

United Way of Southeast Alaska

2015 ANNUAL REPORT

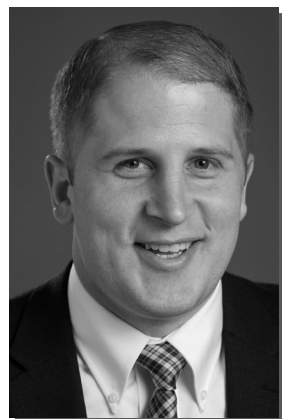


A
Bridge
to a
brighter
future

GIVE
ADVOCATE
VOLUNTEER

Chair's Message from Rustan Burton

Chairman of the Board of Directors for United Way of Southeast Alaska



Wow, what a great year! I know, those aren't words we often hear in southeast Alaska, but for United Way of Southeast Alaska, it was a great year. It is impressive to see so many of our partners and supporters come together to make great things happen during a time where there were fewer resources and a lot of uncertainty. So, perhaps you will find it a breath of fresh air to hear about the many accomplishments that were a result of the hard work of the United Way staff, Board, Partner Agencies, and especially our donors. Here are a few of the highlights:

-Campaign contributions were up by 16% from 2013 to 2014. This is huge! Thank you!

-\$30,000 in Community Impact grants were awarded to 12 agencies across Southeast Alaska. This was a 100% increase.

-\$198,924 was raised for our partner agencies, a 4% increase. This is so important given the challenges so many nonprofits are facing today.

-Our Cruise for a Cause event with Martin Buser sold out and over \$31,000 was raised -nearly 3 times what we raised the year before.

-Our Day of Caring event resulted in 55 people from 8 work places completing 10 service projects for our partner agencies.

-The Reading Tutors program is now in three elementary schools-Riverbend, Harbor View, and Gastineau. A huge thank you goes to Coeur Alaska for their contributions to make this valuable program happen. Thank you as well to our tutors and our Reading Tutor Coordinator Lisa Worl. Their efforts and participation have made a difference in the lives of the students they worked with this school year.

In addition to all those incredible results, we managed to get involved with several other local projects and initiatives such as United Way's participation in the Food Resources Group, endeavoring to bring together organizations addressing food insecurity in our community, and the "Paper Tigers" film premier, on which we collaborated with the Alaska Children's Trust, the Association for Education of Children and Youth, Juneau Youth Services, the Zach Gordon Youth Center and Yaakoosge Daakahidi High School. The film provided insights into the level of impact trauma-informed practices can have on our children and youth. The movie explores the impacts of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and how the power of resiliency helps youth overcome these adversities.

Internally, we made a big push on getting our committees up and running, or running more effectively. We felt like more work needed to be done at the committee level in order for us to be successful. The committees responded and did a great job by identifying ways to grow our annual events like Cruise for a Cause, and working as a whole to develop the strategic plan that led us to grow our annual campaign results. I think the results tell us that was a good strategic move. In addition, we saw good things happening with other local events we were involved in like the Juneau Rotary Brewfest, the Preparedness Expo, and the "Paper Tigers" film.

I hope you feel good about these results, and I hope you realize that our success as an organization is because of your generosity and willingness to help. I know that people's lives are better because of what you have contributed to those efforts. So thank you from all of us at United Way of Southeast Alaska.

Finally, a big thank you as well to our board members and the United Way staff. They have done so much to help push and pull for the cause. Thank you!

Rustan Burton

2014-2015 Local Campaign Pledges to Agencies

United Way of Southeast Alaska, \$139,578.27
 Community Impact Agenda \$30,745.4
 Education \$8,465.42
 Health \$4,711.92
 Income \$8,029.9

Agency Name

*Advocates for Victims of Violence, Inc
 *Kodiak Women's Resource and Crisis Center
 *St. Vincent de Paul Society
 *Kenai Peninsula United Way
 *United Way of Anchorage
 Aiding Women in Abuse & Rape Emergencies
 Alaskan AIDS Assistance Association
 American Red Cross of Alaska
 Assn for the Education of Young Children
 Big Brothers Big Sisters of Alaska
 Boy Scouts of America, Great Alaska Council
 Boys & Girls Clubs of Alaska SE
 Brave Heart Volunteers
 Cancer Connection
 Catholic Community Service
 CCS - Hospice & Home Care

Total Designation

\$3,800
 \$345
 \$800
 \$5
 \$533
 \$24,932.90
 \$202.56
 \$1,815
 \$3,505.32
 \$3,205.77
 \$905
 \$2,065.37
 \$723.31
 \$4,335.62
 \$14,079.47
 \$5,015.47

CCS - Southeast Senior Services \$1,600
 Front Street Community Health Center \$506.67
 Gastineau Human Services \$4,477.54
 Girl Scouts of Alaska \$2,437.62
 The Glory Hole \$26,437.9
 Helping Hands \$6,041.77
 Hospice of Haines \$1,254
 Juneau Family Health and Birth Center \$2,716.15
 Ketchikan Youth Initiatives \$703.88
 Love INC Juneau \$2,684
 Planned Parenthood of the Great NW \$2,290.50
 REACH, Inc. \$5,732.26
 SERRC: The Learning Connection \$2,739.06
 Sitka Counseling and Prevention \$142.65
 Sitkans Against Family Violence \$3,817.74
 Southeast Alaska Food Bank \$23,180.90
 Southeast Alaska Guidance Association (SAGA) \$362.32
 Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL) \$10,642.42
 Wildflower Court \$7,251.47
 Women In Safe Homes (WISH) \$1,120.92

*Indicates non-partner agency

2015 Cruise for a Cause

By Sara Truitt

Each May, United Way of Southeast Alaska sets sail with Allen Marine for our annual Cruise for a Cause Fundraiser. It is an opportunity for our organization to celebrate the importance of early child literacy, a cause dear to the heart of our United Way and supported throughout the year through a generous grant from Coeur Alaska, and the volunteer work of community members who take time out of their busy schedules to tutor young children right here in Juneau.

