



United Way of Southeast Alaska

UNITED WAY OF SOUTHEAST ALASKA

2016 Annual Report



GIVE • ADVOCATE • VOLUNTEER



Chair's Message from Mark Mesdag

Chairman of the Board of Directors for United Way of Southeast Alaska

I am proud to present to you the United Way of Southeast Alaska 2016 Annual Report. An annual report provides an opportunity to reflect on the past year, acknowledge our accomplishments, prepare for the challenges in the year ahead and acknowledge the great spirit of volunteerism that exists in our communities across Southeast Alaska. I am very appreciative of the many folks who have given of themselves this past year to help make a difference in their community. They served on the Board of Directors, volunteered for service on committees, gave of their time to our partner agencies and made significant contributions of their financial resources. I'm proud to have served as the Chair of United Way this past year and I look forward to the challenge this coming year of spreading the United Way of Southeast Alaska message and the opportunities to strengthen our relationships with all of the communities of Southeast. United Way of Southeast Alaska has a solid record of success. As with any organization, it is the people that make the difference. This last year I have continually been surrounded by community members who move with purpose and resolve. The vigor

and enthusiasm displayed by our partner agencies, board members, volunteers and staff during our many annual activities has truly inspired me. Your commitment to community has made the difference. We have a great staff of dedicated professionals working to carry out our mission of improving lives and strengthening communities in Southeast Alaska. All of whom are working diligently to address individual needs and improve lives by organizing the caring and collaborative power of our communities. They are a great team and I appreciate all that they do to make United Way of Southeast Alaska a better organization. I hope you will review the material contained in this annual report and let us know if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for the coming year. We look forward to your feedback and to the opportunity to work with you to ensure another year of success in achieving our mission.

Mark Mesdag,
Chair
United Way of Southeast Alaska

Read Learn Succeed: Learn United Volunteer Reading Tutors Program

By United Way of Southeast Alaska

Research indicates most students spend kindergarten through third grade acquiring basic reading skills. Beginning in fourth grade and continuing all the way through high school—and then on into adulthood—they employ these skills to research, problem-solve, think critically, act upon ideas and share knowledge.

Reading is critical to a child's success in school, not to mention lifelong earning potential and the ability to contribute to their communities. The problem is, some students struggle with learning to read, for a variety of reasons. Fortunately, almost all children can learn to read; a little extra attention is all it takes to help them catch up.

In Juneau, the United Way of Southeast Alaska has teamed up with Juneau Public Schools and corporate sponsor Coeur Alaska to run the Learn United Volunteer Reading Tutors Program, specifically targeting early childhood literacy.

Now in its fifth year—and currently operating in Riverbend, Harborview and Gastineau Elementary Schools—the Learn United Volunteer Reading Tutors program provides constructive guidance, positive encouragement and a literacy-rich setting for elementary school-aged children. The program matches at-risk students, typically K-1, with their very own Learn United volunteer reading tutor.

"The goal is to promote a lifelong love of reading," says Pamela Garcia, an instructional coach with Juneau Public Schools and the Learn United Volunteer Reading Tutor Coordinator for Riverbend and Harborview schools.

"We do this by creating positive experiences and building positive relationships around reading," she says.

Volunteer reading tutors meet one-on-one with students, for a half-hour each week, usually during their lunchtime. After enjoying lunch together, tutors and students practice reading aloud, discussing passages and covering topics like alphabet, phonics and reading comprehension.

"For these kids, just having a grown-up come to see them—and only them—makes a big difference," says Gastineau Elementary School principal Brenda Edwards.

"It also demonstrates a willingness to learn as an adult," she says. "That sets a positive example, in and of itself: seeing a need and stepping up to meet that need."

The Learn United Volunteer Reading Tutor Program originated as part of the United Way of Southeast Alaska's "Literacy By Third Grade" campaign, as well as the national United Way "Million Reading Tutors" campaign, which seeks to engage one million new volunteer readers, tutors and mentors.

