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UNITED WAYS AND FAMILYWIZE HELP MORE THAN 5 MILLION PEOPLE 8,464 PEOPLE IN WHATCOM COUNTY SAVED \$670,000+ ON MEDICATION

Bellingham - United Way of Whatcom County and FamilyWize Community Service Partnership, the nation's leading provider of free prescription drug discount cards, along with 1,000 other local United Ways today announced the milestone achievement of having helped more than 5 million people have access to medication they otherwise would not have been able to afford. Locally, 8,464 people in Whatcom County have been directly helped by this program.

“Saving people money on necessary prescriptions is vital to the health and well-being of our families and our community,” said Peter Theisen, President and CEO, United Way of Whatcom County. “Too often, not taking medicine you need because you can’t afford it begins a series of consequences that could start with disease progression and end with large medical bills or even bankruptcy.”

“United Way is focusing on creating opportunity for all by improving health, education and financial stability,” said Stacey Stewart, U.S. President of United Way Worldwide. “Our partnership with FamilyWize helps us advance that cause, and 1,000 United Ways across America are helping people be healthier and more productive.”

Since 2005, FamilyWize, United Ways and pharmacies around the country have helped people stay healthy and productive in more than 95% of all U.S. counties. The partnership has provided free prescription discount cards that help people get the medicine they need, accounting for more than \$500 million in direct savings on prescriptions. Patients in Whatcom County have saved \$670,345 since the program began.

Dan Barnes, president and CEO of FamilyWize, noted the significance of reaching the \$500 million milestone, explaining that, “We set an ambitious goal for our partnership - to help families save \$1 billion on the cost of medications by the end of 2015. Now we’re halfway there.”

Studies show the partnership addresses a critical need. According to *Consumer Reports*, Americans who are financially strapped tend to skip medicine or lower their dosages. A *New England Journal of Medicine* article reported that the cost of medicine not taken exceeds \$100 billion each year on avoidable hospitalizations and \$177 billion on additional healthcare costs. And a Harvard University/CVS Caremark study shows that taking medicine as prescribed can save as much as \$7,800 per patient annually, money that otherwise would be spent on

emergency rooms, hospitalizations, tests and other procedures. Financial complications that often arise when necessary medicine isn't taken as prescribed include absenteeism, job losses, mortgage forfeitures and bankruptcies.

"The United Way - FamilyWize partnership demonstrates how a grassroots initiative can help individuals and communities avoid such consequences," Theisen added. "We provide these free prescription discount cards to local social service agencies, faith-based organizations, schools, community centers, local government and healthcare providers so everyone can get the medicine they need."

Many local pharmacists and physicians also assist by providing cards or making their patients aware of how to get a card, either through United Way of Whatcom County, the FamilyWize.org site or even via text by sending the word "family" to 700700 to receive a Rx discount card via text.

Savings are often as high as 75% off the price charged without the card, which can be used for any FDA approved medicine at most pharmacies. With average savings of about \$20 per prescription, the FamilyWize card often means families can avoid an unpleasant choice between getting medicine or buying food.

To compare discounted prices of prescriptions at nearby pharmacies or for more about the program, visit FamilyWize.org

The FamilyWize Community Service Partnership was established in 2005 to help people get the medicine they need. Today, more than 50,000 community agencies, coordinated by nearly 1,000 participating United Ways and America's Promise Alliance Partners in all 50 states coordinate local distribution of the free [FamilyWize prescription drug discount cards](http://FamilyWize.org), which lower the cost of medicine by up to 75%. As of May 2013, the free FamilyWize cards have helped more than five million people save over \$500 million. For more information, visit FamilyWize.org/about-us

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>

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