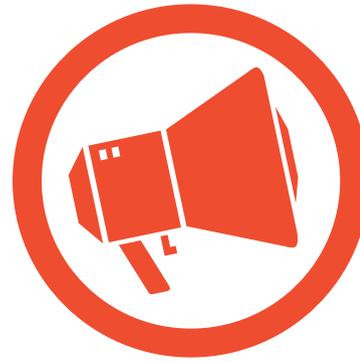


# 1 in 3

individuals will use services provided by United Way or a partner agency in their lifetime

## GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.



## 2013 ANNUAL REPORT

# UNITED WAY OF SOUTHEAST ALASKA

Building blocks for a good quality of life:



### EDUCATION



### INCOME



### HEALTH

## 33 PARTNER AGENCIES

United Way of Southeast Alaska focuses on what matters most - results. We offer the most powerful way for donors and volunteers to make a difference in their community. By giving where they live, donors are able to make a difference in their own backyard, with people they know and love. We make lasting changes!

## LIVE UNITED



## A Word from Wayne Stevens

President for United Way of Southeast Alaska



### Why United Way?

An individual who donates to a domestic violence shelter likely gives because she wants to support women and children, believes that safety inside the home can translate into safety in the broader community, and values healthy relationships. But a family seeking safety at a domestic violence shelter isn't only receiving services from the shelter itself; the family is likely connecting with counseling services, food banks, youth programming opportunities, and legal resources, among others. Supporting healthy relationships and the safety of women and children is more complex than meets the eye.

### This is where United Way of Southeast Alaska steps in.

We hope that this annual report will help you answer the question, "why United Way?" United Way of Southeast Alaska has the power to bring groups together to tackle the issues facing our communities. When we convene individuals and groups and encourage collaboration, there is greater power to address the challenges we face.

United Way of Southeast Alaska is committed to doing the most good in our communities – together. We believe that the problems facing our communities are complex and multi-faceted and that giving should be leveraged to make the most impact.

### United Way helps to leverage this impact in 4 important ways:

1. We efficiently raise and distribute funds to ensure that our partner agencies are able to do their work effectively in order to make our communities stronger.
2. We act as a facilitator between partner agencies and community stakeholders, welcoming everyone to the table and starting conversations to ensure that our communities have the passion, expertise,

and resources to work together to accomplish real and lasting change.

3. We gather and distribute data about important indicators in our community. This allows us and our partner agencies to see where the need is, what needs are being met, and where services are lacking. We focus on health, income stability, and education, the building blocks for a good life, to affect the most impact and to address the root causes of the complex problems facing Southeast Alaska.

4. When there are important pieces missing, we work to address those needs through community impact grants and projects.

### Doing more together than we can do individually – this is what it means to LIVE UNITED.

I hope you will read the articles about the amazing work of our partner agencies in this annual report to see how United Way of Southeast Alaska and our partner agencies have been doing the most good together during the last year.

Our annual report provides an opportunity to reflect on the past year, acknowledge our accomplishments, prepare for the challenges in the year ahead, and acknowledge the great spirit of volunteerism and giving that exists in our communities across Southeast Alaska. I am very appreciative of the many folks who have given of themselves this past year to make a difference in their respective communities. They served on Boards of Directors, volunteered for service on committees, gave of their time to our partner agencies and made significant contributions of their financial resources because they know that together, we can make a bigger impact.

Please contact our offices if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for the coming year and we look forward to the opportunity to work together with you to ensure another year of success in achieving our mission.

Thank you, Wayne

## A Word from Mary Becker

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



When you look at this annual report and all of the things that have been accomplished in the past year I want you to feel proud.

**You did it.** This annual report is not about us. It's

not about me or the rest of the board or even the staff members. It's about you. It's about the amazing work that YOU have allowed us to accomplish through your giving and support. And it's about the many people and initiatives that you've supported. You're the backbone of our Southeast community. You're the backbone of the work that gets done in each and every community and you should feel infinitely proud of yourself for that.

I hope that every time you drive by our office or the office of one of our partners, whether it be in Haines, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Sitka, Wrangell, or one of the many other communities you are a part of, that you feel like it's yours. I hope that you feel comfortable enough to stop by and chat for a bit. I hope you feel comfortable enough to ask questions about the work that's happening and the people's lives that are changing. I hope you feel like you're an instrumental part to the success of your community, because you are.

You chose to give to United Way of Southeast Alaska and when you chose to do that you chose to touch the entire Southeast community. United Way is involved in so many things around the community, it's hard not to be passionate about the work that we are doing.

When people ask me about why I've dedicated so much time and energy to United Way the answer is always easy. I care about our community and want to be involved in the many movements all around it. United Way is one way to make that possible. You, the donor, help to make it possible for United Way to make a difference in the lives of so many.

There is so much passion that I see in you, our donors. I can see it every time we chat about the work that you're helping United Way to do. I'd like to take a moment to thank you for that. Thank you for being so involved and committed to our cause. Enhancing the common good is something that takes a lot of really committed people working together. I think we have that here in Southeast. I see it every day. I see people caring for their neighbors and advocating for the less fortunate and really working to improve our community. That's what makes me so proud to live here and be a part of the Southeast community!

Thank you so much!  
Mary Becker

## THANK YOU BP!



Special thanks to BP for their underwriting of this publication. Their generosity helps United Way of Southeast Alaska share our work across the region!

## ADVANCING THE COMMON GOOD BY FOCUSING ON THE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A GOOD LIFE:



**EDUCATION:** We are working at critical points along the school spectrum to help children and youth achieve their potential through education. Together, we are engaging the region to support youth by volunteering, mobilizing resources to improve access to quality, affordable childcare and early learning opportunities, and partnering with schools, parents, and businesses to improve literacy rates.



**INCOME:** We are helping individuals and families become financially stable by supporting basic needs programs like Juneau's Food Resource Summit and partnering with regional non-profits and businesses to distribute children's clothing across the region. Together, with our 33 partner agencies, we are working to increase financial education, help hardworking people obtain job training and sustaining wages, and increase affordable housing for seniors and families.



