

ENGAGING A NEW GENERATION OF VOLUNTEERS

Jennifer Treadway, United Way of Southeast Alaska Board of Directors



Like many Juneau transplants, Jennifer Treadway, came for a job; uniquely, she stayed to volunteer.

“I fell in love with Alaska,” she says of her post-collegiate internship at the Juneau-Douglas City Museum in 2010.

“When the year was up, I wasn’t ready to leave,” she says. So she did another internship, with the Alaska State Archives.

“When *that* year was up, I still wasn’t ready to leave,” Treadway explains. “So I became an AmeriCorps volunteer with the United Way.”

This, as they say, was the beginning of a beautiful friendship, not only with the United Way of Southeast Alaska, but community service in general. Treadway has since completed her AmeriCorps service, plus a paid stint as the United Way’s resource development director. Currently, she volunteers on its Board of Directors.

“It’s important to give back to a community that’s embraced me so wholeheartedly,” Treadway says.

Why the United Way?

“They serve everyone, really,” she says. “By serving the United Way, I serve everyone, too.”

Like all volunteer board members, Treadway provides operational and financial oversight. She’s also the secretary. Perhaps more importantly, as a younger member, she brings the millennial perspective. Her focus: reaching and engaging a deeply civic-minded age group that favors volunteering to charitable giving.

“We’re still trying to stabilize, financially,” she says. “But we’re passionate. We’ve got energy. Give us volunteer opportunities to be passionate about.”

Treadway speaks of “increasing brand recognition” and “meeting us where we are,” which can sometimes be tricky for the more traditionally minded. She also recommends specifically mission-oriented tasks—“we like tangible results in real-time”—using the many skills millennial volunteers might bring.

Of course, Treadway places some responsibility on younger volunteers, too.

“Think about the skills you can bring to a local non-profit and offer them,” she says.

Overall, Treadway describes volunteer community service as mutually beneficial.

“When you volunteer, you meet people you might not ordinarily encounter,” she says. “That’s how you grow into a well-rounded citizen.”