

United Way of Mason County kicks off campaign

Goal is \$235K to help 22 agencies

By GORDON WEEKS
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United Way of Mason County is launching its fall fundraising campaign to help families become financially stable, promote healthful eating, expand access to health care and help educate youth and adults.

Most of the workplace United Way collection campaigns kick off in September and wrap up by Thanksgiving, but drives are conducted all year long. The Walmart in Shelton conducts its campaign in February, and Fred Meyer in May.

This year's fundraising goal is \$235,000, said Carrie Lemon, the executive director of United Way of Mason County. Last year's campaign collected \$274,000, she said.

The 22 agencies funded by United Way of Mason County for 2015-16 include the Hood Canal Food Bank, the Mason County Senior Activities Association, Sound Learning, the Asset Building Coalition of Mason County, North Mason Resources, CareNet Pregnancy Center, Turning Pointe Domestic Violence Services, Community Food Pantry in Belfair and Harmony Hill Retreat Center in Union.

United Way of Mason County reports that in 2014, donations helped 1,233 local people



Shelton residents Janice Swisher and Steve Townsend play cribbage Tuesday morning at the Mason County Senior Activities Center at the Pavilion in Shelton.

Journal photo by Gordon Weeks

save \$124,900 on prescription medicine. The donations provided resources to help 145 low-income adults and teenagers improve their English, reading, writing and math skills.

The donations also helped provide shelter to 475 people in 119 families, and gave clothing, hygiene items, diapers and school supplies to 236 children.

United Way accepts applications for the donations from organizations that address at least one of the following areas: education, income and basic needs, and health.

Interested agencies and groups can call United Way at 426-4999.

Starting last year, nonprofit groups received funds from United Way for two years instead of one. The second year

of funding is contingent on the agency maintaining its programs and the money being available.

The goal of the group is "to not just put on a Band-Aid, but seek long-term solutions," Lemmon said at a fundraising kickoff event on Sept. 16 at Maple Glen Retirement Community in Shelton.

The agencies will apply for the grants in January. United

Way representatives will then interview the heads of the agencies and visit the organization sites.

United Way of Mason County's other programs include its volunteer center, the Day of Caring fundraiser, the Community Services Group, RSVP Community Jobs and Reading Buddies. The agency also distributes free prescription drug discount cards through its FamilyWize program, and offers health and human services information and referrals through the service Washington Information Network 2-1-1.

The agency is also called upon to mobilize resources during disasters, like last summer's fire in Matlock that destroyed several homes, Lemon said.

United Way sent the message out to its 22 partner agencies, which prompted an outpouring of donations that included clothes, sheets and food, she said.

United Way of Mason County is partnering with Mason Transit Authority to host a volunteer summit from 3 to 6 p.m. Oct. 7 at the MTA Transit-Community Center, 601 W. Franklin St., Shelton.

The event is designed to raise awareness about the organization and recruit volunteers. For more information, contact Isaac Wagnitz at 426-4999 or lwagnitz@unitedwaymason.org.