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United Way of
Southwest Virginia
www.unitedwayswva.org

FROM OUR CEO



Travis W. Staton, CEO

Welcome to our reformatted United Way of Southwest Virginia newsletter! You'll notice some changes that might have you worried about the cost. Please know that we are decreasing the number of times we send the newsletter to two a year, to cut down on the cost of postage and production. We hope you will enjoy the new, magazine-style format.

To keep up with news about our agencies and the work of United Way powered projects like Smart Beginnings, Virginia Quality, the Healthy Community Action Team and others, make sure you visit www.unitedwayswva.org. While you are there you can sign up for our monthly e-newsletter. We hope you will connect with us via social media, too. Visit www.facebook.com/unitedwayswva and like our page to get daily updates or our Vimeo channel www.vimeo.com/unitedwayswva to see our videos.

We have just finished grant allocations for the 2016-2017 funding year. You may review a list of partner agencies on our website at www.unitedwayswva.org/grants. I am impressed with the number of caring people all across our community. Our partner agencies provide the passion, expertise and resources to advance the common good. The agencies we work with are focused on education, income and health – the building blocks for a good quality of life. The people who work in the agencies commit long hours to create a better region for all of us to live, work and raise families.

Finally, I am happy to introduce Carolyn Koesters, Cassandra Caffee, Mary Anne Holbrook, and Briana Morris. All four of these ladies are welcome additions to our team.

NEW TEAM MEMBERS



Mary Anne Holbrook
Community Relations
Manager



Cassandra Caffee
Regional Coordinator
Smart Beginnings SWVA



Briana Morris
Marketing &
Communications Manager



Carolyn Koesters
Regional Coordinator
Smart Beginnings SWVA

SUMMER OF SERVICE
June 20th through September 21st

UNITED WAY OF SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA
THE VOLUNTEER CENTER

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LIVE UNITED
United Way

CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE

Sir Ernest Shackleton, explorer to the South Pole, once stated, “Optimism is true moral courage.” Marc and Tammy Ammen are true optimists, who have invested their passion and their resources in our region’s children. Thanks to their transformational gift in 2015, the Backpacks Unite program will help almost 1,000 children in Southwest Virginia this year.



Tammy told us, “We find the Backpack program vitally important for the future of our region. This region has been particularly hard hit with the losses in the coal industry. Unless we take a very active role in the lives of the children in our corner of the world, that generation will not only go hungry, but could potentially be a lost generation. We need to ensure that the physical hunger of these children is met first and then take a very active role in the education of them. You can’t feed the mind until you feed the body.”

“You can’t feed the mind until you feed the body.”

Marc and Tammy’s courage and future-focused optimism is encouraging and a powerful demonstration of commitment to our community and what it means to LIVE UNITED. We see great need around us and sometimes that need seems overwhelming. When partners come alongside us in that work and invest their time, talent and treasure, it is inspiring and empowering and helps us work with renewed determination.

Marc and Tammy’s focused philanthropy is a catalyst for change. By identifying a specific need and sharing generously, they are investing in our region’s greatest asset: our children’s future. United Way is proud to work closely with them and with other stakeholders across the region to build partnerships and work collaboratively to make people’s lives better.

We invite you to join us. Like Marc and Tammy, you can give, you can advocate and you can volunteer. To learn more about how to make your own transformational gift, contact Ashley Bartee or Mary Anne Holbrook, our Community Relations Managers, by calling 276-628-2160 or emailing abartee@unitedwayswva.org or mholbrook@unitedwayswva.org.

TEACH CHILDREN TO SAVE

What do a banker, a puppet and a room full of children have in common? Teaching children to save, that’s what!

Working through United Way of Southwest Virginia’s Volunteer Center, TruPoint Bank’s Vice President and Regional Executive, Richard Hughes, joined pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students at Lebanon Primary School for a presentation teaching children why and how to save money. The children were enthralled with Sammy the puppet, who talked with them about where to put their dollars saved for a special purchase.