In 2015 we were thrilled to host Iditarod Champion Martin Buser as our featured speaker. Mr. Buser did a fantastic job regaling guests with stories of his experiences on the trail, as well as his experience as a father who instilled within his children a lifelong love of reading and learning.

The weather was on our side for this event,

providing clear blue skies and plentiful sunshine. Thanks to the hard work of our Board members Kelli Grummett, Rosemary Hagevig and Sue Bill, it also marked the first year that United Way was able to hold a silent auction during the event. Businesses near and far donated all kinds of auction items, from a trip aboard a helicopter to view the Mendenhall Glacier – to an exotic African safari in South Africa. It was a wonderful evening of stimulating conversation, dinner and relaxation, surrounded by the natural beauty of Southeast Alaska.

United Way of Southeast Alaska hosts this event each year in May. Keep an eye out for tickets sales on our website every April! www.unitedwayseak.org

Alaska 2-1-1

We all know how important it is to have the right information at the right time.

Oftentimes, the struggles that families and individuals face can appear suddenly and without warning. Services that you never expected to need before might become necessary to the health and safety of your family. When you're in trouble, sometimes it's hard to know where to turn.

Just as we know to dial 9-1-1 for an emergency, or 4-1-1 for phone information, Alaskans can dial 2-1-1 for immediate referral to critical health and human services. Operators are available from 8am – 5pm Monday through Friday and information is also available online at any time at www.alaska211.org

2-1-1 offers information, free of charge to the caller, on a broad range of services, including rent assistance, food banks, affordable housing, health resources, child care, after-school programs, elderly care, financial literacy, job training programs and more.

In 2015, Alaska 2-1-1 provided 39,909 phone referrals and recorded 51,307 online searches statewide. The top three caller needs in 2015 were Basic Needs at 34% of all calls, Health/Mental Health Support at 18% of all calls and Employment/Income Help at 10% of all calls.

Requests for Basic Needs and Mental Health/Substance Abuse up in Southeast

In Southeast, Alaska 2-1-1 covers communities within the Haines, Hoonah,-Angoon, Juneau, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Prince of Wales-Hyder, Sitka, Skagway, Valdez-Cordova, Wrangell and Yakutat Boroughs.

In total, Alaska 2-1-1 made a total of 995 referrals within Southeast Alaska last year. The top referral categories for services within the Southeast region were Basic Needs, Health Care, Employment & Income Boosts and Mental Health/Substance Abuse. The top three unmet needs were Transportation – Airfare, Rent/Utility Payment Assistance, and Rent/Utility Deposit Assistance.

Most notable for 2015 was the increase in referrals for Mental Health and Substance Abuse assistance at 67% more than 2014.

Operated by United Way of Anchorage, People should feel confident of being able to call 2-1-1 and reach a trained specialist weekdays Monday- Friday, 8am to 5pm, dial 2-1-1 or 800-478-2221, or answers are available 24/7 online at www.Alaska211.org.

You can now download the Alaska 2-1-1 APP!

On Apple: <http://apple.co/1TszTMi> or on

Android: <http://bit.ly/1YUOYrr>



Allen Marine Catamaran docks at the Orca Point Lodge where guests of the 2015 Cruise for a Cause gathered to learn about the importance of early childhood literacy.



Four-time Iditarod Champion Martin Buser gives a presentation about his time on the trail, his recent publication DOG MAN: Chronicles of an Iditarod Champion, and the importance of instilling children with a lifelong love of reading.



Guests of the 2015 Cruise for a Cause arrive at Allen Marine's Orca Point Lodge for an evening fundraiser for the United Way of Southeast Alaska, devoted to improving childhood literacy rates in Southeast.

Rotary Club of Juneau presents portion of proceeds from Capital City Brewfest to United Way of Southeast Alaska



Board members Millie Ryan and Ann Gifford check in volunteers at the 2015 Capital Brew Fest!

The Rotary Club of Juneau chose United Way of Southeast Alaska as the charity partner for the 2015 Capital City Brewfest. At their December 1st meeting, the Rotary Club of Juneau presented United Way of Southeast Alaska with a check which represented a portion of the proceeds from a very successful Capital City Brewfest.

Both the Juneau Rotary Club and United Way of Southeast Alaska have a focus on literacy. The Rotary Club of Juneau runs the Literacy Line Caboose from which club members provide free age appropriate books to young people in the Juneau community.

United Way runs the LEARN UNITED: Reading Tutor program in partnership with Coeur Alaska. The program connects students in K-2nd grade with a tutor twice a week for 30 minutes of additional reading skill building. Community volunteers work with the students to help them get their reading skills to grade level. Both organizations believe reading is a fundamental skill for future success.