**HEALTH:** We are helping individuals and communities improve their health by promoting healthy, age appropriate activities across the region for children and teens on Youth Connect ([youthconnect.unitedwayseak.org](http://youthconnect.unitedwayseak.org)). In addition, our partners are working to increase access to healthcare services; reduce substance abuse, child abuse and domestic violence; and increase health education and preventive care in communities across Southeast Alaska

## 2012-2013 PLEDGES DEDICATED TO AGENCIES

<b>AWARE</b>	\$26,144.69	<b>Girl Scouts of Alaska</b>	\$4,829.43	<b>SERRC: The Learning Connection</b>	\$4,207.64
<b>Alaska Health Fair, Inc.</b>	\$177.93	<b>Girl Scouts of Alaska – Ketchikan</b>	\$117.10	<b>Sitka Counseling and Prevention</b>	\$97.58
<b>Alaska Legal Services Corporation</b>	\$400.00	<b>The Glory Hole</b>	\$33,848.06	<b>Sitkans Against Family Violence</b>	\$3,261.60
<b>Alaskan AIDS Assistance Association</b>	\$303.34	<b>Helping Hands</b>	\$8,930.00	<b>Southeast Alaska Food Bank</b>	\$26,601.53
<b>American Red Cross of Alaska</b>	\$1,011.00	<b>Hospice of Haines</b>	\$3,879.92	<b>Southeast Alaska Independent Living/ORCA</b>	\$6,387.78
<b>Association for the Education of Young Children</b>	\$2,432.85	<b>Juneau Family Health and Birth Center</b>	\$2,746.08	Stand Together Against Rape	\$240.00
<b>Big Brothers Big Sisters of Alaska</b>	\$1,665.00	Ketchikan Committee for the Homeless (PATH)	\$84.00	<b>St. Vincent de Paul Society</b>	\$1,080.00
<b>Boy Scouts of America, Great Alaska Council</b>	\$3,029.93	<b>Ketchikan Youth Initiatives</b>	\$283.38	United Way of Southeast Alaska	\$164,368.53
<b>Boys and Girls Club of Ketchikan</b>	\$722.25	<b>Love INC</b>	\$3,839.00	Education	\$9,737.00
<b>Boys and Girls Club of Sitka</b>	\$345.05	Lutheran Social Services of Alaska	\$120.00	Health	\$3,542.00
<b>Brave Heart Volunteers</b>	\$2,523.95	<b>Lynn Canal Counseling Services - Haines</b>	\$120.00	Income	\$3,542.00
<b>Cancer Connection</b>	\$7,709.99	NAMI – Juneau	\$2,244.83	<b>Wildflower Court</b>	\$2,216.47
<b>Catholic Community Services</b>	\$17,365.56	<b>Planned Parenthood of the Great NW</b>	\$1,179.33	<b>Women in Safe Homes (WISH)</b>	\$2,167.88
<b>Hospice and Home Care of Juneau</b>	\$5,561.00	<b>REACH, Inc.</b>	\$6,510.32	<b>TOTAL PLEDGED *(not necessarily collected):</b>	<b>\$372,168.93</b>
<b>Southeast Senior Services</b>	\$2,005.00	Rendezvous Senior Day Services, Inc.	\$794.00		
<b>Gastineau Human Services</b>	\$3,145.93	Salvation Army Ketchikan	\$650.00		

\*Bold indicates a United Way partner agency

\*Partners not listed above: Polaris House, Southeast Alaska Guidance Association (SAGA)

## What's the 211?

People like you know how important it is to have the right information at the right time.

Often times, 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 need help, 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.

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.

People should feel confident of being able to call 2-1-1 and get a trained specialist weekdays from 8:30-5 or answers are available 24/7 at the website [www.alaska211.org](http://www.alaska211.org). There are some phone systems that may have trouble calling 2-1-1. If this is true for the caller, then call 1-800-478-2221.



## PROJECT HOMELESS CONNECT



Project Homeless Connect was a great success. Over 200 people received assistance from various agencies. While over a hundred stopped by the donation distribution center; heavy jackets, winter gloves, hats, scarves, sleeping bags, blankets, and winter boots were the most popular items. Luckily, donations kept rolling in as the day progressed. Thanks to everyone who donated items this year especially Alaska Commission for Post Secondary Education, AAA, Juneau Public Health, and the several individuals.

## “ My Family Needed Help and I Didn't Even Know”

Story from ACS Manager, Bob Varness

As a son, father, and community member, United Way has touched my life, helping my family through some tough situations. When we needed them most, United Way and its 33 partner agencies were there, providing solace to my family even when I did not know it was needed.

After receiving two years of cancer treatments elsewhere, my father returned to Alaska, knowing he was terminal. Most people do not normally think about the logistics of day to day operations, complications, or the pain of waiting for someone you love to die. **Nothing can prepare you to see a loved one suffer while feeling powerless in the face of their death.**

That's when Catholic Community Service's Hospice and Home Care of Juneau stepped in to help. They found hospital beds and portable potty seats, taught family members how to give morphine shots, and provided family counseling and comforting hugs for my sisters, mother, and myself.

In short, the people of Hospice and Home Care of Juneau were a wonderful blessing to our entire family, becoming an extension of our family and ensuring the last weeks of my father's life were comfortable.

Years later, I was volunteering with my church at the Glory Hole, a local soup kitchen in downtown Juneau, with my youngest daughter. Plate after plate, we piled meatloaf and mashed potatoes, hoping to nourish their most basic need, hunger. As we were serving yet another plate, Carly nudged me. **I looked up to see my other daughter taking a plate from Carly's outstretched hand.**

Unbeknownst to me, my daughter had been going through a tough time and had been eating at the Glory Hole for weeks. She was too embarrassed to ask for help from her own family.

**That event changed our lives.** It brought us closer together, allowing us to acknowledge that we all need a helping hand. I am thankful to the Glory Hole and United Way for providing comfort and help to my daughter and those in need.

**UWSEAK has probably helped you, too.** Did you know that one in three individuals utilize services provided by United Way or one of its 33 partner agencies? In other words, one third of your family, friends, co-workers and neighbors benefit from United Way's network of non-profit organizations.

I urge you to consider making a donation to United Way of Southeast Alaska. A donation means only a small effort from you, yet results in incredible strides forward for the community. No donation is too small because all are an important contribution to the cause.

It is by many people working together that we can create something bigger than ourselves. By acknowledging our connections to our community, we can begin to make a difference.