Of course, the reading tutor program found an enthusiastic partner in Coeur Alaska, a prime force behind its success.

"Coeur Alaska is always looking for ways to make a sustainable, positive impact in our community," says Wayne Zigarlick, Vice President and General Manager of Coeur Alaska. "Literacy is the educational cornerstone for individual and community success, and this investment in our children's ability to read can help increase the graduation rate, reduce the dropout rate and encourage students to pursue secondary education opportunities."

As the program's sponsor, Coeur Alaska funds books, lesson plans, supporting materials and assessment tools, as well as a paid full-time volunteer coordinator for Riverbend and Harborview and a half-time coordinator at Gastineau. Some Learn United Volunteer Reading Tutors are Coeur employees, themselves.

"We encourage our employees as well as other community members to join us in supporting this program," Zigarlick says. "Just one hour a week is all it takes to make a difference."

Of course, volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds. Edwards describes Gastineau's reading tutor roster as "all over the board—college kids to grandmas and grandpas."

"The people of Juneau have a genuine interest in helping, especially when it comes to childhood literacy," adds Garcia.

Hence, the program hopes to grow. At this point, the Learn United Volunteer Reading Tutors Program serves only K-1 in three elementary schools—although this past year, some Gastineau tutors continued with their students into second grade. Offering reading tutors to a broader range at every school requires more volunteers; this requires additional volunteer coordination, training and support.

But to those who experience the program's benefits on a daily basis, it's well worth the effort.

"By the end of May, you can really see a bond between tutor and student," Garcia says.

"The more people we can engage in elementary education, the better," says Edwards. "You welcome your school into the community by welcoming the community into your school."

Interested in becoming a Learn United Volunteer Reading Tutor? All volunteer tutors receive background checks and a two-hour training session in the use of materials, as well as how to deliver instructional support and interact productively with younger students. Learn more at getconnected.unitedwayseak.org.

Read Learn Succeed: Learn United Volunteer Reading Tutors Program appears courtesy of United Way of Southeast Alaska as part of a project profiling the achievements of its Community Impact Grant Recipients. To learn more about "Living United," the United Way of Southeast Alaska or any of its partner agencies visit www.unitedwayseak.org.



Biology of Stress, Science of Hope: Community Screening of “Resilience”

By United Way of Southeast Alaska

There are many useful ways to spend an hour (and even more self-help articles devoted to the subject). You can get a haircut, clean out your email inbox, bake a casserole, exercise, meditate, organize your closet or catch up on “thank you” cards (you know you’ve got some).

But what if one hour was all it took to make a substantial difference in the lives your community’s children?

That’s the aim of the 60-minute documentary “Resilience: The Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope,” which focuses on the implications of toxic stress stemming from adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs.

It also inspired a team of local non-profits—including the Alaska Children’s Trust, the Association for the Education of Young Children-Southeast Alaska (AEYC-SEA), the United Way, the Juneau Suicide Prevention Coalition, thread, Juneau Youth Services, the Zach Gordon Youth Center, Juneau School District, and ROCK Juneau (Raising our Children with Kindness)—to offer a free community screening of “Resilience” this past January at Centennial Hall. More than 300 people attended the presentation, followed by a café discussion.

“We all got together and decided everyone in Juneau needed to see this film,” said Joy Lyon, Executive Director of AEYC-SEA. “It’s all about how we internalize stress,

and the profound impact of childhood on the rest of a person’s life.”

Directed and produced by James Redford (yes, Robert’s son), along with Karen Pritzker and co-producer Dana Schwartz, “Resilience” chronicles the birth of the ACEs movement, a new way of thinking among pediatricians, therapists, educators and communities, who use cutting-edge neuroscience to disrupt cycles of violence, addiction and disease.

Once upon a time (i.e. the 1980s) ACEs theory was considered controversial... that is, until long-term research findings revealed one of the most important public health discoveries in decades: extremely stressful experiences during childhood (e.g. abuse and neglect) can alter brain development, with lifelong implications for future health and behavior.

