

UNITED WAY FAQs

Got Questions? We have answers!



UNITED WAY
Whatcom County

1. Why should I give to the United Way Community Impact Fund and not directly to an individual charity?

Here are three great reasons:

- 1.) 100% of your donation stays local to help Whatcom County individuals and families!
- 2.) Programs are vetted and dollars are allocated according to community goals and needs.
- 3.) 1 donation supports 24 local nonprofits all working together to tackle the most pressing issues.

No one agency can fix complicated problems like homelessness, poverty, domestic violence, and addiction, and a family in need may be turning to multiple programs for support. Giving to United Way's Community Impact Fund allows you to give to a comprehensive network of vetted programs and agencies all at once, stretching your dollars as far as they can possibly go.

Did you know? United Way partner agencies go through a thorough vetting process that includes United Way staff, Board, and community volunteers before receiving funding, so you can feel good knowing your dollars will be invested wisely.

2. How much of my money stays in Whatcom County?

All of it! There are over 1,000 United Ways doing good in over 30 countries! Each local United Way gets to focus on the critical issues facing their own community. Only programs operating in our community are eligible for funding from United Way of Whatcom County. We believe in creating strong kids, families, and neighborhoods right here at home— where we live, work, and play.

Did you know? United Way is a community driven organization. Local businesses, organizations, and volunteers help raise and distribute dollars invested right here in Whatcom County.



3. I live in the county. How does United Way support my friends and neighbors?

Great question! There's a reason we're called United Way of Whatcom County. We are dedicated to serving everyone in our community and are always looking for ways to grow and expand our reach. We are working with a variety of programs that serve areas all over the county. Here are some of the amazing services provided county-wide:

- Books mailed to children from birth to age five through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Children from every zip code in Whatcom County are represented in our enrollment numbers.
- Support for students throughout Whatcom County from Communities in Schools
- Essential childcare, youth programs, and food delivery services through the Whatcom Family YMCA
- Home visits for children with developmental delays from Whatcom Center for Early Learning
- Food storage and distribution to county food banks via the Bellingham Food Bank
- Fresh food options for hungry families from the Ferndale Food Bank
- Child abuse prevention, trauma advocacy, and parenting support services through Brigid Collins
- Literacy tutoring for adults from the Whatcom Literacy Council
- Food delivery services for homebound seniors through Meals on Wheels
- Domestic violence and sexual assault prevention services through DVSAS
- Academic assistance for underserved students in all Whatcom County school districts from FuturesNW
- Resources to promote student success through Bellingham and Ferndale Family Resource Centers
- Mental health services for individuals throughout the county from Animals as Natural Therapy
- Affordable medical, dental, mental health, and pharmacy services from Unity Care NW

Did you know? Over 50,000 people in Whatcom County benefit from United Way funded programs every year.. Chances are you know someone who has been helped.

4. What about overhead? Should I be concerned?

This is a very common question for nonprofits. Why? Because people care deeply about the causes they give to and want to make sure they are making a maximum impact with their dollars.

In the for-profit world, overhead is accepted as the cost of doing business, and very few people ask what a company's overhead is when making a purchase. But nonprofit organizations are often held to a completely different standard. Imagine trying change the world with no budget for an office, staff, technology, or other everyday expenses. How much could you accomplish?

United Way of Whatcom County's investment in infrastructure allows us to hire a dedicated, long-term staff (5 employees), maintain an office, comply with annual audits and other financial oversight, and fund a network of nonprofit agencies doing amazing work here in Whatcom County.

United Way of Whatcom County has achieved the highest ratings on both [Candid](#) (Platinum!) and [Charity Navigator](#) (Four Stars!). These

charity watchdog groups evaluate nonprofit organizations annually for efficiency and transparency.

Did you know? United Way goes through a rigorous audit process every year, so you can have confidence your donations are being well spent.



5. I don't see my favorite organization on the list of funded programs. What happened?

The organization you're looking for may not have applied for funding this year. Perhaps they shifted their programs to new areas of impact. Community needs may also have shifted. And it's quite possible there just weren't enough dollars to go around.

[Decisions about which programs to fund aren't easy.](#) Our Community Impact Panel carefully evaluates each request to determine if and how a particular program fits into our goals, what the long-term outcomes are, and what level of funding we can provide. As a result, the list of programs and agencies we fund will change from year to year, depending on community needs and priorities.

United Way is constantly striving to find, support, and invest in the best long-term solutions to bring people out of poverty and into healthier, more stable situations. We truly believe this benefits not just those we help, but all of us as a community.

Did you know? Our group of partner agencies changes as the needs in our community change. The more money we raise, the more great programs we can support!

6. I Want to give directly to Dolly Parton's Imagination Library or a partner agency. Can I do that?

Yes! While most people donate to the Community Impact Fund that supports 24 local nonprofits plus early learning and literacy all at once, there is an option to direct a portion of your gift to the Imagination Library or another agency.

If you want to direct dollars to Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, simply let us know on your giving form. To restrict your gift to a partner agency or other nonprofit 501(c)(3), contact our office at 360-733-8670.

- The nonprofit you choose must be a qualified 501(c)(3)
- A minimum donation of \$100 is required
- Find more information about designated gifts [here](#)

One thing to note: Depending on the 501(c)(3) organization you choose, your donation may not stay local, and the agency may not go through United Way of Whatcom County's vetting process.

Did you know? 100% of donations to United Way of Whatcom County's Community Impact Fund stay local to support a network of agencies right here in Whatcom County.