

## Op-Ed 2013

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### ICU AND UNITED WAY – COLLECTIVELY IMPACTING THE COMMUNITY

As a local credit union, ICU is tuned into the financial needs of Whatcom County residents and we understand the complex challenges many of them face. As a business that cares about the communities in which we live and work, we believe that supporting United Way's Community Impact Fund is an important part of what we do in order to make a collective impact here in Whatcom County.

ICU has a long history of giving back, not just to our members, but to Whatcom County as a whole. Whether it's through our Feed the Need Community Food Drive, which we started over 20 years ago, or our strategic partnerships with businesses, government and organizations designed to support local farmers, small businesses, neighbors and friends, we are committed to working together to create a stronger, healthier community. These partnerships, that cooperation, and the collaboration of many individuals working toward shared goals make our community stronger and create positive impacts for all of us.

By participating in United Way's annual workplace giving efforts, we are able to offer an easy, fun and inspiring way for ICU to make a difference. Each year, we invite United Way into our business to provide information about the work they are doing in our community and how we can be a part of it.

When I was a young parent, my children benefited from United Way funded programs. Now I have the pleasure of employing young parents, and I'm proud to work for an organization that cares enough to help keep these programs going. For me, it's not just about those who benefit from services supported by United Way, because we all benefit from individuals and families becoming stronger. But, it's also about employees who participate by giving and distributing the funds— people who recognize the issues in our community and want to be part of the solution.

For several years, I have encouraged staff members to serve on the United Way Fund Distribution Committee. This group consists of volunteers who invest a significant amount of time and effort in researching each funding request

and deciding where and how United Way Community Impact Fund dollars will be best invested to create maximum impact in Education, Income, and Health in Whatcom County.

This year, I had an employee who served on the allocations committee in the Education area. This individual has been a long time financial supporter, and had decided this was the year to stretch his commitment just a little bit more. Through the fund distribution process, he was able to visit and learn about many United Way supported programs and how they are part of a larger system, all of them working together to raise the levels of Education, Income and Health for all. When the process was over, we talked at length about the amazing efforts that are being made in our communities and the impact Industrial Credit Union makes through our collective United Way contributions. This staff member is filled with inspiration about all that is being done and continues to talk with fellow employees to focus on the good we can do by working together, collectively.

We have a motto at ICU that guides our choices and decisions: Smart with Heart. We believe it is smart to encourage our employees to participate in supporting our community. We believe it is smart as a company to put our money where our mouth is by matching the donations they make. We believe that the result of being good stewards in our community is that our hearts grow larger and stronger, along with our communities. This is why we give, advocate and volunteer. This is why we choose to LIVE UNITED.

I would like to invite you to join ICU, along with hundreds of local businesses, organizations and individuals who are committed to working together to make Whatcom County stronger. If your organization has a United Way Campaign, make it the best that it can be. If you don't have a United Way Campaign, I encourage you to contact United Way of Whatcom County to get one started. It's a great way to get your business and your staff involved in a movement that is impacting our entire community.

Terri Salstrom  
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