

## News Release 2008

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### UNITED WAY OF WHATCOM COUNTY ANNOUNCES TWO NEW PROGRAMS RECEIVING COMMUNITY SAFETY NET FUNDS

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**Bellingham-** United Way of Whatcom County announced almost \$1.2 million in grants from the Community Safety Net was recently awarded to 31 partner agencies. The organization broke all previous fundraising records with more than 300 Whatcom County businesses and their employees giving back to the community by participating in the organization's annual work place fundraising campaign. Contributions were given as direct designations to the donor's charity of choice or were contributed to the Community Safety Net, a pool of funding distributed to local non-profit Partner Agencies through a volunteer process.

All grant applicants from Partner Agencies were carefully reviewed by the Fund Distribution Committee, a group of over 50 local volunteers. Over 300 hours were spent evaluating each of the Partner Agency applications, touring and reviewing program facilities, assessing the benefits each program provides, and researching the current needs in our community. The Committee presented their recommendations which were then approved by the United Way of Whatcom County Board of Directors.

"In today's economy we are seeing a significant increase for services," said Peter Theisen, United Way of Whatcom County President. "United Way is responding by raising more money than ever and using that money wisely. Our fund distribution process insures the donated funds are supporting crucial community needs."

Two new programs receiving funding this year include Interfaith Community Health Center's Dental Access Project and the Bellingham Food Bank.

Interfaith Community Health Center, a long time United Way of Whatcom County Partner Agency, was awarded a grant for its Dental Access Project. The program provides dental care to all of Whatcom County, regardless of ability to pay. In 2007, a needs assessment conducted by the Whatcom Coalition for Healthy Communities discovered that the most needed and least accessible service for residents of Whatcom County is dental care. The Fund Distribution Committee took this into consideration when deciding where to allocate funds.

“Funds from United Way of Whatcom County support a new dental access coordinator position at the health center. This person is responsible for coordinating our mobile dental program that targets low income children in Head Start programs, other day care centers and elementary schools; coordinating our Donated Adult Dental Services (DADS) Program where local, private dentists volunteer two days per month for adult care, and other dental outreach activities,” said Rebecca Johnson, Development Director of Interfaith Community Health Center. “We are very excited about increasing dental care access because there is such a huge need.”

The Bellingham Food Bank is Whatcom County’s largest emergency food provider, giving free groceries to those in need and distributing food to smaller food banks throughout the county. This year the food bank has seen a 30 percent increase in requests for food services.

“The need for food services is surpassing anything we have ever seen,” said Mike Cohen, Executive Director of the Bellingham Food Bank. “The financial support from United Way of Whatcom County is critical as we are getting busier and it is equally important that our agency has been included in the network of [United Way] partner agencies.”

United Way of Whatcom County has worked for over 50 years to increase financial resources for local health and human service needs, and to seek and invest in community-building opportunities to improve the health and welfare of Whatcom County residents.

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