In making the check presentation, John Blasco President of the Rotary Club of Juneau said "We proudly present this \$6,655.69 check to the United Way of Southeast for their partnership and collaboration in the 2015 Capital City Brewfest. United Way of Southeast is a tremendous

community partner and we are so fortunate to have them providing the leadership and contributions back to our communities. Literacy is a key area of focus for both of our organizations, and we know that these funds will have their greatest potential impact going through United Way of Southeast."

"United Way of SE Alaska is pleased to be the non-profit partner for the Juneau Rotary Club's Annual Brewfest event again this year – and it is great to see local Rotarians finding a creative way to raise funds to help those in need," said Bill Peters, United Way of SE Alaska's Treasurer. Funds contributed to United Way create a big impact to folks throughout Juneau and the greater SE Alaska community.

To learn more about United Way and its 32 partner agencies, visit www.unitedwayseak.org. To donate online, visit www.unitedwayseak.org/donate. To volunteer, visit getconnected.unitedwayseak.org.



Resource Development Director Sara Truitt hands off a donation of kids items to Love Inc, one of several United Way nonprofit Partner Agencies to receive a portion of the K.I.D.S distribution. K.I.D.S is made possible in partnership with Cook Inlet Tribal Council and many corporate partners across the state of Alaska. Items are given out to organizations who provide assistance to families with children.

KIDS Shipment – Brightening the Holiday Season

By Sara Truitt

Each fall for the past several years, Cook Inlet Tribal council has worked with United Way of Southeast Alaska to coordinate a shipment of toys and children's clothing to Juneau. Through the generously donated warehouse space and transportation from both World Wide Movers and Lynden, we are able to spread that shipment out to other agencies and communities across southeast.

This past fall, twelve agencies split the shipment between four communities. Children in Juneau, Sitka, Angoon, and Hoonah all received portions of the donated items. The recipient agencies were Sitkans Against Family Violence, Girl Scouts, Big Brother Big Sisters, Sitka Counseling and Prevention Services, Alaskan Aids Assistance, Helping Hands, AWARE, Glacier Valley Elementary, Salvation Army, Catholic Community Services, Love Inc and Zach Gordon Youth Center.

Cook Inlet Tribal Council itself partners with Rasmuson Foundation, Alaska Airlines, O'Neill Properties Inc, TOTE, Carlile Transportation Systems and Northern Air Cargo to put together this great effort. United Way of Southeast Alaska is not the only initial recipient of these items, as several shipments are sent out across the state of Alaska. Historically, the timing of these shipments lines up nicely with the holidays and many of our partner agencies use these items to help line their shelves to assist families in need with making the holidays a little easier on their wallets.

United Way of Southeast Alaska is grateful for such partnerships. It is an ongoing reminder of what it truly means to Live United.

A little goes a long way with United Way of Southeast Alaska

When you are asked to Give, it does not have to mean a financial strain to you or your family. Small amounts add up to big changes. You may never know the impact your contribution had, but our partner agencies are able to tell you, it does go far.

What does \$5.00 a week accomplish?

\$5 a week equals \$260 a year.

You can provide training and support to a Big Brother or Sister who will act as a positive mentor to a young child.

You can sponsor 8 children who will receive a book a month from the Dolly Parton Imagination Library

You can provide a woman seeking safe shelter the opportunity to receive 10 hours of legal advocacy through AWARE

What does \$10 a week accomplish?

\$10 a week equals \$520 a year.

You can provide 3 months of trauma informed counseling for a child suffering the impacts of abuse.

You can pay for all the meals provided during NAMI's Peer-to-Peer education and empowerment program, supporting individuals diagnosed with mental health conditions

You will have helped purchase a round trip plane ticket to Seattle for someone undergoing cancer treatment.

What does \$15 a week accomplish?

\$15 a week equals \$780 a year.

You can send a troop of 9 girls to Girl Scout camp

You can cover training for several volunteers in the school based program of Big Brothers Big Sisters

You can help cover the costs of survivors of domestic violence on Prince of Wales island to be flown to safe shelter.

Additionally, donations to United Way of Southeast Alaska provide grant funding, community collaboration, trainings for nonprofit partners, research, outreach and service events throughout the year.

THANKYOU Southeast Alaska for all of your continued generosity and support!



Above Left: Attendees of the VITA Financial Cent\$ program listen to a presentation on Credit, Money Management and Personal finance.

at Tlingit Haida Regional Housing Authority meets with a community member to help her with her tax preparation. This program was made possible in part through a grant from United Way of Southeast Alaska.

Above Right: Dawn Wesley, the Financial Skills Specialist

THRHA Receives Financial Support for Financial Cent\$

United Way of Southeast Alaska and British Petroleum (BP) donate \$2,500 to the THRHA Voluntary Income Tax Assistance site (VITA) and an additional \$2,500 is donated by United Way of Southeast Alaska and Wells Fargo to the Financial Cent\$ program! THRHA's Financial Cent\$ program provides a vast amount of services to community members with the majority of services being free of charge to clients. The Financial Cent\$ program is based on the belief that financially literate communities create healthy, sustainable, and empowered communities. Financial Cent\$ also supports maintaining sustainable economies by keeping money in the community. The Free Tax Preparation VITA site eliminates the cost of tax preparation, returns those savings to clients and

filters money back into communities. In 2013 the VITA sites prepared 222 tax returns, in 2014 357 tax returns were prepared and this year we are already surpassing those numbers at 355 tax returns prepared with more than a month left in the tax season. The average cost to prepare your tax returns is \$300.00 per person which means clients have saved \$280, 200 to date.