My family and I thank you. Sincerely,  
Bob Varness



# United Way and Community Benefit from Advance in Technology

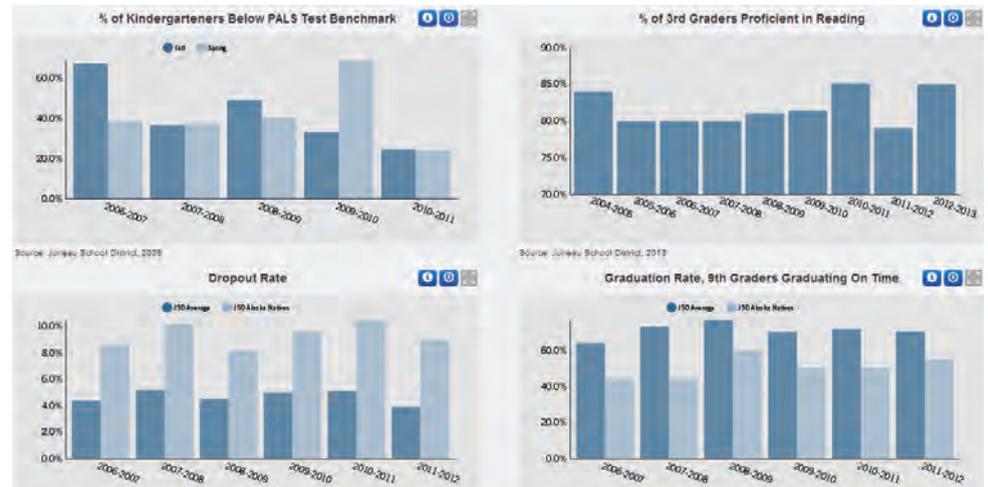
Advances in technology change the way societies operate. From the creation of the wheel to the recent technological advances with smart phones, we find ourselves wondering how we ever lived without them. Advances such as these streamline our life and allow us to function with ease. McDowell Group has created a system that changes the way data is managed, viewed, and shared. Their new dashboard tool streamlines data and creates a system that allows us to research with ease.

Dashboards, created by synthesizing data into interactive charts and graphs, provide information in a quick glance. Jim Calvin, principal and senior economic analyst for McDowell Group, believes that “dashboards are a great way to clearly and concisely present data in a very interactive, user-friendly way.” For Calvin, the purpose of dashboards is multifaceted. “Whether for analysis of data for internal management purposes, or for communicating information externally, business and organizations can enjoy quick and easy access to large amounts of information.”

Dashboards are a critical tool utilized by United Way of Southeast Alaska. Through a generous partnership with McDowell Group and modeled on a previous dashboard created for the Southeast Conference, United Way has created striking visualizations of community indicators (measured data points) for Juneau for the organization’s three areas of focus: education, income, and health. These indicators are used to spotlight critical information that is relevant to many community organizations across the region.

Wayne Stevens, president of United Way of Southeast Alaska, notes, “We have this wealth of data hidden inside a COMPASS report, but it is not readily accessible to everyone.” The dashboard turns a bulky, data-heavy report into an instantly accessible, concise and interactive database. Stevens is “pleased that McDowell Group was willing to work with us to convert raw data into very usable tools for people to be able to access online.”

The importance of such a tool is immeasurable. When asked why the COMPASS report is so crucial, Stevens responded, “There is an old adage of ‘What gets measure gets done.’ This provides us a tool to measure the data and see if we are headed in the right direction. As we develop new solutions to problems we can track outcomes.” While the United Way dashboard currently only shows indicators for Juneau, United Way and McDowell Group are working to add other communities from the existing COMPASS data report, as well.



The practical uses of this tool are not limited to United Way. The Juneau information housed on the United Way dashboard (found at [unitedwayseak.org](http://unitedwayseak.org)) and McDowell Group’s original dashboard on the Southeast economy (found at [McDowellGroup.net](http://McDowellGroup.net)), are accessible to other organizations and groups. Combined, these tools have a wealth of information about Southeast Alaska that could be crucial for other non-profits, businesses, schools, and even individuals. These two dashboards provide information on the health, education, and economics of the Southeast Alaska community as a whole, as well as the smaller, individual communities.

This isn’t just for us. This is a tool for you. For the non-profit fighting to feed and house the homeless; for the school striving to educate its students; for the business searching for a way to give back; for the individual passionate and driven to improve their community. Compare what you thought with what’s real. Find out where you stand in the numbers. Use the tool to determine, segment, and target your audience. Utilize the dashboard to show your staff, your supporters, your friends, and family what your mission is and why.

Take a look. See where we stand, where we fall short, and where we can go in the future.

## Earn Donations for UWSEAK

**You’re already shopping. Make a difference while you’re at it!**

In just 1 minute you can make a big difference. Earn donations for United Way of Southeast Alaska by using two of your favorite shopping options: Fred Meyer and Amazon.com.

### Earn by Shopping Fred Meyer:

Fred Meyer is donating \$2.5 million to charities in the Pacific Northwest. Help us get a portion! It’s really simple! They’re letting YOU decide where the money goes. Simply connect your card to United Way of Southeast Alaska to let Fred Meyer know that you want donations to be given HERE in Southeast.

#### Step One: Link Your Rewards Card

With just a few clicks you can connect your rewards card with United Way of Southeast Alaska.

#### Step Two: Shop!

After connected your card online to UWSEAK, whenever you use your rewards card at Fred Meyer, you’ll be earning donations for United Way. This ONE-TIME task can make a BIG difference in Southeast Alaska. It’s really that simple!

### Earn by Shopping Amazon:

Use AmazonSmile for your Amazon.com purchases and Amazon will donate a portion of your spending to United Way of Southeast Alaska!

**Just visit [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) and choose United Way of Southeast Alaska.**

#### What is AmazonSmile?

AmazonSmile is a website operated by Amazon that lets customers enjoy the same wide selection of products, low prices, and convenient shopping features as on Amazon.com. The difference is that when customers shop on AmazonSmile ([smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com)), the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases to the charitable organizations selected by customers.

The shopping experience is identical to Amazon.com with the added benefit that the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate to the charitable organization you choose.



# Extending a Hand to One, Improving Society for All

## “Advocacy opens the doors of opportunity...”

While Alaska boasts the country’s lowest population density, its nonprofit landscape looks far more crowded—over 7,000 registered charitable organizations operate statewide, one for every 100 residents.

Of course, in Alaska, nonprofits fill a special niche, especially among the smaller, more geographically isolated communities of the Inside Passage, providing services and resources that wouldn’t otherwise exist. But their sheer number can also complicate the state’s philanthropic environment.

“Philanthropy becomes even harder to define here because people serve their communities in other ways, like sharing fish with elders or stocking someone’s fridge after they’ve been hurt in an accident,” says Wayne Stevens, president and CEO of the United Way of Southeast Alaska, an organization that seeks to bring together—or “unite”—the region’s myriad organizations, volunteers, advocates, donors and recipients.

What’s more, with government funding continuing to dry up (and new organizations continuing to sprout up), not only do Alaskan nonprofits rely on charitable giving; they compete for it. And so, for the average recipient of fundraising calls during dinner or printed appeals in the mailbox, deciding which issues to support and how best to support them can seem confusing, daunting and time-consuming.

