whatcom County experience serious depressive symptoms, and approximately one in six youth contemplate suicide. With United Way's grant Rebound Root's will be able to provide expanded support for 400 children and their families on their path toward health and healing, and successful integration into social settings.

30+ Long-Time Program Partners

Not only is United Way of Whatcom County partnering with these three new programs, but will also be continuing support for several long-time programs. Here are some examples of the great programs they will be supporting this year:

- Affordable Childcare at the Bellingham Child Care and Learning Center
- Academic Success and Healthy Lifestyles Programs at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Whatcom County
- Child care and after school programs at the Whatcom Family YMCA
- Food Distribution at the Bellingham Food Bank
- Transitional Housing at Northwest Youth Services
- Literacy Tutoring for Adults through the Whatcom Literacy Center
- Child Abuse Prevention through Brigid Collins Family Support Center
- Senior Nutrition at the Whatcom Council on Aging
- Abuse recovery and housing services through Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services of Whatcom County

These are just some examples of the many programs United Way of Whatcom County is partnering with, check out unitedwaywhatcom.org for the full list of partners. In addition to these funded programs, United Way of Whatcom County also provides the FamilyWize Prescription Discount Program, Kindergarten Readiness Calendars for all pre-kindergarten children, and is the fiscal sponsors of Project Homeless Connect. More projects and programs will receive support throughout the year.

Local Donations to United Way of Whatcom County Made all of this Possible

The funds for these grants, and all of United Way’s work, is made possible by local donations from individuals, businesses, and organizations to United Way of Whatcom County’s Annual Campaign. Overall recently \$343,380 was granted to Education programs and projects, \$316,536 was granted to Financial Stability programs and projects, and \$266,175 was granted to Health programs and projects. More United Way of Whatcom County program investments and sponsorships will happen throughout the year and another \$169,000 will be contributed to donor specified programs.

About United Way of Whatcom County

United Way of Whatcom County’s mission is to improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of our communities to advance the common good through Education, Income, and Health. They provide leadership that galvanizes and connects a diverse set of individuals and institutions, and mobilize human and financial resources, to create long-term social change by advancing Education, Income, and Health for all. United Way of Whatcom County’s goals for the community involve: helping children/youth achieve their potential through academic success, ensuring individuals/families achieve financial stability and economic independence, and building individuals who are healthy and avoid risky behaviors. To learn more about United Way of Whatcom County visit www.unitedwaywhatcom.org or check out their Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/UnitedWayWhatcom>

The following pictures are available for your use upon request:

Parent Support – Lydia Place



Service-enriched - Mercy Housing



Rebound Roots - Rebound