The \$2,500 donated by United Way and BP to the VITA site will help with payment for equipment, supplies, and the cost of travel to Southeast communities. Travel around Southeast communities is costly, so monetary contributions will greatly help with the expansion of THRHA's Free Tax Preparation program.

United Way and Wells Fargo also donated \$2,500 to the Financial Cent\$ program

which will allow for further expansion into more communities in the Southeast Alaska region. The Financial Cent\$ program is a financial literacy advocacy program focused on adult, youth, and community specific education. Classes range from learning about the culture of money, budgeting and savings, to credit, home-ownership and college preparation. THRHA aims to keep this program free program to enhance client self-sufficiency. Donations to the program are immensely appreciated and will provide the Financial Cent\$ program the necessary resources to reach more Alaskans. The donation and support United Way, BP and Wells Fargo, and we look forward to continuing the partnership in the future.

United Way of Southeast Alaska – a Regional Presence

By Sara Truitt

The United Way of Southeast Alaska covers a service area from Yakutat to Ketchikan and everywhere in between. In 2015 we had 32 partner agencies, each doing positive work devoted in the areas of Education, Income, Health – or a combination of the three. Some of these organizations operate in one community, while others operate in multiple Southeast communities.

We all know the challenge of travelling between communities in such a rural and wild place. And we all know the desire to strive for better connectivity among our communities economically, socially, philanthropically, and so on.

Thus it was with great pleasure that United Way of Southeast Alaska was able to reach out to the community of Sitka in 2015 to present about the Fall Giving Campaign to the University of Southeast Alaska Sitka Campus. I was fortunate

to be the one who was able to make the trip in November. It was a wonderful opportunity to share stories about the work that United Way of Southeast Alaska pursues under the impact areas of Education, Income and Health.

United Way is partnered with Sitkans Against Family Violence as well as Sitka Counseling and Prevention Services – two non profits who are both based in and operate within the community of Sitka. Additionally, United Way of Southeast Alaska is also partnered with Southeast Alaska Independent Living, Catholic Community Services, Salvation Army, Boys and Girls Clubs, Girls Scouts, Boy Scouts, American Red Cross of Alaska and Big Brothers Big Sisters – all nonprofits which operate in part or extend services to those in the Sitka Community.

It is not just the partnership of nonprofits, but that of the business community and private individuals that makes it possible for the United

Way of Southeast Alaska to have a regional presence. Workplaces such as GCI, Northrim Bank, Lynden, Wells Fargo Bank and many others that I can't fit here, but which operate across the region, provide the financial support that allows United Way of Southeast Alaska to grow its support for our partner agencies. One way this support is returned back to the communities of Southeast is through our Community Impact Grants. In 2015 Grants were awarded to organizations in Thorn Bay, Craig, Ketchikan, and Sitka as well as Juneau. Programs designed to encourage sustainable food development, employment opportunities, reading, education, access to health needs and youth programming. This was all made possible because of these important strategic partnerships.

We are optimistic and enthusiastic about growing these relationships into the future to create a stronger, more vibrant region for all who call Southeast Alaska home.

“Paper Tigers” Film Premier and Panel Discussion

Alaska Children's Trust premiered an exciting new documentary with a showing in Juneau at 360 North on October 26th. United Way of Southeast Alaska in partnership with the Alaska Children's Trust, Association for the Education of Young Children in Southeast Alaska, Juneau Youth Services, Zach Gordon Youth Center, Juneau Community Foundation, Juneau Afterschool Coalition and the B.A.M. program were excited to develop plans to the Juneau premier of “Paper Tigers”.

Paper Tigers follows the lives of six students in Walla Walla, Washington as they attend an alternative high school that has begun to look at how chronic stressful event such as child abuse, neglect and household dysfunction (called adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs) can impact youth and how promoting resilience can help.

Alaska has consistently had one of the highest rates of child abuse and neglect in the nation. In 2012, when the most current data is available, there were 2985 substantiated victims of child abuse and neglect in Alaska. This number only includes the cases that have gone through the Department of Health and Social Services, there are still many children who are not getting



the help and attention they need. When children are exposed to these chronic stressful events, their brain development can be altered. It impairs their physical, social and intellectual development and results in an increased risk of poor performance in schools, mental health problems, substance abuse, and long term health problems among

others. This also comes with a financial toll such as healthcare, child welfare, law enforcement, lost work productivity and the list goes on. Paper Tigers looks at real life examples of how we can help our children heal from trauma and how healing is ultimately a more effective and cheaper response than punishment.

With a full studio of almost 100 attendees, a lively discussion was facilitated by Samantha Dye of Dynamic Consulting. Following the showing, a panel of experts working with children discussed topics such as juvenile justice, early childhood development, foster care, and the economic impact of ACEs.

The event was a chance to begin a grassroots conversation about trauma and resilience in Alaska and to give people an opportunity to learn more about the work going on in Alaska and how people can get involved to help protect Alaska's children.