“Simply put, Southeast Alaskans want to help,” Stevens explains. “They just might not be sure how to start. That’s where the United Way comes in.”

Since 1974, the United Way of Southeast Alaska has been working to “advance the common good” by recruiting people and organizations throughout the region to identify community issues, focus a response and effect change. With its recent “Live United” movement—based on the idea that extending a hand to one improves society for all—the United Way outlines a simple strategy for those wishing to take part in Southeast Alaska’s philanthropic process: “Give, Advocate, Volunteer.”

**Give.** Giving to the United Way—especially through its Annual Workplace Campaign, which begins in August and continues until the end of the year—remains the easiest and most powerful way to invest in Southeast Alaskan communities. Through a regular payroll deduction or direct gift, employees (often with matching employer donations) can support 33 United Way partner agencies, from hospice care in Haines to social services in Sitka, youth initiatives in Ketchikan to senior centers in Juneau to family programs in Petersburg.

“There are 37,000 jobs across Southeast Alaska—not counting 2,500 self-employed,” says Stevens, noting what he terms “huge potential.” “If everyone donated \$2 of their weekly paycheck, that would total \$3.7 million a year—straight to community service across the region.”

Charitable contributions to the United Way of Southeast Alaska can be split equally among all its partner agencies, or directed into one of three action areas—Education,

Income or Health—identified by the United Way as “building blocks for a good life.”

“We try to isolate and focus on an ‘umbrella’ issue, like literacy, that influences many other issues. By addressing that one, you address them all,” Stevens says.

Not simply a funding entity, the United Way is itself an active community organization. No single nonprofit can tackle a large-scale social problem on its own; positive change requires collective action, a combination of time, talent and resources that can only come from organizations, government, businesses and individuals working in synchrony, with a singularity of purpose.

Here, United Way of Southeast Alaska facilitates conversations between various groups, not only identifying specific needs, but also focusing passion, resources, expertise and human power squarely on those needs. A prime example: every month, the United Way of Southeast Alaska convenes a meeting of food resource groups to find gaps in service—such as those in school lunch programs during summertime—as well as to eliminate redundancies.

**Advocate.** Of course, the United Way also emphasizes advocacy as a means of philanthropy, encouraging those who consider themselves passionate about education, income and health to vocalize their thoughts, “champion the cause and make some noise.”

“Advocacy opens the doors of opportunity,” says Stevens, noting advocacy as a welcoming avenue for those who don’t normally participate in philanthropy to become active.

**Volunteer.** As any charitable organization in Southeast Alaska will tell you, volunteerism is a nonprofit’s lifeblood. To that end, the United Way actively works to develop volunteer opportunities both for children and adults. Most recently, it launched Get Connected ([getconnected.unitedwayseak.org](http://getconnected.unitedwayseak.org)) a social media-style volunteer engagement and management platform linking prospective volunteers with community organizations throughout the region. Not only can participating agencies post available opportunities; volunteers can create individual profiles specifically tailored to their schedule and interests, creating a vast volunteer talent pool.

“We’re hoping to build on strengths and assets already in the community,” Stevens says. “Helping volunteers and nonprofits find each other—it sounds so simple, yet it’s so effective in supporting direct-service programs and effecting social change.”

With so many ways to engage in philanthropy, the United Way believes local residents will not only continue helping their neighbors—they’ll encourage those neighbors to help their neighbors, and those neighbors to help their neighbors, and on down the line.

“Southeast Alaskans will rise to the challenge,” says Stevens. “We always do.”

## Why Give to United Way? **TO DONATE ONLINE, VISIT [WWW.UNITEDWAYSEAK.ORG/DONATE](http://WWW.UNITEDWAYSEAK.ORG/DONATE)**

- Statistics show that 1 in 3 people will use services provided by United Way or a partner agency in their lifetime.
- United Way provides an opportunity to maximize your giving potential by giving to multiple needs at once.
- We all win when a child succeeds in school, when families are financially stable, & when people are healthy.
- We are all connected & interdependent. We each have a stake in our community & a responsibility to do our part.

# 2013 Community Impact Awards

This year, United Way of Southeast Alaska presented Community Impact Grant awards totaling \$16,000 to twelve regional non-profit organizations from a pool of sixteen applicants. The twelve funded projects were selected by a volunteer committee chaired by Lance Stevens of Alaska USA Federal Credit Union and comprised of select members of United Way of Southeast Alaska's Board of Directors as well as community members. The total amount of requests was in excess of \$49,400.00.

During the annual giving campaign, donors can direct their contributions directly to United Way of Southeast Alaska, one of our action areas – Education, Income, and Health – or one of our 33 partner agencies. All community impact grant funds are derived directly from donations designated to one of our three action areas.

## The recipients and their projects are listed below:

### Education

- Association for the Education of Young Children - Southeast Alaska (AEYC-SEA) received \$1,500 for their All Aboard For Early Literacy project.
- Girl Scouts of Alaska (Southeast Alaska) received \$1,000 for capacity building in Southeast Alaska.
- Juneau, Alaska Music Matters received \$2,000 for their music instruction program for elementary students.
- Juneau Family Health and Birth Center received \$1,000 for Building Strength in Families: Community Parenting Classes.
- Southeast Alaska Guidance Association (SAGA) received \$1,000 toward the Alaska Youth Service Corps Program
- SERRC (Southeast Regional Resource Center) received \$2,500 for their Family Literacy Center at Gruening Park.

### Income

- Ketchikan Youth Initiatives received \$1,000 for their Hungry for Health program.
- Shepherd of the Valley in Juneau received \$1,500 for their summer lunch program.
- Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL) received \$1,000 for rural community outreach.

### Health

- Alaskan AIDS Assistance Association received \$500 for the Alaska Syringe Access Program.
- Cancer Connection received \$2,000 toward the community health forum in Juneau.
- Women in Safe Homes (WISH) in Ketchikan received \$1,000 toward their family preservation and reunification program.



## Raising Awareness for Interacting with Persons Experiences Disabilities

The Diversity Training on Friday April 26, 2013 had 29 participants and three presenters. The three presenters for the workshop were Jim Beck, Executive Director of Access Alaska; Duane Mayes, Director of the State of Alaska's Division of Senior and Disability Services; and Rich Sanders, staff to the Alaska Governor's Council of Disabilities and Special Education. This workshop helped to create conversation on what has and is happening with disability culture. It is our hope that this workshop will be the basis for more disability workshops that will reach others not only in Juneau, but throughout Alaska. A video of the training is available through United Way of Southeast Alaska.