“How about digging a hole and burying your money, like a pirate’s treasure?” asked Sammy, who later admitted to forgetting where he dug the hole. Another hole, this one in his pocket, caused Sammy to lose the dollar he put in there for safekeeping and he had to break his piggy bank wide open to get his money out, so that wasn’t an option for safekeeping. After several scenarios, Sammy said “Hey, what about keeping your money in a bank?”

The children easily identified what a bank is for, but some had questions and comments. “What if the bank gets robbed?” asked one young boy. Mr. Hughes explained about how the bank was insured and even if there was a robbery, their money would be safe. Another child informed the group about the machine at banks that made money. Mr. Hughes clarified how an ATM machine works. After much discussion, it was agreed that a bank was the safest place to keep one’s money.

For more information on volunteer opportunities with United Way and its agencies, contact Debby Loggans at 276-628-2160 or dloggans@unitedwayswva.org.

IGNITING PASSION

At the end of 2015, United Way received an anonymous gift to begin a new initiative that will make a positive impact in our community. In the beginning of 2016, United Way created Ignite with a vision to have a community of youth who are ready to enter and advance in the workforce. Ignite is an opportunity for youth to realize their potential and chase their dreams.

Crystal Breeding, formerly a Community Relations Manager with United Way, is the Ignite Program Manager. Crystal will recruit schools, students and employers to participate in this effort, and will make sure communication flows freely among all the groups.

Our strategy is for everyone who participates in Ignite to get value from the program. Students will benefit from Ignite by learning about great jobs right here in Southwest Virginia. Schools will have links to content experts in our area. Employers will gain a better prepared workforce. Employees at companies will have the chance to mentor young people. And, eventually, more businesses and industries will choose to locate in our area, because we have the workforce they need to succeed.

To learn more about Ignite and how to become a partner to bridge the workforce gaps in our community, contact Crystal Breeding at cbreeding@unitedwaysva.org or 276-628-2160.



Sandy Osborne

“Virginia Quality allows Sandy to work toward her vision to make a difference in children’s lives.”

“I CAN DO SOMETHING HERE.”

When Sandy Osborne walked into the Marion Baptist Child Development Program she was greeted with a friendly face and thought to herself, “I can do something here.” Sandy, who is of East Indian decent, came to the U.S. from Trinidad. She started as an aide at the center and worked her way up to the director’s job. She believes taking care of children is “in her blood.”

Sandy has always wanted to run a high quality program. She is very pleased with the partnership she has with United Way’s Virginia Quality program. She thinks Virginia Quality gives her “something to stand on.” For example, Sandy and her teachers quit using time out and instead redirected students to positive activities. They were happy when they realized this is a standard reinforced by Virginia Quality.

Virginia Quality has two primary goals: to help families identify high quality child care options for their young children, and to help child care and preschool programs provide high quality care. Virginia Quality doesn’t force directors to make changes, but most directors are like Sandy: they love children and want what is best for them.

Sandy faces challenges every day. She is grateful to Virginia Quality, because they provide on-site mentoring, coaching and professional development for her and her teachers at no cost. This allows her to work toward her vision to make a difference in children’s lives.

Thank you to all of you who have supported United Way’s partnership with Virginia Quality and the child care providers they work with. Your giving has allowed Sandy to “do something” positive for our preschoolers here in Southwest Virginia. To learn more about Virginia Quality contact Robin Grossman at rgrossman@unitedwaysva.org or 276-628-2160.

WISE COUNTY STUDENTS GET A REALITY CHECK



Hunter Romano, Wise County 4-H

In April, over a hundred eighth graders in Wise County participated in a Reality Store, a financial simulation to teach students about personal accounting, financial responsibility and life choices. The activity is a new partnership between United Way of Southwest Virginia and Wise County 4-H.

As a part of the simulation, students were assigned a job and a salary commensurate with that job. The students also were told information about their life status, including whether or not they were married or parents. The students then made purchases of essential life items at various stations, including taxes, utilities, real estate, insurance, vehicles, child care, charities, and entertainment. Students were responsible to make purchases that best fit their income, then balance their checkbooks. Upon completion, they assessed their decisions and financial status.