A Healthy Community, One Prescription at a Time: Front Street Community Health Center Rx Assistance Program

By Geoff Kirsch

According to the American Heart Association, more than half of all adult prescription holders fail to take their medications correctly. This accounts for 10% of all hospital admissions, not to mention countless doctor's office, urgent care and emergency room visits. More sobering still, prescription noncompliance kills an estimated 125,000 people each year.

All this begs the obvious question: if it's so important, why don't people take their meds?

"There are many reasons, and they frequently compound on each other," says Alli Hourigan, clinic coordinator for the Front Street Community Health Center.

Not surprisingly, the biggest barrier is financial. More than 14 million Americans can't afford to fill their prescriptions, even those with private insurance. These people often employ techniques such as pill splitting, skipping doses or simply not taking any medication at all.

"Access to affordable medicine literally makes the difference between life and death," says Hourigan. "That's what we're trying to give people here, locally."

She is referring to the Front Street Community Health Center's fledgling Rx Assistance Program, made possible in part by a Community Impact Grant from the United Way of Southeast Alaska.

The Rx Assistance program consists of two components: a) last-resort prescription assistance for those awaiting Medicaid or other discount programs—"people who've fallen through the cracks" and b) a continuously stocked in-house dispensary of common pharmaceuticals used to treat the most frequently seen conditions (e.g. insulin for diabetes, bronchial inhalers for asthma, etc.).

"Our patients tend to have complex needs and it can be challenging to meet those needs," Hourigan says. "But the Rx Assistance program really helps them to stick to their treatment plans."

Since 2003, the Front Street Community Health Center has been providing culturally appropriate, high quality integrated medical,



Front Street Health Center provides a variety of health care services to community members in Juneau, regardless of income level or access to health insurance.

dental and behavioral health care services to all Juneau residents with an emphasis on its most vulnerable populations. This encompasses primary medical care, mental health care, substance abuse counseling and case management; services range from in-office procedures (e.g. ingrown toenail removal) to treatment and monitoring of common diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, asthma and arthritis, among many other chronic ailments.

Based on the belief that healthcare is a human right, the Front Street Health Center never denies anyone services due to an inability to pay. Indeed, FSCHC rates as the only Federally Qualified Health Center in Juneau, a national reimbursement designation from the US Dept. of Health and Human Services specifically for low-income groups.

As such, the Front Street Health Center currently receives around 320 individual patients a year.

"But not every patient meets federal designations," says Hourigan, noting the importance of the United Way's Community Impact Grant to fill gaps such as this.

"And while the clinic's budget supports primary care services, funding remains limited

for medications," she says. "Especially expensive or long-term medications, especially for uninsured patients."

Not only has the Community Impact Grant directly funded prescription medications for the Rx Assistance program, it also allowed the clinic to launch it immediately, while continuing to secure additional funding for further support and growth.

As you might imagine, developing an in-house dispensary takes quite a bit of time and money—"in addition to the pharmaceuticals, themselves, you've got all the equipment, like refrigeration units, and then all the documentation"—but the clinic continues to pursue as aggressive a timetable as possible.

"For patients with cognitive or ambulatory disabilities, or even for those relying on public transportation, just a trip to the drug store represents a significant barrier to effective health care management," says Hourigan.

"Our goal is to be a one-stop medical home," she says. "We're working to expedite health care in general, to make it a regular part of our patients' lives."

Of course, many barriers persist, Hourigan explains. Front Street Health Center patients don't necessarily have phones, for instance; even something as simple as confirming an appointment can become extremely difficult.

"Still, improved health means improved quality of life," says Hourigan. "And that improves the quality of life for the whole community, one person at a time."

"A Healthy Community, One Prescription at a Time: Front Street Community Health Center Rx Assistance Program" appears courtesy of United Way of Southeast Alaska as part of a project profiling the achievements of its Community Impact Grant Recipients. To learn more about or donate to the Front Street Community Health Center, visit <http://frontstreetchc.org>. To learn more about "Living United," the United Way of Southeast Alaska or any of its partner agencies visit www.unitedwayseak.org.



Each fall, for the past several years, the United Way of Southeast Alaska hosts a Day of Caring here in Juneau. On Friday, October 1st, United Way continued their annual tradition of promoting community service. Joined with volunteers from nine local workplaces, service projects were completed at multiple nonprofits across the community. The volunteers came from the City and Borough of Juneau, Northrim Bank, GCI, True North Federal Credit Union, Wells Fargo, UAS Construction Faculty, Elgee Rehfeld Mertz and the United Way Board of Directors. Without the participation and support of these businesses, Day of Caring and the good work that comes from it – would not exist.

Day of Caring is purposeful in the fact that it takes place during the traditional workday. It gives employees time away from their normal duties to come together and celebrate volunteerism by completing a much needed project for an assigned nonprofit.