The presenters were received well, and the feedback directly after the workshop from participants matched that of the feedback from the surveys. The presenters also felt that the workshop had gone well. The surveys revealed many would have likes more guided interaction.

The whole training was filled with inspirational stories. One of Jim Beck's stories focused on Edward Roberts. Ed Roberts helped to push the change in public universities

by forces UC Berkley into accepting him and creating an accessible dorm for people with disabilities. Ed was paralyzed from the neck down from polio. He slept in an iron lung each night and moved around in a powered wheelchair. Roberts was able to inspire many others into joining the civil rights movement. He serves as a reminder that we should not let obstacles stand in your way of something you want.

Duane Mayes told a story about his parents, who were born deaf, and how he had to become an interpreter from an early age. Upon telling this story, the participants gained insight into the mind set of deaf culture. The story allowed participants to witness discrimination against someone with a disability. His father quit his job after many years of never getting a raise because the man hired the same day as him for the same position received one each year. Once his father was able to find another job, one that Duane secretly helped him get, his mother and father never took time off even when sick, from the fear of being replaced. Duane explained that his was a common occurrence with people experiencing disabilities. Bringing awareness to issues such as these will hopefully prevent them in future.



## Local Businesses and Community Members Participate in Day of Caring

Continuing our focus on developing volunteerism in the Juneau community, United Way of Southeast Alaska sponsored a Day of Caring event to kick off their Annual Giving Campaign on Tuesday, October 1, 2013.

Each year, generous local businesses encourage their employees to spend a workday engaged in volunteer projects at local non-profit organizations as part of Day of Caring. This year, United Way matched approximately 50 volunteers from 4 local businesses with 6 projects. Workplace team members volunteered their time and skills in order to complete much needed service projects such as painting entry halls and office spaces, cleaning and sanitizing children's playrooms, landscaping and maintaining flower beds, picking up trash, and constructing a new swing set.

"Juneau's non-profit organizations are always delighted to receive volunteers to help with projects because these projects would otherwise be put on the back burner or not done at all," said Mary Becker, Board Chair.

"Day of Caring offers participants an opportunity to not only lend a hand with valuable projects at local non-profit organizations, but also learn more about these agencies and the valuable services they provide to the Juneau community," said Wayne Stevens,

Director of United Way of Southeast Alaska. "Participants in Day of Caring who give to United Way of Southeast Alaska during their annual workplace campaign are also able to make a personal connection and see how these agencies benefit from their generous contributions."

United Way of Southeast Alaska gratefully acknowledges DIPAC and the Prospector Hotel for use of their facilities as well as Heritage Coffee and Baxter, Bruce and Sullivan for their donations of food to this event.

### Business & Agency Matches:

Community members and personnel from the U.S. Coast Guard constructed a swing set for REACH, Inc.

Personnel from different departments with the City and Borough of Juneau painted walls at Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL) and completed grounds work for Juneau Youth Services.

REACH, INC. landscaped and maintained grounds for Juneau Alliance for Mental Health, Inc. (JAMHI)

True North Federal Credit Union picked up trash along Big Brother Big Sister's stretch of adopt-a-highway.

Wells Fargo Bank and Home Mortgage deep cleaned the basement of AWARE's shelter.



## Cruise for a Cause: Literacy

Through a generous donation by Allen Marine Tours, UWSEAK hosted an evening cruise with dinner at Orca Point Lodge. Guests enjoyed listening to special guests Kelley Harvey and Shannon Avenson, with the Juneau School District, and Jackie D'Cafango Kookesh and Sarah Dybdah, with Sealaska Heritage Institute. These women spoke about the successful community programs helping children and youth achieve their potential

### Why a conversation on literacy?

Education is the cornerstone of individual and community success. Successful completion of high school is crucial for young people to acquire employment suitable for sustaining a family and their health. However, more than 1.2 million children dropping out of high school each year. In Juneau, 5% of district students leave between 7th and 12th grade without a transcript request. Unfortunately, these numbers are even grimmer for young Alaska Natives. Each year, the Alaska Native dropout rate is approximately twice that of the entire district.

United Way of Southeast Alaska understands that, in order to decrease dropout rates in Southeast Alaska,

our focus cannot be on high school students alone. To address the problem of high school dropouts, United Way of Southeast Alaska encourages early learning by supporting the Born Learning initiative and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Recently, United Way of Southeast Alaska launched a Literacy by Third Grade campaign to help ensure children are reading at grade level by the time they complete third grade.

From kindergarten to third grade, successful readers learn the skills that enable them to understand and find meaning in written text. Children who have trouble reading at grade level often struggle in school and drop out as a result while successful readers are more likely to graduate on time and be better prepared to enter the workforce. By placing emphasis on reading success, United Way of Southeast Alaska expects to see graduation rates increase, dropout rates to decrease, and substance abuse rates in young people to decrease. Utilizing our core strengths — committed community partners and public engagement capacity — we can achieve our goal.



United Way Staff with first lady Sandy Parnell.

**United Way of Southeast Alaska is an independently governed, non-profit organization dedicated to strengthening lives, helping people, and improving community conditions in Southeast Alaska. United Way and our partner agencies work to create real, lasting change by addressing the underlying causes of problems within our communities. We support community programs and initiatives that help those in need and also prevent problems from happening in the first place.**

# LEARN UNITED: Reading Tutor Program by: Geoff Kirsch

“Up to fourth grade, you learn to read; after fourth grade, you read to learn,” goes an old elementary education maxim. Turns out, modern science agrees.

Research indicates most students spend kindergarten through the end of their third grade years acquiring basic reading skills. Beginning in fourth grade, however—and continuing on through high school—they employ these skills to research, problem-solve, think critically, act upon ideas and share knowledge.

The problem is, two-thirds of American fourth graders currently read below grade-level. These students will likely remain poor readers for the rest of their academic careers—studies show that without intervention, nearly 75% will never catch up. What’s more, they tend to fall behind in other subjects, as well. Not only does this erode high school graduation rates; it can lead to behavioral and social problems carried well into adulthood.

“Clearly, reading is a building block to life success,” says Wayne Stevens, President of United Way of Southeast Alaska. Teaming up with corporate sponsor Coeur Alaska, United Way runs the fledgling LEARN UNITED Reading Tutor Program, specifically targeting early childhood literacy in Juneau, with future sights set on the entire region.

Now in its second year, the LEARN UNITED Reading Tutor Program works with the public school system to provide constructive guidance, positive encouragement and a literacy-rich setting for elementary school-aged children. Specifically, the program identifies struggling students and matches them with their own volunteer reading tutor.

