

## Op-Ed 2014

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### MILLS ELECTRIC – A PROUD UNITED WAY PARTNER

100+ years. That's how long Mills Electric has been part of Whatcom County. In that time our company has been part of building a vibrant community by working on projects at Bellingham Technical College, Whatcom Hospice House, the refineries, Sunnycrest Elementary, and many others. But in addition to these projects, we have also been a long-time partner with United Way of Whatcom County to build a stronger community through advancing Education, Income, and Health.

When Mills Electric was established in 1911 by Howard O. Mills, we specialized in commercial service work and appliance repair. Over time the scope was expanded to the industrial and marine sectors. Now Mills Electric provides complete electrical solutions including planning and preconstruction, virtual design, prefabrication, 24hr maintenance/service, just to name a few. We are proud to have more than 150 employees and to be committed to safety and quality. Our work and scope have grown over time but our commitment to the community remains top priority, which is why we support United Way of Whatcom County.

Over the last few years United Way of Whatcom County has grown and changed, just like Mills Electric, in an effort to better address community issues and be at the forefront of crucial community change. After extensive research and community conversations, United Way of Whatcom County has dedicated their mission to advancing Education, Income, and Health for all right here in Whatcom County. In order to do this they have chosen specific goals and are using strategies to ensure change and grow opportunities. Their partners are all working in the same direction guided by data and a drive to move the dial on issues like access to early learning, the graduation rate, homelessness, financial stability, and ensuring healthy and active lives. These issues affect us all. Increasing the graduation rate increases the amount of prepared and skilled workers for the workforce. Increasing financial stability creates economic sustainability and less strain on the taxpayer system. And we all win when our friends and neighbors are living healthy and active lives.

Because United Way of Whatcom County is dedicated to local issues and has their finger on the pulse of what is affecting our community, Mills Electric has been pleased to run a United Way work-place giving campaign each year. This type of campaign gives our employees the chance to be part of something big, something that is creating change and improving our community where we all live, work, and play.

We were honored to receive the Spirit of United Way Award last year for our efforts on our work-place giving campaign. This award is given to a company who embodies the essence of United Way, jumping in to give, advocate, and volunteer whenever possible while running a great campaign. Our staff showed their generosity and increased our total giving by

40% over the previous year. Not only do our employees contribute generously but as a company we also provide a corporate gift to show our support.

At Mills Electric we are always working to improve on company processes in order to better our finished product for our clients, and United Way of Whatcom County is also growing and changing to ensure the best possible outcomes for our community. Over the years I have seen United Way of Whatcom County move to a more flexible and adaptable funding process to ensure that they are working with the most current groups that are focused on the same goals. They have also taken on projects to enhance their program support such as: being fiscal sponsors for Project Homeless Connect, producing a free kindergarten readiness calendar for more than 6,000+ Whatcom County families, and participating in the FamilyWize prescription drug discount program. This commitment to grow and change and to ensure an impact on the community is directly in line with our culture and focus at Mills Electric and it's why we are committed partners to United Way.

I am personally so proud of our employees and the culture of giving that we have at Mills Electric and I invite you to join me in giving to this effort. Your gift to United Way of Whatcom County's Community Impact Fund will increase caps & gowns, ensure that families have a place to call home, and will ensure safe, healthy and active living. If your workplace offers a United Way Campaign, please participate and make your contribution to the Community Impact Fund. If your work place does not offer a United Way Campaign, I encourage you to consider starting one. It's fun, it's easy, and it makes a measurable difference in our community. If you would like to start a United Way Campaign at your work place, call the United Way office at 733-8670 or check out [www.unitedwaywhatcom.org](http://www.unitedwaywhatcom.org).

The more dollars raised, the more United Way can expand partners and ensure goals are met to create a brighter future for us all. Mills Electric has been part of this community for more than 100 years, and I'm glad that our company is supporting United Way of Whatcom County to ensure that we have a strong and healthy community for the next 100 years. Great things happen when we live united.

John Huntley  
Owner  
Mills Electric

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