At AWARE, employees from Wells Fargo worked together to provide a deep clean to the Shelter. Volunteers power washed decks, vacuumed vans and cleaned the kitchen and communal eating area. At Juneau Family Health and Birth Center, a team from True North Federal Credit Union spruced

up the library and gathering area where new and expectant parents gather to take parenting classes and receive support. A team from GCI provided a Highway Cleanup in connection to Big Brothers Big Sisters. Employees from Northrim Bank spent the morning raking, cleaning and landscaping at the Bridge Adult Day Program Run by Catholic Community Services while another Northrim Bank group provided Juneau Alliance for Mental Health with a refreshed and landscaped front entrance. Employees from the City and Borough of Juneau split into three teams to tackle projects at Helping Hands, Juneau Youth Services and the Association for the Education of Young Children. The United Way Board of Directors were joined by a Construction Professor from UAS to tackle a large project for SAIL, creating storage space for their community loan closet that provides accessibility assistance gear to anyone recovering from an injury or living with a disability. At the Girl Scouts office, downtown, a group from Elgee Rehfeld & Mertz painted, cleaned and organized the main office, giving it a bright splash of color.

On Saturday, the Day of Caring event continued on a smaller scale, beginning with a kick off at the new UAS Pugh Residence Hall where students gathered to learn a little about the United

Way's mission as well as the fact that community focused philanthropy does not always mean dollars and cents, but can also mean service work and a desire to help others. The students were members of the AL-I program which, according to the program manager is a first year experience for students to learn leadership and project management skills. Meanwhile, across town another group from Northrim Bank donated their morning to landscaping, mowing and leaf blowing at JAMHI. All the nonprofit agencies expressed deep gratitude and thanks for the volunteer time spent helping their agencies on Thursday and Saturday.

These are projects that are needed, but aren't always easy for nonprofits to find the time and resources to tackle. Day of Caring exists to help with those tasks. Everyone works together to make the community a little brighter.

Each year the Prospector Hotel donates their conference space to host a Meet and Greet, allowing volunteers and agency representatives to meet and review their projects. DIPAC donates the use of their space to host a morning breakfast for the volunteers, donated by Bruce Baxter and Sullivan Law Offices. It is truly a community effort and United Way could not be more honored to get to facilitate and take part in that effort each fall.



of Southeast Alaska's Day of Caring 2015

United
Way



Above: On Saturday, the Day of Caring event continued with UAS students hosting a food drive for the Southeast Alaska Food Bank. Food was sorted and stored by the volunteers who came from the UAS AL-I Program, a leadership program designed to teach first year University students about creating community service projects, and developing leadership skills.

Below: The volunteers for Day of Caring came from an assortment of local businesses, happy to donate their time and talents to service projects around town. The workplaces represented in this shot are: City and Borough of Juneau, Elgee Rehfeld Mertz, Wells Fargo, UAS, United Way Board of Directors, Northrim Bank, and True North Federal Credit Union. Not Pictured: GCI.



Financial Self-Sufficiency in Southeast: Tlingit Haida Regional Housing Authority's Financial Cent\$ and Voluntary Income Tax Assistance Programs

By Geoff Kirsch

For Dawn Wesley, Financial Skills Specialist at Tlingit Haida Regional Housing Authority (THRHA), the mission is clear.

"We want every family to become financially self-sufficient."

Of course, this is far easier said than done in Southeast Alaska—particularly in its smaller, more geographically isolated communities. Employment opportunities tend to be seasonal and not always plentiful. Affordable housing proves scarce to non-existent, as do utilities, food, clothing, gasoline and imported goods (which is pretty much all goods). Compounding matters, the population of Southeast Alaska ranks among the oldest in the state—in other words, tens of thousands of people are rapidly approaching retirement, if they haven't already reached it.

Enter THRHA's Financial Cent\$ and Voluntary Income Tax Assistance programs, each supported by Community Impact Grants from the United Way of Southeast Alaska.

"Essentially, it boils down to maximizing income, minimizing spending and saving for the future," says Wesley, who spearheads both programs, in addition to THRHA's Student Housing Voucher Scholarship Program, THRHA's Energy Cent\$ Program and "anything else our clients need help with."

Financial Cent\$ encompasses a three-phase financial literacy course. In phase one, she presents Money Values and the Culture of Money, intended to help people change their financial behaviors. Phase two is Credit Essentials, a course designed to impart healthy credit habits. And in phase three, participants receive one-on-one goal-focused coaching in topics like budgeting, spending and credit-building.

"Specifically, we're helping our clients work toward financial self-sufficiency by improving their financial capability," says Wesley of THRHA's overall ethos.

"Homeownership is a great benchmark of financial stability," she explains. "It is usually the largest investment most Southeast Alaskans will make, financially as well as psychologically."

Wesley's philosophy on household

financial stability also focuses on trimming spending wherever possible, which sometimes entails looking at finances under a different light.

Perfect example: THRHA's VITA—or Voluntary Income Tax Assistance—program, which, for the past four years has offered free income tax preparation and filing. In 2015 alone, VITA helped Southeast Alaskans file 527 individual tax returns, saving nearly \$150,000 in preparation fees. Refunds this year totaled a whopping \$691,181.

"That's \$840,000 going into the communities—\$840,000!" says Wesley.

VITA relies on a roster of volunteer tax preparers, including accountants, state workers, college professors and students. Not only does VITA assist with filing for the current tax year; often, first-time clients owe several years of back tax returns.

"That can make people afraid of their income taxes," she says. "But really, the process is a lot less scary than you think... as long as you have someone knowledgeable to help guide you through it."