Here’s how it works: volunteer reading tutors meet with K-2 students one-on-one, twice a week, for thirty minutes a session. These sessions take place during normal school hours or during the after school rally program although never instead of other enrichment programs (or “specials”) such as art, music and physical education. Tutors help students practice reading aloud, discuss passages and provide simple instruction, covering such topics as alphabet, phonics and reading comprehension—as well as the key element of growing into an engaged reader (and writer, for that matter): self-confidence.

“A little reassurance can make a huge difference,” says Stevens.

The LEARN UNITED: Reading Tutor Program arose from the United Way of Southeast Alaska’s “Literacy By Third Grade” campaign, coupled with Coeur Alaska’s desire to partner with the United Way and Juneau School District to make a sustainable difference in elementary school literacy.

Indeed, the worldwide United Way has also recently brought childhood literacy to the forefront, exemplified by a 10-year initiative to halve the high school drop-out rate by 2018, as well as the “Million Reading Tutors” campaign, which seeks to engage one million new volunteer readers, tutors and mentors.

“It’s a multi-pronged effort,” says Stevens, illuminating the broader scope.

He cites another recent partnership with Southeast Regional Resource Center (SER-RC) to build the Gruening Park Family Learning Center, as well as ongoing support for the Association for the Education of Young Children (AEYC) to participate in Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, through which every child in Southeast can register to receive a free, new book in the mail every month from birth to age five.

“Reading is one of those rare skills that once you acquire, it’s pretty hard to lose,” Stevens says. “Plus, every dollar you invest in early childhood saves between \$15-\$20 in future costs to society. That’s a pretty good return on your investment.”

In the case of the LEARN UNITED Reading Tutor Program, Coeur Alaska is the principal sponsor, and, according to Stevens, a prime force behind the program’s success.

“Coeur Alaska is always looking for ways to make a sustainable, positive impact in our community,” says Wayne Zigarlick, Vice President and General Manager of Coeur Alaska. “Literacy is the educational cornerstone for individual and community success, and this investment in our children’s ability to read can help increase the graduation rate, reduce the dropout rate and encourage students to pursue secondary education opportunities.”

As the program’s sponsor, Coeur Alaska provides funding for resources geared to meet each student’s learning needs: books, lesson plans, supporting materials and assessment tools.

In doing so, Coeur Alaska sets a positive example of corporate citizenship for students, to say nothing of all the personal role models it supplies—many LEARN UNITED reading tutors are themselves Coeur employees.

“We encourage our employees as well as other community members to join us in supporting this program,” Zigarlick says. “Just one hour a week is all it takes to make a difference.”

At this point, the LEARN UNITED Reading Tutor Program serves Riverbend Elementary School, its pilot school, although preliminary steps have been set in motion for branching out, this year adding a volunteer coordinator position.

“We’re hoping to grow the program, and are still recruiting volunteers every day,” says Stevens. “Ultimately, though, we hope to use the program as a model for school districts across all of Southeast Alaska.”

Interested in becoming a LEARN UNITED reading tutor? All volunteer tutors receive a two-hour training session in the use of reading tutor materials, as well as how to deliver instructional support and interact productively with younger students. Learn more at [getconnected.unitedwayseak.org](http://getconnected.unitedwayseak.org) or email the LEARN UNITED Reading Tutor Program coordinator at [readingtutor@unitedwayseak.org](mailto:readingtutor@unitedwayseak.org).



# COMMUNITY IMPACT STORIES:

## Brave Heart Volunteers: Sitkans Helping Sitkans Face Devastating Loss

by: Geoff Kirsch

“Yee Gu.aa Yáx X’wán,” goes a traditional Tlingit farewell: “Be of brave heart.”

Of course, that can be easier said than done when facing terminal illness or the physical and mental deterioration that accompany aging—for individuals as well as their families.

“These are intense situations, involving people at very challenging points in their lives,” says Willow Moore, executive director of Brave Heart Volunteers, a non-profit organization that provides free services including education, information, referral, respite, case-management and volunteer visiting for Sitka’s isolated, ill, elderly and grieving.

“Our volunteers—who range in age from families with small children to 90!—help these people maintain the highest quality of life possible, for as long as possible.”

Serving more than 400 Sitkans each quarter—nearly 5% of the city’s population—Brave Heart Volunteers fills a gap common to the small, isolated communities of Southeast Alaska: end-of-life/hospice care and associated bereavement support.

“Sitka’s a great place to live,” says Moore. “We want to extend that to the whole lifecycle. Unless you plan on living forever, you’ll face end-of-life issues sometime. You should face them with the support of your community.”

While Brave Heart’s volunteers are trained (and screened), they don’t provide nursing, per se, although the organization routinely connects care receivers with various medical—not to mention legal and financial—resources.

Rather, volunteers offer “compassionate care”: companionship, conversation and comfort. This ranges from light chores and laundry to shopping and errands, simple meal preparation and yard work to letter writing and reading, or just sitting and visiting.

“Taking care of a parent or spouse with a terminal illness or living with someone who no longer knows who they are can be very challenging,” says Moore, noting BHV care receivers frequently suffer from Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia. “Our volunteers often give the family the gift of time to take a break knowing

their loved ones are in good hands.”

Largely volunteer-driven, year-round and free-of-charge, Brave Heart Volunteers is a prime example of United Way’s “Live United” movement, a collective belief in the power of working together for a common purpose. The Brave Heart volunteer roster numbers in the hundreds—an end-of-life situation can involve as many as 20 for each care receiver—and family members of care receivers routinely become volunteers, themselves.

“The families we serve like to thank us by volunteering,” says Moore. “And more than 80% become donors.”

Given the scope of its services—BHV also runs caregiver support and education groups, legal and financial planning workshops, grief counseling and a drop-in lending library/resource room, in addition to music and storytelling groups at the Pioneer Home—it’s surprising to learn that Brave Heart Volunteers is only 12-years-old, especially considering its grassroots origins.

Like other Panhandle towns, Sitka boasts a large (and growing) aging population. This, coupled with geographic isolation from other communities, creates a large (and growing) need for hospice services.

Seeing this gap, a handful of dedicated Sitkans led by two nurses, Aurelia Hughes and Jean Frank, brought Southeast Alaska’s trademark do-it-yourself spirit to community service, originally founding the organization in 2001 under the name Faith in Action.

Meetings were held, committees formed, proposals drafted. In 2002, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation awarded the fledgling organization a start-up and development grant; within a year, volunteer visiting began. In 2004, the group received its Tlingit name, “Yee Gu.aa Yáx X’wán,” reflecting the essential Tlingit value of respect for elders, parents and self.