Today, toxic stress is widely understood to be a leading cause of everything from diabetes and cancer to substance abuse and depression, as well as homelessness, domestic violence, incarceration and even early death. Indeed, too much ongoing stress triggers a cocktail of hormones that can wreak havoc on children at the cellular level, placing them at greater risk for all manner of adult perils. And while the broader impacts of poverty worsen the potential, ACEs affect people of all socioeconomic levels.

“The child may not remember, but the body

remembers,” Lyon said, echoing the documentary’s tagline.

Of course, “Resilience” isn’t all doom and gloom—in fact, it’s just the opposite. Through an intriguing blend of animated graphics, informative notes, expert interviews, miniature case studies and common-sense observations, Redford’s documentary entertains, informs and, most importantly, never passes judgment. Rather, it emits positive energy and artistic optimism. The researchers, practitioners and subjects profiled in “Resilience” prove that once we understand a problem we can work toward preventing it; improved societal and medical practices can greatly lessen toxic stress both in our homes and in our communities.

“It’s so important to see and hear these strategies in action,” said Lyon. “I think everyone walks away from this documentary with a better understanding of their kids, their neighbors, their co-workers and people in general.”

In addition to the Centennial Hall event, “Resilience” has been shown on seven other occasions this past year, to more than 1000 people. Another large public screening and conversation is also planned for the fall. Additionally, groups can “rent” the film from ROCK Juneau and host their own viewings and discussions.

“This film truly demonstrates the importance of

supporting young children, parents of young children and people who work with young children,” said Lyon, who sees part of the solution in high quality childcare and pre-kindergarten education.

“Many organizations are already actively engaged in this,” she continued, “but we can always ramp up our efforts.”

Here, in addition to funding through the Community Impact Grant program, the United Way of Southeast Alaska offers a unique ability to bring many disparate public service actors, agencies and non-profits under the same umbrella.

“In terms of collective impact, the United Way really facilitates our ability to effect positive change on a long term, community-wide scale,” said Lyon.

“Working together is the key to empowering individuals and communities to improve the health and wellbeing of this and future generations.”

“Biology of Stress, Science of Hope: Community Screening of ‘Resilience’” appears courtesy of United Way of Southeast Alaska as part of a project profiling the achievements of its Community Impact Grant Recipients. To learn more about “Living United,” the United Way of Southeast Alaska or any of its partner agencies visit www.unitedwayseak.org.

A Place for Healing: Sitkans Against Family Violence

By Geoff Kirsch

The numbers don’t lie. According to the most recent Alaska Victimization Survey, 47% of adult women in the City and Borough of Sitka have experienced intimate partner violence, sexual violence or both; 7% in the past year.

While these statistics may be sobering, the community’s response is definitely heartening. For more than 40 years now, Sitkans Against Family Violence (SAFV) has been providing empowerment-based safety and advocacy for victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse, as well as promoting a culture of non-violence and respect.

What began in 1976 as a crisis hotline has, over the course of four-plus decades, grown into a full-service shelter, serving survivors with secure, temporary living conditions, personal support, safety planning and access to a variety of services to rebuild safe lives on their own.

“We help people through extremely tough situations,” says Michelle Mahoney, SAFV Acting Director.

SAFV’s shelter, with a capacity of 24 women and children, consists of six bedrooms—outfitted with closets, storage and bedding—bathrooms, lockers, a full kitchen, two communal living rooms, a laundry room and a children’s playroom. Of course, SAFV supplies its residents with food, basic toiletries and towels, detergent, baby needs, children’s toys, books and art materials.

In addition to shelter, SAFV offers victims crisis intervention, advocacy and support; legal advocacy, information and referral; and systems advocacy, which can include medical services, social services,

mental health, housing, public assistance and other organizations.

“Our staff members include well-trained advocates, especially adept at navigating the legal and healthcare systems,” says Mahoney.