Another common misunderstanding: VITA clients frequently qualify for Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) without realizing; in 2015, the program recouped \$132,333 of these credits. EITC is a refundable tax credit for low- to moderate-income working individuals and couples, particularly those with children.

"Refunds are great, but our ultimate goal is to educate people so they can do their own taxes," says Wesley. To this end, VITA also helps people adjust their annual withholdings to minimize "surprise" tax debt at the end of the year.

Currently, Wesley and THRHA volunteers conduct both the Financial Cent\$ and VITA programs in person in the communities of Angoon, Craig, Douglas, Kake, Klawock, Saxman and Juneau, THRHA's main office. Hydaburg, Kasaan, Petersburg, Skagway, Wrangell and Yakutat may participate remotely.

"We try to serve as many communities as possible," she says. "Finances are a huge factor in our outreach capabilities. That's why partnerships like we have with United Way are so important.

Indeed, Wesley credits the Community

Impact Grant with enabling the programs' mobility and mentions Yakutat as the next likely addition to the in-person list. One day she hopes this list will include every community in Southeast Alaska.

"Remote communities have the greatest need," she says. "Energy costs are absurdly high. A gallon of milk can cost upwards of \$9. And how can you foster the importance of saving money in a community with no access to a bank?"

For their part, THRHA faces these problems head on, also offering courses in elder financial abuse, high school classes in financial literacy, college student housing voucher scholarships and the Individual Development Account program, which not only provides a mechanism for saving money, but also contributes matching funds that can be as high as \$10 to every one dollar saved.

"We couldn't do all of this without financial supporters like United Way," says Wesley. "Though we've made great strides, we're still not where we need to be."

As for future plans, in addition to providing more one-on-one coaching, THRHA is currently writing a curriculum specifically geared for youth, to better prepare them for their financial health as they transition into adulthood.

"For kids to go out, get educated and then come back into their communities—that's huge," she says. "You build youth to be strong and self-sufficient, and everything falls into place. Eventually, that becomes the norm—everyone strong and self-sufficient."

"Financial Self-Reliance in Southeast: Tlingit Haida Regional Housing Authority's Financial Cent\$ and Voluntary Income Tax Assistance Programs" appears courtesy of United Way of Southeast Alaska as part of a project profiling the achievements of its Community Impact Grant Recipients.

To learn more about, or volunteer for, Tlingit Haida Regional Housing Authority programs visit www.thrha.org. To learn more about "Living United," the United Way of Southeast Alaska or any of its 32 partner agencies visit www.unitedwayseak.org.

Two Jewels in a Crown of Library Programs on Prince of Wales Island: Thorne Bay's "Lapsit Reading Kit" and Craig's "No Job Seeker Left Behind"

By Geoff Kirsch

Public libraries enjoy a long history as centers of the American community, providing a venue for education, engagement and social gathering. This is especially true on Prince of Wales Island, where small towns—separated by long distances and rugged terrain—predominate.

"The library takes on such an important role here," says Jesse Drucker, a VISTA Americorps volunteer at the Thorne Bay Public Library. "It's the only place within hours of driving to get books, music and movies, not to mention free Internet access."

Enter "Libraries Build Communities," launched by Alaska State Public Library Coordinator Julie Niederhauser. This umbrella program specifically seeks to bolster the public library system of Southeast Alaska by placing a VISTA Americorps volunteer at three locations on Prince of Wales—Coffman Cove, Craig and Thorne Bay—plus another in Kake.

The goal: to enhance education and economic wellbeing through library programs focusing on early childhood literacy, financial literacy, digital literacy and job readiness.

Two new initiatives recently implemented by these VISTA volunteers include the Thorne Bay Public Library's "Lapsit Reading Kit" and the Craig Public Library's "No Job Seeker Left Behind," both made possible by Community Impact Grants from the United Way of Southeast Alaska.

Studies show early intervention can significantly influence reading, word recognition and spelling. Targeting children from six- to 36-months-old and set to begin in April 2016, the Lapsit Reading project creates 12 early childhood literacy kits for educators, parents and guardians to borrow from the library.

"It's so beneficial for families to be able to check out and take home a bunch of early literacy materials," says Drucker, who designed Thorne Bay's kits—modeled on those from "Ready to Read" in Anchorage—to create an engaging, dynamic reading experience between parent and child.

"Home is where reading practices begin," he explains. "Children learn best from their parents, spend the most time with their parents and respond



Vista Volunteer Katie George works with Craig residents attending the No Job Seeker Left Behind Program, funded in part with a grant from United Way of Southeast Alaska. The program was designed to offer residents of Prince of Wales classes to help them increase their employment and economic opportunities. United Way of Southeast Alaska believes that all families should have financial stability and independence.

more strongly to their parents' voices than any other adult's."

In addition to board books, the Lapsit Reading kits contain puppets, children's music, games, activities and early literacy tips, funded entirely by a Community Impact Grant.

"Basically, we're trying to give parents all the resources they need to hit the five practices for early literacy: talking, singing, reading, writing and playing," says Drucker.

"The Community Impact Grant allowed us to get specialty items, like the CDs," he says. "I really appreciate the United Way's focus on early literacy. That's when you can really connect with kids, when they're very young. Especially if you do it in a way that's fun."

Across the island, Craig Public Library's VISTA volunteer used a Community Impact Grant to champion job readiness.