Officially changing its name to Brave Heart Volunteers in 2007, recently, the focus has expanded to defining organizational milestones, setting up endowments and developing plans for long-term sustainability. If this seems a tall order for a full-time staff of two—Moore and program director Amanda Taylor—it is.

“Again, volunteers are key,” says Taylor, who, along with “dabbling

in a bit of everything—fundraising, planning, media” oversees training, conducts intake and matches volunteers with care receivers.

In addition to local volunteers and a volunteer from the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, Brave Heart Volunteers benefits from AmeriCorps, a federal program that engages adults in intensive community service work.

BHV’s AmeriCorps volunteer position, funded in part by a Community Impact Grant from United Way of Southeast Alaska, not only coordinates care schedules, but also works one-on-one with care receivers—some BHV AmeriCorps volunteers have served as many as seven families.

“Our AmeriCorps volunteers are indispensable,” says Taylor. “Not only for meeting community needs. By enabling more active fundraising, they’re gifts that keep on giving.”

And she should know. Taylor, herself, originally came to Brave Heart Volunteers as an AmeriCorps volunteer in what was supposed to be a ten-month program. That was 2010. Three years later, she’s still there, after a second AmeriCorps stint, a part-time position and, ultimately, assuming her current role.

“I guess you could say I liked the experience,” says Taylor, admitting Sitka’s natural beauty also played a role in her decision to stay.

“Mostly, I felt responsible for the community as part of the community,” she says. “All Sitka seems to feel that way. It’s like we’re on this island, and we all have to look out for each other. Really, Brave Heart Volunteers is just about taking care of your neighbor.”

Though she speaks blithely about it now, Taylor arrived with limited experience dealing with the ill or elderly.

“I came in a little blind,” says Taylor, who describes suffering “nerves” on her first volunteer visit.

“It took a while, especially with end-of-life families. But I observed, I learned. Now, I look forward to working with them. You can see the relief, the peace of mind. It’s almost like they can breathe again.”



*First National Bank: We would like to extend a huge thanks to First National Bank of Alaska and their employees for their incredible commitment to the Southeast Alaska community through workplace giving. The amount represents the \$12,864.20 pledged from First National Bank employees in the 2013 campaign.*



*Coeur Alaska: Thank you to Coeur Alaska for the amazing support that you provide to Southeast Alaska through United Way! This amount represents the pledged amount for the 2013 annual campaign of \$17,500 from 56 employees of Coeur Alaska Kensington Mine and a matching corporate gift of \$5,000 from Coeur Alaska, Kensington Mine. Your commitment to Southeast shows through your generous support!*



*Brave Heart Volunteers*



*Girls on the Run, photo by Klas Stolpe, Juneau Empire*

## Girls on the Run: Lessons for Running the Race of Life

*by: Geoff Kirsch*

Of all the aspects of Girls on the Run Southeast Alaska—a 12-week, 24-session after school program for girls aged 8-14—most intriguingly, running is only part of it.

“Really, the running is a vehicle,” says Ati Nasiah, Prevention Manager at AWARE and Girls on the Run Southeast Alaska Council Director. “We use it to empower girls to believe in themselves and celebrate their own uniqueness.”

Motivating pre-teen girls to live joyful, confident and healthy lives, Girls on the Run combines training for a 5K “run” with a core curriculum based on healthy decision-making, self-respect and community service.

“We offer girls lessons for running the race of life,” Nasiah says. “What it means to set a goal and achieve it, and also that the ‘impossible’ can be possible.”

Meeting twice a week in teams of 7-20 girls, five coaches per team, GOTR teaches life skills through physical training, education, teamwork and mentoring. In addition to running exercises, each one-and-a-half hour session includes dynamic lessons and discussions on topics like bullying, gossip, peer pressure, body image, eating attitudes and gender stereotypes—what Nasiah terms “breaking out of the girl box.”

“Not only are we helping girls avoid the pitfalls of adolescence; we’re inspiring them to dream big, recognize their inner strength, activate their limitless potential and live in a world where all girls and women are safe and respected,” she says.

In this way, Girls on the Run Southeast Alaska is a thriving example of the United Way’s “Live United” movement, influencing conditions for all by extending a hand to one.

While AWARE runs the program in Juneau, partnerships with WISH in Ketchikan and SAFV in Sitka enable GOTR to reach all towns and villages along the Alaskan Panhandle. The program harnesses the efforts of hundreds of volunteers—each specially trained to deliver GOTR’s curriculum (as well as CPR and basic

first-aid)—with programs in Yakutat, Hoonah, Haines, Skagway, Gustavus, Wrangell, Petersburg, Ketchikan, Sitka, Juneau and Angoon.

And though every coach receives the same training and curriculum, in each community—and even team-to-team in the same community—Girls on the Run looks and feels different.

“They’re all made up of different women and girls,” Nasiah explains. “Each brings her own particular insight, heart and... let’s call it ‘sparkle’

Despite its barely five years of existence, GOTR Southeast Alaska has literally served almost 1000 girls across the region—284 in the 2011-2012 academic year alone. Because each team completes its own community service project during the season, GOTR is also raising a new generation of young, strong, socially-conscious Southeast Alaskans—female Southeast Alaskans—actively working toward the common good.

While AWARE has aided women in abuse and rape emergencies for decades, until recently the organization concentrated mostly on crisis intervention. Over the last 10 years or so, however, it began looking at domestic violence from a public health angle.

Enter Juneau Violence Prevention Coalition (JVPC), comprised of community members from various organizations, including AWARE, coming together for preventing first-time victimization and perpetration of domestic violence.

“We started talking about promoting youth as agents of change,” says Nasiah, crediting collaboration much in the spirit of “Living United” for GOTR’s birth in 2007. “That’s also the reason for its success: the many agencies, partners and volunteers all teaming up to take on a challenge.”

Through these discussions, the brainstorming group happened upon Girls on the Run International, an umbrella organization founded in 1996 by four-time Ironman tri-athlete Molly Barker.

“We immediately fell in love with the curriculum,” Nasiah says. Particularly attractive: to keep the lessons age-appropriate, Girls

on the Run operates two distinct programs, “Girls on the Run,” for 3rd–5th graders, and “Girls on Track,” directed at 6th–8th graders.

With several grants and the support of JVPC and AWARE, Girls on the Run Juneau became a local chapter, or “council,” in 2008, piloting the program at one middle school and one elementary school. Within a year, organizations began reaching out to GOTR Juneau wondering if they’d be willing to accept more resources and expand GOTR to all of Southeast Alaska.