“Perpetrators leave their victims feeling isolated and devastated,” she explains. “It’s so rewarding to connect them with whatever resources they need to restore their confidence.”

Based in Sitka, SAFV also serves the surrounding communities of Port Alexander, Kake and Angoon, supplying safe homes, advocacy trainings, educational presentations and other forms of rural outreach.

“Our advocates practice culturally relevant, trauma-informed advocacy,” says Mahoney.

Indeed, SAFV works closely with both the Alaska Native and LGBT communities. And in keeping with its ethos of inclusivity, SAFV will also assist male victims in finding safe housing, along with offering them advocacy and supportive services.

“Men experience domestic violence and sexual abuse, too,” she says.

Of course, SAFV’s work doesn’t end with shelter and advocacy. The organization also runs a substantial prevention program, geared toward stopping violence before it starts.

To that end, SAFV coordinates a variety of educational initiatives in conjunction with the public schools. This includes safety seminars in every grade, kindergarten

through 12th, as well as Girls on the Run and Boys Run I toowú klatseen after school programs for third, fourth and fifth graders, and Coaching Boys into Men, which incorporates a curriculum of respect and violence prevention into high school athletics.

For the community at large, SAFV conducts annual advocacy trainings and hosts a variety of public conversations. Its DV Task Force—which, besides SAFV, includes members from the Sitka Public Health Center, Sitka Tribe of Alaska, the District Attorney’s office, the Sitka Police Department, Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARCH) and Sitka Community Hospital—meets monthly to exchange information and collaborate on events to further violence prevention. And, for the past six years, SAFV has organized Sitka’s annual “Choose Respect” March, in which hundreds of community members come together to take a stand against domestic violence and sexual abuse.

If that sounds ambitious, it is—and it couldn’t happen without incredible outside support.

For one, SAFV relies heavily on its volunteers—a diverse array of old and young, representing various abilities, socioeconomic levels and ethnicities. Volunteers donate an average of 1050 hours per year, answering the crisis hotline, assisting with direct advocacy, providing childcare and helping with fundraising, special events, youth-based programs, safe homes and shelter maintenance.

“We’re so supported and we’re so grateful,” says

Mahoney. “Smaller communities really do pull together.”

Like most non-profits, SAFV depends on state funding, which, in recent years, has become less reliable. This complicates planning, especially when it comes to budgeting.

Here, again, explains Mahoney, the people of Sitka also step up, donating money, in-kind services, food, bedding and other basic needs. So, too, do many area non-profits—organizations like the United Way of Southeast Alaska, whose Community Impact Grant funds all manner of shelter supplies and program materials.

“The United Way is a long-time SAFV partner,” she says. “Such a recognizable organization opens doors to resources we otherwise might not be able to access.”

And accessing resources will take on special importance in the not-too-distant future, as SAFV finalizes plans and begins construction to enlarge the shelter.

“More room means more privacy and more privacy means more dignity,” says Mahoney. “That will make our shelter an even better place for healing.”

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Juneau Community Foundation and United Way of Southeast Alaska Team up with the Juneau School District to provide Elementary School Breakfast Program

Next school year, the Juneau School District will be offering free breakfast for all students at most elementary schools and grab and go foods where a breakfast cannot be offered.

With the Juneau Community Foundation's \$13,104 award from their Social Service Field of Interest Fund, made possible by donations that were made in honor of Julie and Peter Neyhart, and United Way of Southeast Alaska's \$5,000 Community Impact award it is possible to expand this program in August 2016.

The Juneau School District will support a universal breakfast program at Gastineau, Glacier Valley, and Riverbend Elementary Schools, along with a program at Yaakoosge Daakahidi Alternative High School. Federal reimbursement funding at these schools should be sufficient to cover the breakfast program costs.

The Juneau Community Foundation and United Way of Southeast Alaska award funding will provide universal breakfast at Harborview and Mendenhall River Elementary Schools, Juneau Community Charter School, and Montessori Borealis. Funds will also be provided to Auke Bay Elementary School for grab and go breakfasts.