The project involved local schools and several volunteers, including some college students, who ran the stations around the gymnasium on the campus of UVA Wise.

Students and teachers alike found the Reality Check a valuable learning experience. One student stated, “Money’s not everything, and it can’t get you far, but it does help.”

To get a glimpse of the day and hear about the event from students and teachers, visit United Way’s Vimeo channel at www.vimeo.com/unitedwayswva. To learn more about bringing the Reality Store to your community contact Leann Vernon at lvernon@unitedwayswva.org or 276-628-2160.

PHYSICAL FITNESS FOR A LIFETIME

United Way of Southwest Virginia, in partnership with the Smyth County Healthy Communities Action Team (HCAT) and Smyth County Public Schools, has received a two-year, \$58,815 childhood obesity prevention grant from the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth (VFHY). These funds will launch Physical Fitness for a Lifetime: Teach it! Learn it! Live it!, an outdoor learning initiative to promote physical activity and outdoor recreation. “United Way of Southwest Virginia is extremely honored and excited to once again partner with the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth and the Smyth County Healthy Communities Action Team in implementing this gracious grant,” said Smyth County HCAT Manager, George Owens. “We truly believe that executing the initiatives outlined in this grant will be transformative in achieving the principal goal of reducing or eliminating childhood obesity through physical activities.”

Physical education teachers in Smyth County will develop new curriculum for students including fishing, biking, swimming, disc golf and golf. These are “activities for a lifetime” that children can enjoy in our region’s many outdoor recreation areas. “Smyth County Schools is honored to partner with the United Way and the Healthy Community Action Team to implement this grant in our school division,” said Dr. Mike Robinson. “I firmly believe that the improvements we make in our elementary HPE curriculum will benefit our students for the rest of their lives.” The grant will run from July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2018.

Do you want more information about the Smyth County Healthy Community Action team or the Physical Fitness for a Lifetime: Teach it! Learn it! Live it! project? If so, contact Smyth County HCAT Manager, George Owens at 276-628-2160 ext. 4067. or email him at gowens@unitedwayswva.org.



Photo Credit: Smyth County News & Messenger
Smyth County Healthy Community Action Team

LEADERS OF TOMORROW

Students at Southwest Virginia Community College (SWCC) know how to make things happen! The newly formed, SWCC Student United Way is a student-led community change organization that continues to grow in numbers and support since its inception in January.

Student United Ways are not a new concept, however, the SWCC club is the first of its kind in Southwest Virginia. Travis Staton, United Way of Southwest Virginia, CEO said, “Student United Ways give students the opportunity to better understand the needs in their communities and discover, through hands-on activities, how they can help in resolving these issues. We are excited to begin this new venture with these enthusiastic young leaders.”

Group advisor, Paula Owens, became stirred while attending a presentation by United Way’s Volunteer Center Manager, Debby Loggans and Highlands Education Literacy Program’s (HELP) Executive Director, Beth Hilton. “Between Debby speaking on community service and Beth speaking on the needs of her organization, I knew immediately that students at SWCC were the answer to many of the challenges discussed that day.” By the end of the school’s holiday break, twenty students had signed up to start the first Student United Way in Southwest Virginia.

The group hit the ground running. They quickly elected the founding executive committee, consisting of President, Zach Gross, Vice President, Todd Hill and Secretary, Morgan Cook. The students have completed their first fundraiser and identified projects of interest for the next year. The group was also recognized during United Way of Southwest Virginia’s annual Impact Awards Banquet and quickly began developing partnerships with some of the regions leaders.



Paula Owens, Advisor; Todd Hill, Vice President; Morgan Cook, Secretary; Zachary R. Gross, President.

“These are our leaders of tomorrow and their enthusiasm is contagious,” said Staton. “This experience in Student United Way will give them a true understanding of the opportunities to make a difference in their community when they give, advocate and volunteer.”

