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UNITED WAY OF WHATCOM COUNTY EXPANDS PARTNERS, ANNOUNCES GRANT RECIPIENTS

Bellingham, WA- To better address key community-wide issues in Education, Income, and Health United Way of Whatcom County announced new partnerships along with strengthening their long-time partnerships with local programs and organizations. The change to an open, responsive and proactive funding system is a big step forward in terms of getting ahead of community issues and focusing on solutions. Each funded program uses strategies and best practices aligned with United Way's specific goals in order to build a stronger community for all.

After a month-long process of reviewing grants and visiting programs, the United Way's volunteer Fund Distribution Committee made their decisions for which programs to fund and total amounts per program. This committee, whose members range from stay at home dads to bank executives, is made up of 30+ community members and split into three panels (Education, Income, and Health). They dedicated countless hours to the task and ultimately based their decisions on partnering with programs that will best help United Way achieve specific community-wide goals.

The Education Panel was tasked with awarding funding to programs that create stable and healthy families and children, achieve school readiness for kindergartners, and increase the high school graduation rate by preparing youth to succeed. One of the new partners the panel chose to invest in is the Home Port Learning Center which is designed to address the community need to reengage Whatcom County students that have dropped out of school and return them to school, employment or training programs. The Panel felt very strongly about the impacts of this program and were excited to partner with them in their efforts to increase the graduation rate. Other examples of programs that received support from the Education Panel include the Affordable Childcare Program at the Bellingham Childcare & Learning Center, Academic Success & Healthy Lifestyles programs at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Whatcom County, and Early Learning and School-Age Enrichment programs at the Whatcom Family YMCA.

"On behalf of the Board of Directors of Home Port Learning Center I wish to thank United Way of Whatcom County and especially the volunteers of the Education Panel in recognizing the dedication of our staff and the academic achievements of the students," said Steve Paus, President of the Board of Directors of Home Port Learning Center, "The grant we receive will result in making our program more effective and increase our ability to measure the

results of our work. We look forward to joining with the other partner agencies in helping with next year's campaign."

The Income Panel's goals were to support programs that increase financial stability, increase overall income, and increase safe, stable, and affordable housing. Two new partners were supported by this panel: the Food To Bank On project through Sustainable Connections, and the Individualized Employee Program at Work Opportunities. Both programs will support financial stability for a variety of local populations including vulnerable adults and low-income families. Along with these new partners the Panel also chose to continue partnerships with many programs including the Transitional Residence Program at Lydia Place, Transitional Housing Program at Northwest Youth Services, Financial Stability Program at the Opportunity Council, and the Literacy Tutoring for Adults Program at the Whatcom Literacy Council.

"The United Way is a major contributor to the health and wellbeing of our community. The funds United Way awards to the Opportunity Council are essential in meeting the needs of the people we serve. They are the glue that binds other, often fragmented, funding sources. We value not only the funds we receive but also the support United Way provides to smaller nonprofits that deliver critical services because no one agency can do it all. We are all in this together, helping stem intergenerational poverty and making Whatcom County a healthy and safe place to live," said Dave Finet, Executive Director of the Opportunity Council.

Ensuring healthy and active living, increasing health care access and prevention, and increased safety were the goals the Health Panel was focused on for their funding decisions. They brought on two new partners: The Intensive Case Management Program at the Whatcom Alliance for Health Advancement (WAHA), and the Senior Nutrition Program at the Whatcom Council on Aging. Both of these programs fill an important need to keep vulnerable populations healthy and active. The Panel chose to continue partnerships with many health focused programs, including: Child Abuse Prevention Program through Brigid Collins Family Support Center, Recreational Services for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities through the Max Higbee Center, and the Integrated Behavioral Health Project at Interfaith Community Health Center.

"WAHA's Intensive Case Management (ICM) Program is a shared community resource, functioning both between and within organizations, intent on helping the most vulnerable members of our community reach their health goals. Having our ICM Program vetted and selected by community volunteers to become a United Way funded program showcases its value, both in terms of value to the community and return on investment," said Larry Thompson, Executive Director, Whatcom Alliance for Health Advancement.

A total of \$1.07+ million in Community Impact Funds were allocated to 40 local programs. Another \$227,000+ was contributed to donor specified programs for a total United Way investment of \$1.3 million for Whatcom County. More funds will be invested in community initiatives throughout the year, such as an early literacy outreach program with the Ferndale School district, sponsorship of the Homeless in Bellingham film project, distribution of the FamilyWize prescription discount cards, fiscal sponsorship of Project Homeless Connect, and other opportunities focused on advancing Education, Income, and Health for all.

“These issues affect us all. Increasing the graduation rate produces more individuals with the skills needed for the workplace, more families with a roof overhead provides a foundation for a stable life and stable neighborhoods, and we all flourish when friends and neighbors are healthy and safe from abuse. United Way is about more than short-term charity for a few; we’re about lasting solutions that build opportunity for everyone,” said Peter Theisen, President/CEO of United Way of Whatcom County.

About United Way of Whatcom County

United Way of Whatcom County’s mission is to improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of our communities to advance the common good through Education, Income, and Health. They provide leadership that galvanizes and connects a diverse set of individuals and institutions, and mobilize human and financial resources, to create long-term social change by advancing Education, Income, and Health for all. United Way of Whatcom County’s goals for the community involve: helping children/youth achieve their potential through academic success, ensuring individuals/families achieve financial stability and economic independence, and building individuals who are healthy and avoid risky behaviors. 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>

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