"This partnership among foundations and the school district will help ensure that all of Juneau's elementary school students start the day on the right foot, with breakfast. We hope to be able to take part in more partnerships like this one, that assist our community," said Amy Skilbred, Executive Director, Juneau Community Foundation.

The breakfast program was brought to the attention of the Community Foundation during discussions with community members who currently help provide school breakfasts and state employees who manage the federal reimbursement funds. It became clear that federal funding is left unused every year for this program.

The School District will be monitoring the universal breakfast program for the 2016-17 school year to determine whether it encourages all students to take part and raises the number of students in need participating.

"Providing food resources where it is needed has long been a program of United Way of Southeast Alaska. Working with the Southeast Alaska Foodbank, church food pantries and a variety of summer lunch programs and before school breakfast programs, it has become apparent that children are starting the day hungry. Studies show that when students are not dealing with the issues of food insecurity, they are better able to focus on learning. A side benefit of this program, we hope, is to provide more community support and funding for these programs and the weekend backpack programs reports Wayne Stevens, President/CEO, United Way of Southeast Alaska.

The Juneau School District will cover any costs above the grant award not reimbursed by federal funding.

"Breakfast is considered the most important meal of the day by many sources. The word breakfast means "break the fast" as typically the last meal eaten was 8-10 hours prior. It is important to eat a health breakfast to refuel the body by providing the energy and nutrients needed. By teaming up with the Juneau Community Foundation and United Way of Southeast Alaska, we hope to see an increase in the number of students eating breakfast at school. Our partnership will help students start their day off right by eating a healthy meal." Adrienne Schwartz, Food Services Supervisor, Juneau School District.

We encourage community members interested in donating to support feeding the hungry in Juneau to donate to the Juneau Community Foundation or United Way of Southeast Alaska.

BAM Review for Annual Report

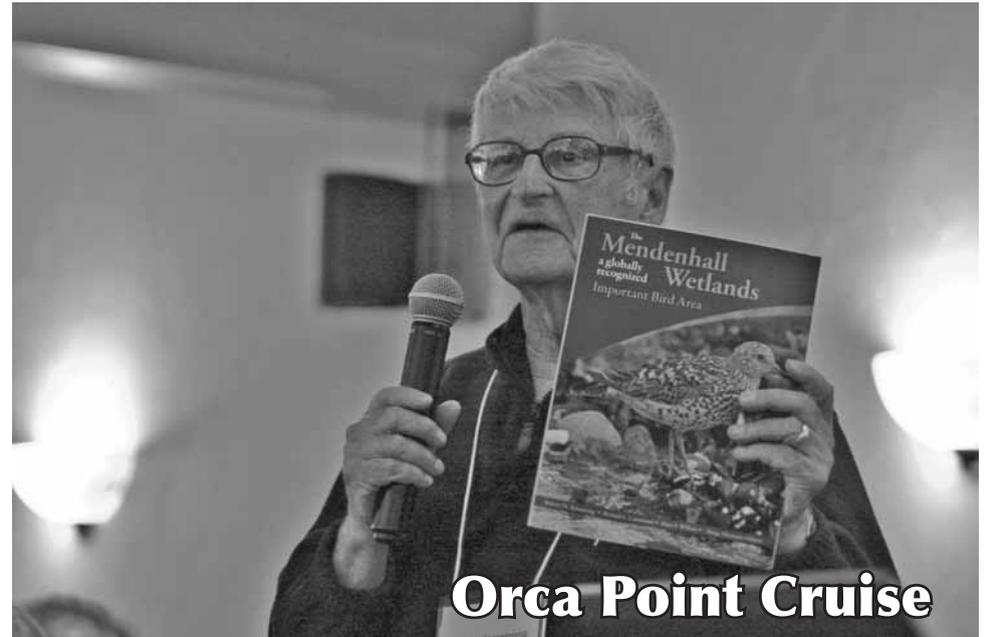
As the United Way of Southeast Alaska's AmeriCorps member, I volunteered in many different programs throughout Juneau and expanded my knowledge of the community. One program that I really enjoyed was the Body and Mind (B.A.M!) Program.

