

News Release 2013

March 15, 2013

For more information, contact:

Peter Theisen, United Way of Whatcom County, ptheisen@unitedwaywhatcom.org, (360)733-8670

Tamara Tregoning, United Way of Whatcom County, ttregoning@unitedwaywhatcom.org, (360)733-8670

UNITED WAY CELEBRATES CAMPAIGN SUCCESS, GIVES SNEAK PEEK AT NEW PROGRAM WITH FERNDALE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Bellingham— The United Way of Whatcom County's Awards Banquet to honor the individuals and organizations who made the Fall 2012 Work-place Giving Campaign such a success, had a record breaking attendance of nearly 300 people, the most attendees in the history of the organization. The event was hosted at the Best Western Lakeway Inn on March 14th and highlighted people and organizations that are determined to make a difference in our community.

With thousands of participating donors along with many volunteer hours from hundreds of individuals, this year's Fall Work-place Giving Campaign was a huge success, raising more than \$2 million and still growing.

"Contributions from over 160 workplaces have built a strong Community Impact Fund which will be invested in programs that seek to directly improve the education, financial stability and health of Whatcom County residents," said Peter Theisen, President of United way of Whatcom County.

At Thursday's banquet more than 25 business and individuals were recognized by United Way for their overachieving contributions during the Campaign. The Campaign Champion award is given to the volunteer who put in a tremendous amount of effort and advocacy in the Campaign. Ray Perry, of Heath Tecna (one of the foremost suppliers of airplane interior products) was the recipient this year after accomplishing a 63% increase in employee giving and helping to start their first ever corporate matching program with United Way. The Spirit of United Way Award, which embodies the ideals of United Way in community support, was presented to Sargento Foods. Even though their plant is relocating to Wisconsin, the employees still had an extremely successful Campaign to leave a legacy for our community as they move on. The Joseph and Anne McClain award, one of the most prestigious awards given to the company who showed the most outstanding Campaign success, was given to PowerTek Electric who had both a 39% increase in donations as well as a 40% increase in participation and a record breaking amount of donors who contributed more than \$1,000 a person.

Other award winners included Opportunity Council, Ferndale School District, Matrix Services, The Unity Group, Costco, PSE, and WECU. A full list of winners is available at unitedwaywhatcom.org.

The Workplace Giving Campaign is made possible through the Community Builder Program, which allows companies to sponsor the Campaign and underwrite its costs. Community Builder Participants included: BP Cherry

Point Refinery, Banner Bank, Matrix Service Inc., Peace Health St. Joseph Medical Center, WECU, Boeing, Williams Company, Macy's, Samson Rope, Sargento Foods, CH2M HILL, Bellingham Cold Storage, Phillips66 Ferndale Refinery, and PSE.

United Way supports several programs in Whatcom County that foster early learning education to prepare children for school readiness. At the Awards Banquet the Ferndale School District shared a special video with an inside look at their new collaborative program, Early Learning Connections, that is being funded by United Way. The Early Learning Connections program works with a variety of non-profits to help children learn basic classroom skills so that when they enter kindergarten they already have the tools to succeed in a structured environment. It provides early learning immersion for pre-school aged Ferndale children as well as transportation to enable families to participate in the program together. Getting the parents involved as well as the eager children has helped foster new connections in families and instills early literacy even before entering school.

Along with early learning, funds raised during the Campaign will be invested in Whatcom County programs that will:

- Improve graduation rates
- build skills for families to have greater financial stability
- Increase independence and stability for vulnerable populations
- Reduce substance abuse, child abuse, and domestic violence
- Increase access to critical health care service

“Our work is focused on building a stronger community for everyone. We all win when a child succeeds, when a neighborhood turns around, and when everyone has good health,” said Theisen.

The next step with the Community Impact Funds raised during the Campaign will be to gather a team of local volunteers to review programs and conduct site visits in order to allocate funds to make an impact in Education, Income, and Health. Funds are allocated by teams of community volunteers based on the need and relevancy of the program within the community. All funded programs must show proof of long-term, measurable impact and address key goals and issues to affect Education, Income or Health. Those interested in participating on the committee are encouraged to contact United Way of Whatcom County.

United Way of Whatcom County has worked for over 50 years to improve lives by mobilizing individuals and organizations to create long-term change by investing in Education, Income and Health for all Whatcom County residents. To learn more about United Way of Whatcom County visit www.unitedwaywhatcom.org or check out their Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/UnitedWayWhatcom>

###