Since then, GOTR Southeast Alaska has grown by leaps and bounds. Ultimately, Nasiah would like to see GOTR accept every girl expressing interest. Right now, enrollment occurs on a first-come, first-served basis, and costs \$100 per girl, although any family can apply for and receive a scholarship “without question.”

In 2012, these scholarships were partly funded by United Way of Southeast Alaska, through a Community Impact Grant, awarded to ten non-profit organizations across the region.

“The United Way is a huge resource linking us with youth services,” Nasiah says. “It and all its partner agencies may have different missions and tactics, but essentially, we’re all working to build healthy communities.”

The program has also benefited from hiring a full-time staffer, Julie Walker, who assumed the role of GOTR Advocate this past fall.

Walker recruits coaches, students and schools as well as handling coach training and day-to-day support.

“It’s extremely rewarding to be part of something that’s making a difference,” Walker says. “The lessons are geared toward girls, but in the process, as coach, you also learn a lot about being a woman.”

Child or adult, Walker describes an almost universal boost in confidence from finishing the concluding 5K event, regardless of a participant’s speed.

“Hop, skip, walk, run—as long as you keep moving forward.”

## Healing Families by Feeding Families: Ketchikan's WISH Family Services

by: Geoff Kirsch

"After a good dinner one can forgive anybody, even one's own relations."

-- Oscar Wilde

"One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well."

-- Virginia Wolfe

As anyone who's ever hosted a meeting or gathering in Southeast Alaska can attest, if you want people to attend—not to mention participate—you've got to provide food.

But for Ketchikan's Women in Safe Homes (WISH) Family Services division, food's importance cuts even deeper. Simply put: food heals families.

"When people nourish themselves better, they feel healthier, think better, problem solve better and react to stress better," says Beth Bogarde, WISH Family Services Manager. "These things make a family cope with each other better."

Obviously, there's no closer relationship than family—in the communities that dot the Panhandle, the definition of "family" often extends to the broader kinship of an entire town or village (an idea United Way terms "Living United"). And food plays an integral part in defining family roles, rules and traditions. More than that, though, a steadily increasing number of the families served by WISH Family Services—20-30 per quarter in Ketchikan and Metlakatla—survive on minimal sustenance.

"Honestly, the snacks we bring into the homes may be the only snacks the children get; the meals we provide may be the only 'solid' meal many of the adults will eat all day," says Bogarde.

But make no mistake. While the nutrition component plays a part in all its services, WISH Family Services is not a food program, per se. WISH, itself, is a crisis intervention organization, providing shelter, support, advocacy and education for people impacted by domestic violence, sexual assault/abuse.

Several years ago, WISH Family Services division evolved out of a similar but far smaller program housed within the shelter. Today, WISH Family Services has branched out into two programs: Family Preservation Services and Time-Limited Reunification.

Through Family Preservation Services, WISH works with intact families to strengthen inter-familial relations, thereby reducing the likelihood of neglect and/or domestic violence. Working in the

homes—some families, up to four times a week, for several hours at a time—WISH Family Preservation also offers help with employment, public assistance and educational opportunities.

"We talk a lot about functioning as a stronger family: positive discipline, how to alleviate tension in the home and, of course, nutrition," says Bogarde, also noting the importance of parent-child activities to family harmony. "A family that has fun together, bonds together, and what better way to bond than preparing and sharing food together?"

The other half of WISH Family Services program, Time-Limited Reunification, serves families in which the children have been removed from the home.

WISH tries to facilitate reunification whenever possible, however it can. This includes closely following parents' case plans and progress, transporting children to visitation and even supervising visits, in addition to meeting with parents one-on-one.

"It's a very large job. We're constantly thinking of ways to help every family we serve, and every family is different," says Bogarde, explaining that this often entails helping families through medical, housing, public assistance and legal issues.

Preventative and long term in nature, WISH Family Services can work with family for a year or longer until it's not only reunited, but stabilized.

"Our goal is to help families develop strategies so they don't need us any more," she says, jokingly. "We're working really hard to put ourselves out of a job."

WISH also conducts parenting seminars, both in Ketchikan and Metlakatla, open to the whole community. During these eight-week sessions, seminar leaders discuss such topics as childhood developmental stages, anger management strategies and parenting while in recovery for substance abuse. These seminars cover nutrition extensively—specifically meals.

In modern society, it's quicker, easier and, sadly, less expensive to eat fast, processed food. But in the long term, we pay for that convenience with our health.

"Families don't realize the importance of healthy food, and students don't perform as well in school. Irritability increases, both in children and adults, at times, simply due to poor nutrition," Bogarde says.

Not only does WISH Family Services provide the food, it also

teaches recipes and preparation techniques, as well as strategies for week long meal planning and tips to stretch food budgets further.

Sometimes, Bogarde explains, it's as simple as teaching families to try whole wheat crackers or celery with peanut butter, instead of white bread. It also entails staying abreast of available commodities.

"Suppose there's a sale on brown rice," she says. "We talk about various ways to use it as well as how to incorporate other ingredients you may have on hand."

Of course, WISH Family Services also incorporates a particularly Alaskan practice into its nutrition education.

"Especially in Metlakatla, many people still subsistence fish, hunt and gather—these offer perfect opportunities for family strengthening and unity."

Every eight-week parenting course ends with a graduation dinner, with a menu planned, cooked, served and shared by the graduates.

"When people go through the parenting class together, they share their thoughts on some pretty intense topics," Bogarde says. "The dinner is another way of sharing."

Now, all this food begs the obvious question: who pays for it? WISH Family Services relies almost entirely on grant funding through the State of Alaska, yet these grants make no provision for food.

Enter United Way of Southeast Alaska's 2013 Community Impact Grant, awarded to ten non-profit organizations across the region.

"The meals and snacks we provide—and the Community Impact Grant pays for—make a huge difference," says Bogarde. "Without the United Way of Southeast Alaska and the Community Impact Grant we wouldn't be able to do any of it."

By strengthening families, by extension WISH Family Services strengthens the whole community. This is a prime example of United Way's "Living United" moment, whereby extending a hand to one improves society for all.

"United Way plays a vital role not only in our organization, but many other non-profit organizations in the community," says Bogarde. "We're all working together to cast as wide a social net as we can."

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## CONTACT US:

**A:** United Way of Southeast Alaska  
3225 Hospital Drive, Suite 201  
Juneau, AK 99801

**P:** 907.463.5530

**W:** [www.UnitedWaySEAK.org](http://www.UnitedWaySEAK.org)

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