I did three sessions for the B.A.M! program during my AmeriCorps term. The first session was Line Dancing at Dzantik'i Heeni Middle School. Having grown up in Louisiana, I experienced my fair share of line dances at weddings, festivals, and school dances. I was excited to share part of my Cajun heritage with kids who were interested in learning new dances.

The second and third sessions were of the same lesson and took place at both Dzantik'i Heeni and Floyd Dryden Middle School. These sessions delved into the exciting world of Superheroes and comics, focusing on creative writing and cultivating artistic ability. We had discussions that often turned into debates about our favorite superheroes. We examined the characteristics of each superhero we could name and discussed the significance of these characteristics. In doing so, we were able to identify what makes a superhero and use this knowledge in our own creations.

I taught students how to develop characters, expand on their characters by developing a meaningful back-story, create a plot outline with all the necessary elements for storytelling, and put it all together to create a short comic strip. We even made capes to represent our superheroes.

Volunteering with the B.A.M! program provided me with a unique learning experience and expanded on my professional development. I am very thankful to have had the volunteer opportunity with B.A.M! and will continue to volunteer even after my AmeriCorps service concludes.



Orca Point Cruise



Orca Point Cruise

2016 United Way of Southeast Alaska Cruise for a Cause

On May 5th, United Way of Southeast Alaska and our supporters celebrated our mission by relaxing on Allen Marine's jet powered Catamaran and taking in the surrounding natural beauty of Auke Bay as we cruised to the Orca Point Lodge for dinner and conversation with an accomplished local author and nature photographer, Bob Armstrong. We were surrounded by the same beautiful landscape Bob Armstrong has captured on film and in print over the course of his career. Bob Armstrong has been photographing and writing about the natural world of Southeast Alaska since 1960. He has not only authored many books of his own, but has also co-authored several works written about the flora and fauna across Alaska. We were truly fortunate to have him join us for our cruise. There was a silent auction held, with many great prizes available from generous sponsors such as Wings Airways, Glacier Gardens, Temsco Helicopters Inc, Era Helicopters LLC, Waterfall Resort Alaska and the AJ Mine. New this year was the opportunity to bid on the chance to stay at a World Class Fishing Lodge: Waterfall Resort Alaska! We greatly appreciate the ongoing sponsorship and support of Allen Marine Tours, without whom this event wouldn't have been possible. We were also thrilled to include the participation of Waterfall Resort Alaska. We are truly thankful to all who attended and sponsored our Cruise for a Cause, and to everyone who supports our mission of improving the health, income and education of all communities in Southeast Alaska.

2016 Be the Change Youth Conference

United Way of Southeast Alaska partnered with the Juneau Violence Prevention Coalition to host our annual Diversity Workshop titled "Be the Change" on Friday, May 13th, 2016, at the Juneau Arts and Culture Center. Over the past several years, United Way of Southeast Alaska has facilitated this series of diversity workshops with the generous support of the community. With the assistance of a generous grant from the City and Borough of Juneau, we were able to offer an interactive conference with various workshops for high school students in Juneau. We had over 150 students attend for the one-day conference.

The diversity conference included six interactive workshops from five groups across southeast Alaska. The groups that presented these workshops are: Sitka Group Leadership Committee, Teen Council, Lead On! For Peace and Equality, Sources of Strength, and Woosh Kinaadeiyi. The workshops were youth led and focused on different ways to interrupt oppression in schools and throughout the community.

Sitka Youth Leadership Committee (SYLC) is a youth led committee that works toward promoting non-violence and respect in Sitka and beyond. SYLC provides opportunities for teens to develop leadership skills, create positive media messages, and influence change in their community. They offered two workshops at the conference. The first was about building a positive peer culture, which was an open discussion about social issues, such as racism, sexism, etc. The second workshop offered training for teens to learn how to continue the conversation among their peers and how to make changes in their community.

