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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UNITED WAY SPONSORS UNIQUE HOMELESS IN BELLINGHAM FILM PROJECT

Bellingham – United Way of Whatcom County is partnering with the Whatcom Homeless Service Center to sponsor a Homeless in Bellingham film project. United Way of Whatcom County recently adopted new goals, has refined its focus, and has opened up funding and collaborations to new partners and new ideas in order to move the needle on current community conditions. With this new direction in mind, the United Way Board of Directors unanimously voted in favor of supporting this unique and informative look in to an issue that affects everyone in Whatcom County, homelessness.

The Homeless in Bellingham film project is designed to raise the level of discourse and understanding about the variety of issues involved in homelessness in an engaging way. There are many misconceptions and myths about homelessness as well as a high level of demand for solutions to this issue. Currently in Whatcom County there are approximately 560 people that are homeless, 17% of them are under the age of 10. Thanks to several community partners, including United Way, focusing efforts on ending homelessness in Whatcom County, there has been a 30% drop in the local homeless rate. In order to ensure these efforts are continued, the video series will increase knowledge of the issue while showing a variety of viewpoints.

"Homelessness challenges all of us to examine who we are as neighbors and as a community. This video series is designed to help everyone who lives here gain a deeper understanding about this complex social issue," said Greg Winter, Director of the Whatcom Homeless Housing Service Center, "These short films address fundamental questions: Why are so many people homeless? Who are they? Why should we care? What are we doing about it? We look forward to using these videos to actively engage civic organizations, neighborhoods, and faith communities in this compelling discussion."

Each episode in the series will be designed to highlight one or more particular homeless subpopulations or issues and they are each designed to be unique in their look and feel. Future episodes will focus on the diversity of people who are homeless in our community (youth, men, women, LGBTQ, young families, etc..) and issues (concerns of the downtown business community, cost-effectiveness of reducing homelessness, effective solutions, etc...). Each episode will be no longer than four minutes and will give voice to people who

are homeless and to members of the community who have concerns about the issues and solutions associated with homelessness.

“United Way of Whatcom County is focusing efforts to increase safe, stable, and affordable housing in order to ensure self-sufficiency for local residents,” said Peter Theisen, President/CEO of United Way of Whatcom County, “When homelessness is reduced the entire community benefits in the form of decreased crime, less emergency room visits, and less tax payer dollars spent on incarceration. We are so excited to be part of this video series which will shed some light on the complex topic of homelessness and will give us all a glimpse in to the lives of individuals who are homeless and the success stories of individuals who have overcome homelessness.”

To view the first videos in the Homeless in Bellingham film series visit www.whatcomhsc.org. For more information on United Way of Whatcom County’s work visit www.unitedwaywhatcom.org.

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. They provide leadership that galvanizes and connects a diverse set of individuals and institutions, and mobilizes 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>

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