"Job training is on everybody's radar," says Katie George, who, among many other projects, spearheaded "No Job Seekers Left Behind," a free job readiness course offered by the Craig Public Library.

According to the most recent census data, Craig's unemployment rate stands at more than twice the national average. It also boasts a large number of

seasonal workers often looking for off-season work. Not surprisingly, the majority of respondents to a 2015 community assessment identified economic opportunity and job preparedness as primary needs.

"There's a job center in Ketchikan, but not anywhere on Prince of Wales," George explains. "Here, it's up to the library to be the job center."

This past fall, five students age 30-60 completed the debut session of "No Job Seeker Left Behind," which George modeled on a successful program developed by the Spokane Public Library. Taught by a local businessperson, students received instruction in writing resumes, drafting cover letters, interviewing and developing good work habits. Those who successfully completed the four-week course received a thumb drive with their resume and cover letter; as an extra incentive, the winner of the student drawing won an iPad mini—all funded by a Community Impact Grant.

"The real challenge for any library program, really, is getting people to attend," says George. "The trick is getting people to think of the library as a resource for anything they're looking for."

"No Job Seeker Left Behind" also represents a partnership between the Craig Public Library and Prince of Wales Emergency Resources (POWER) aimed at providing continuous programming for teens and adults to help them attain meaningful employment. George hopes NJSLB will be sustained by local volunteer interest, possibly by graduates of the program, themselves.

"Getting a job is such a big part of someone's life. Helping someone do that makes an impact in a very tangible way," she says. "I'm very thankful to the United Way of Southeast Alaska. I hope they continue to support library programs on Prince of Wales Island for a long time to come."

"Two Jewels in a Crown of Library Programs on Prince of Wales Island: Thorne Bay's Lapsit Reading Kit and Craig's No Job Seeker Left Behind" appears courtesy of United Way of Southeast Alaska as part of a project profiling the achievements of its Community Impact Grant Recipients.

To learn more about "Living United," the United Way of Southeast Alaska or any of its 32 partner agencies visit www.unitedwayseak.org.

STAR AmeriCorps Service at United Way of Southeast Alaska

By Dana Herndon, Margaret O'Neal and Sara Truitt

The Juneau Economic Development Council (JEDC) launched the STAR (Service To Achieve Results) AmeriCorps program in 2015 to fill a gap in the community, to execute its economic development strategy of talent development, and to strengthen the bonds between agencies that serve our community. Juneau, for many years, had an AmeriCorps program, run by SAGA, which placed national service members at schools and in a number of nonprofit agencies. The whole community of Juneau benefits from this program because it brings talented college graduates to Juneau who have demonstrated passion, leadership skills, strong work ethic, and a commitment to service. JEDC's STAR AmeriCorps hooks vital talent into our community, encourages them to further develop leadership skills and add value to the community even after their service is finished. It turns great citizens into amazing Alaskans.

This year, United Way of Southeast Alaska was excited to participate in the STAR AmeriCorps program as a host site. Their AmeriCorps member Felicite Toney is currently serving as the Research and Volunteer Coordinator. In this capacity Felicite has helped to connect United Way with the community by enhancing their social media presence and overall communications output. She took part in organizing the Be The Change Youth Diversity Conference in conjunction with Juneau Violence Prevention Coalition members,



United Way of Southeast Alaska's STAR AmeriCorps member, Felicite Toney and fellow members Courtney Weiss of JEDC and Sarah Ginter of AWARE pose for a celebratory shot after preparing 500 Thanksgiving Dinner donation bags at their annual Day of Service event.

AWARE, Inc and the Zach Gordon Youth Center. The event was held this past May at the JACC and was attended by approximately 150 students from Juneau and Sitka. In addition, Felicite has helped United Way streamline their volunteer outreach efforts by working with partner agencies and volunteers to promote Get Connected, United Way's online volunteer coordination platform.

Many AmeriCorps Members have decided to stay in Juneau and are now community leaders. The Juneau AmeriCorps Alumni Facebook Group has almost 250 members! Some are board

members, some are business owners, and some decided to settle down and start families in Juneau. AmeriCorps Members often volunteer more of their time to help other Members with events and projects. Juneau currently has 6 STAR AmeriCorps Members that are each making transformative improvements in the lives of those they serve, from various positions within JEDC, REACH, and the Juneau School District, AWARE and at United Way of Southeast Alaska. The members do outreach and deliver direct services in a number of ways including delivering anti-violence and healthy living content, adult and school-age tutoring and afterschool enrichment that improves academic performance and student/family school engagement. They created internships and volunteer service opportunities for high-school students, promoting confidence, competence and marketable jobs skills, all while providing youth positive role models – they are all truly STARs!



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From the annual meeting...



Above:
Incoming Chair Rustan Burton thanking outgoing Chair Karen Crane for her leadership and service as Chair. Looking on: outgoing board member Sheryl Weinberg, Large Agency Representative. (Seated from Left to Right): Out going board member Joan O'Keefe, Small Agency Representative, Julia Mesdag, guest.



Above:
Executive Committee: 2015 Executive Committee (from Left to Right) Bill Peters, Treasurer; Ann Gifford, Secretary; Mark Mesdag, Chair Elect, Karen Crane Past Chair, Rustan Burton Chair.

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