Sitka Youth Leadership brought with them the "I AM" CAMPAIGN which is a social media movement that encourages people to take a photo of themselves and use the hashtag #RespectChallenge. They brought a photo-booth with them so people could take photos and choose an adjective about themselves. The photos taken with an instant film camera which allowed participants to write the adjective on the photo and then take a picture of the printed photo to put onto social media.

Teen Council is a national peer led sexuality education program for high school students who have a passion for educating and empowering youth in their community. Juneau Teen Council members engage their peers through presentations and conversations about important topics such as healthy relationships, consent, boundaries, pregnancy prevention and other aspects of healthy sexuality in a fun, relatable, and educational way. Teen Council led a workshop on healthy relationships, and discussed gender, love, and stereotypes.

LeadOn! For Peace and Equality is a statewide youth leadership conference for teens to develop skills in ending violence, promoting respect, and implementing social change in the community. Their workshop was about how to impact school policy. They examined current school policies and discussed how they could be improved. They also discussed a cyber bullying policy that the teens in LeadOn have been working on this year.

Sources of Strength is a student leadership program aimed at improving school climate, developing help-seeking behaviors from youth to adults, and breaking codes of silence. Their workshop was about using the sources of strength in their lives, identifying signs of unhealthy relationships and suicide, as well as identifying an adult in their lives who they can trust and turn to in a time of need.

Woosh Kinaadeiyi is committed to diversity, inclusive community and empowering voice. They foster supportive spaces to share stories through:

- Providing a platform that honors identity and oral traditions
- Evaluating personal expression and engaged listening
- Establishing relationships within and between communities
- Offering educational opportunities to develop and strengthen voice



Christy Namee Eriksen and Theo "FySH" Houcke presented a workshop titled "The power of your voice." Christy is an award-winning multidisciplinary artist, community activist, educator, and writer whose work is grounded in social justice and community engagement.

Our goal was to promote equity and social justice by interrupting oppression. We did this by discussing tough social issues and by educating youth on these topics. We supplied students with a booklet that identifies terms, presents facts, and lists community resources available to them. We created a safe place for discussion where teens could share personal stories of challenges and growth. The workshops offered students various ways to be the change, such as through school policy or informing an adult of a friend who may be in an unhealthy relationship or who may be suicidal. We gave teens the tools they need to create positive change in the community.

We would like to say a very special thank you to the City and Borough of Juneau for providing United Way of Southeast Alaska a generous grant to facilitate this event.

Be the Change 2016

of Southeast Alaska's Day of Caring

United
Way



2016 Juneau Day of Caring List of Agencies and Businesses

"United Way of Southeast Alaska would like to acknowledge all those businesses that helped make the 2016 Day of Caring possible.

For their ongoing support and sponsorship:
DIPAC Macaulay Salmon Hatchery
TK McGuires
Baxter, Bruce & Sullivan PC

Thank you to our volunteer groups from:
Wells Fargo Bank
GCI
True North Federal Credit Union
Shattuck and Grummett Insurance
Elgee Rehfeld Mertz
Juneau Central Labor Council
Alaska USA
United Way of Southeast Board of Directors

Volunteer service was performed at Wildflower Court, NAMI Juneau, CCS: The Bridge Adult Day Program, Southeast Alaska Food Bank, Front Street Community Health Center, Salvation Army, AWARE Shelter, Big Brothers Big Sisters

Thank you for all that you do for our community!



A Wealth of Information: the United Way's

Interactive Indicators Dashboard

By United Way of Southeast Alaska

Housing, food security, financial stability, healthcare, education, substance abuse, the environment, gender/ethnic/socioeconomic equality... with so many issues facing our society, even the most well-intentioned, public service-minded citizen can feel overmatched.

After all, one person alone couldn't possibly take on all these challenges. Nor can the government by itself. Schools and non-profits have limited resources; the business world can only write so many checks.

