

News Release 2014

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UNITED WAY HONORS LOCAL BUSINESSES AND CELEBRATES NEW DIRECTION

Bellingham— With nine different categories of awards and a special presentation on United Way's new focus, the annual awards banquet was truly a time for celebration. The United Way of Whatcom County's event honors the individuals and organizations that made the Fall 2013 Workplace Giving Campaign a success and celebrates the impacts that will be made in the community due to their efforts. The annual event was held at the Silver Reef Event Center on March 13th and highlighted people and organizations that are determined to make a difference in our community.

Super Star awards were given to the top 3 largest campaigns in Whatcom County (in order of largest to smallest): BP Cherry Point Refinery, Phillips 66 Ferndale Refinery, and PeaceHealth Medical Center. Next was the Campaign Coordinator of the Year award. Each participating workplace in the Campaign has a volunteer, a Campaign Coordinator, who takes up the opportunity to run their internal United Way Campaign and inspire their fellow coworkers to give what they can to the effort. This year's Campaign Coordinator of the Year award was presented to Susan Arrigoni whose positive attitude and inspirational message of building a stronger community for all resulted in 100% participation at her workplace, GeoEngineers.

The Community Partner Award was presented to Whatcom Educational Credit Union (WECU) for their extraordinary year-round support of United Way and their commitment to building a better Whatcom County for all. WECU has two committees devoted to social responsibility, their employees have volunteered on the United Way Board of Directors and on the United Way Fund Distribution Committee, they are active participants in the United Way supported Whatcom Asset Building Coalition, and each year their Campaign Coordinator team creates a fun video to support their campaign efforts.

The most prestigious award of the night, The Joseph and Anne McClain award, was presented to the company whose level of support was exceptional and whose campaigns inspired others to the highest levels. This year US Bank was honored with the Joseph and Anne McClain award for their commitment to partnering with their employees to strengthen the community. They held informational sessions at every branch, offered a 1:1 matching gift program, had enthusiastic leadership at multiple levels in the business, and increased their giving by 21% over last year. For a full list of award winners visit unitedwaywhatcom.org.

After awards were handed out, President/CEO of United Way of Whatcom County, Peter Theisen, spoke about the interconnected nature of Education, Income, and Health and how we all benefit from success in these areas. Recently United Way of Whatcom County narrowed in their focus and chose specific goals in these three areas and has been working on a variety of strategies to achieve these goals. One big change is that they opened up their Community Impact program funding to new partners in order to ensure that their work is staying current and working with a variety of groups and concepts to achieve goals in the community.

“Our work focusses on specific goals in Education, Income, and Health. The funds raised from the Campaign effort will be used to increase access to early learning, improve the graduation rate, increase financial stability, ensure healthy and active living, and so much more.,” said Theisen, “These are complex issues and we know that it takes a variety of groups and tactics all moving in the same direction to achieve results. We are excited at the possibilities of collaborating with new partners and continually working to strengthen the community for us all.”

The Workplace Giving Campaign is made possible through the Community Builder Program, which allows companies to sponsor the Campaign through monetary donations or loaning a staff member to participate in the Loaned Executive Professional Development Program. This year there were three individuals loaned and two sponsored. All of them participated in an in-depth training that included improving public speaking, learning about the issues facing our community, improved time management skills, and a variety of other important professional skills. They were then tasked with working with 25-35 local businesses and organizations to support their workplace campaign efforts. The five participants in the program all expressed a renewed understanding of the community as well as an increase in professional skills to bring back to their workplaces. Community Builder Participants included: BP Cherry Point Refinery, Anvil Corporation, Matrix Service, Inc., PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center, Samson Rope, WECU, Boeing Corporation, PowerTek Electric, and Phillips 66 Ferndale Refinery.

The nearly \$2 million raised by this effort will be used to support solutions for current issues affecting our community in the areas of Education, Income, and Health. A team of local volunteers will review programs and conduct site visits in order to grant funds to make progress on goals in Education, Income, and Health. Funds are granted by teams of community volunteers based on current issues, relevancy of the program within the community, and ability to use best practices to help achieve specific community-wide goals. Those interested in participating on the committee are encouraged to contact United Way of Whatcom County.

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>