For more information on how to form a Student United Way at any local college or university, please contact United Way of Southwest Virginia, Volunteer Center Manager, Debby Loggans at dloggans@unitedwayswva.org.

AN EARLY START IS SMART

Research shows, children who have developmental problems excel if those problems are addressed early. We also know that there are screening tools to help identify those children. So how best to provide screenings to young children? Since many of the most vulnerable children are served by the Department of Social Services, United Way’s Smart Beginnings program partnered with Lee, Scott, Wise and Norton DSS, as well as Frontier Health, on a pilot project to identify young children in need of developmental services.

By using the screening tool – and simply becoming more aware of the issue – the Virginia Department of Social Services was able to make more effective referrals to Frontier Health’s early intervention program. In fact, enrollment to the program increased by 19% during the first twelve months. When asked about the increase, Karen Davis, Frontier Health’s Director of Early Intervention, attributed it directly to referrals from the Departments of Social Services and the pilot project.

Because of the efforts of United Way’s Smart Beginnings program and the Virginia Department of Social Services, more children in Southwest Virginia are receiving the early intervention services they need.

Do you know someone who could benefit from this program? Contact Buckey Boone, Smart Beginnings Southwest Virginia, Regional Director at 276-628-2160 or email him at bboone@unitedwayswva.org.

SPIKE FOR A CAUSE

The first annual United Way of Southwest Virginia Spike for a Cause Volleyball Championship took place on Saturday, April 9th at the Galax Recreation Center. With eight teams, over 80 players, a turn-out of over 150 people, and over \$2,500 raised, the event was a huge success!

Companies who sponsored the eight teams include Vanguard, Twin County Regional Healthcare, Core Health and Fitness, River North Correctional Center, Grayson County Administration and Grayson County Department of Social Services. These teams competed for awards like most Live United Spirit, best themed team, best sportsmanship, runner-up, and, of course, the coveted first annual Champion Award.

A huge thank you to all companies who sponsored a team, referees who volunteered their time, other community volunteers and especially the events committee who helped make this event happen!

Do you have an idea for a United Way fundraising event in your community? Maybe you want to start a workplace campaign and join other companies in Southwest Virginia that are paving the way for our future while having fun? For more information, contact Ashley Bartee, Community Relations Manager, at abartee@unitedwayswva.org or call 276-628-2160.



Spike for a Cause winners from River North Corrections Center.



Tammy Baumgardner, winner of The Woman of Distinction Award, and Travis Staton.

2016 IMPACT AWARDS

Photo Credit: Earl Neikirk of the Bristol Herald Courier.

In March, United Way of Southwest Virginia honored community businesses and volunteers at the 2016 Impact Awards celebration. The Women of Distinction Award was given to a more than deserving recipient, Tammy Baumgardner of Food City. The Women of Distinction Award is for women who have empowered others to give of themselves through their leadership in the community, serving as role models for other successful women.

The Spirit of the Community award was given to the well deserving UPS Richlands, who provided more than 500 volunteer hours and \$25,000 to feed 242 children through Backpacks Unite. Mohawk Industries and the Crutchfield Corporation both received Growth & Innovation Awards for their organizations. Donating over \$196,000 to the campaign, Utility Trailer received the Top Giver Award.

Other awards given included the Community Partner Award for Smyth County Schools for exemplifying walking the talk of United Way. Volunteer of the Year Awards in Education, Income and Health were given to Catherine Brillhart, Alan Jones and Marcus Adkins. The Health award was given in honor of Mac and Carol Clifton by The Clifton Companies. Media Partner of the Year Awards were given to Bristol Herald Courier, Holston Valley Broadcasting WMEV/FM94, and News 5 WCYB for their exceptional partnership with United Way. The Next Generation Award was given to Northstar Baptist Youth Group. Companies that received special acknowledgement included the 2015 Corporate Partners: Food City, Universal Fiber Systems, and Utility Trailer.

LIVE UNITED



**United Way of
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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

We are so appreciative of our corporate partners and media sponsors!



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