How, then, can we chip away at—and eventually overcome—the seemingly insurmountable task of creating vibrant neighborhoods, vital landscapes and a healthy quality of life for everyone?

The answer: individuals, organizations, agencies and business leaders all working together to effect positive change.

But how do we know we're making a measurable impact?

Enter the United Way of Southeast Alaska.

"Many people think of us in terms of fundraising, which, of course, is a big part of our work," says United Way President and CEO Wayne Stevens. "But more than that, we strive to be a wealth of information and community resources for all of Southeast Alaska, Metlakatla to Yakutat."

In addition to supporting 36 non-profit partner agencies across the region through volunteer coordination and financial contributions—most notably, project-specific Community Impact Grants—the United Way has also embarked on a major initiative to provide the community with a wealth of useful data.

This past year, it launched the "Interactive Indicators Dashboard," provided by the McDowell Group and accessible for free at http://www.mcdowellgroupdashboard.net/united_way/; there's also a link on the United Way of Southeast Alaska website (<http://www.unitedwayseak.org/community-indicators>).

Made possible by funding from BP Alaska, the Juneau Assembly and the Rasmuson Foundation, the United Way partnered with McDowell to determine a variety of community indicators: information about important and timely issues reflecting broad public priorities. Both the funding and project occurred incrementally over a period of six to eight years, beginning with the COMPASS community building assessment report, which led to further rounds of data gathering, updated information and ultimately a broader online presence.

Generally speaking, community indicators reveal economic, environmental and social trends—all harbingers of positive change. These metrics help communities recognize areas for effective public engagement, and provide essential guidance for action. In other words, community indicators help answer the basic questions: are we there yet, and if not, how much further do we need to go?

"Community indicators, and the Interactive Indicator Dashboard, are highly effective tools for informing and mobilizing citizens and policy makers—bits of information that highlight what's happening in a large system," says Stevens.

"They're like gauges on a machine," he explains, "or the headline of a news story."

The United Way's Interactive Indicators Dashboard is divided into three categories: Education, Health and Income, which have been identified by the United Way as the three building blocks for a good life. Each of these categories features an overview, along with a more detailed breakdown.

The Education section includes five years worth of graduation rates for Juneau, Sitka and Ketchikan; as well as the percentage of math and reading proficiency for eighth graders and third graders in those same communities, as well as in comparison to the state as a whole.

Health indicators include population percentage without health insurance, ratio of

population to primary care physicians and prevalence of diagnosed diabetes, as well as rates of smoking and obesity. The breakdown also covers issues such as access to dentists and mental health providers, plus the number of mental health clients.

The Income Stability category covers the most ground, from licensed childcare slots to unemployment rates, housing costs to percentage of students eligible to receive free or reduced lunch, teen pregnancy to domestic violence cases.

Obviously, community indicators don't tell us everything we need to know to understand every issue in its entirety. They do, however, spotlight key information in hopes of mobilizing public involvement.

"The idea is that these indicators will be a touchstone for the people of Southeast Alaska, with the potential to serve as a call to action," Stevens says.

Here, the United Way aims for collective impact, facilitating community agreement on a position, and then coordinating joint efforts to further that position.

Stevens describes a multi-fold intention. First, the United Way seeks to create a collaborative, as opposed to contentious, environment for local public service actors. Especially when it comes to grant funding and attracting volunteers, non-profits can sometimes feel like they're competing against each other, as opposed to working together. Moreover, such coordinated coalitions can develop lifelong community programs, which have the potential for far greater, longer-lasting results than separate shorter-term projects.

"The Interactive Indicators Dashboard should really help the United Way and our partners create real, lasting change," he says. "That's living united: reaching out a hand to one, improving conditions for all."

"A Wealth of Information: The United Way's Interactive Indicators Dashboard" appears courtesy of the United Way of Southeast Alaska. To view the dashboard or learn more about "Living United," the United Way of Southeast Alaska or any of its partner agencies visit www.unitedwayseak.org.



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Term: 2015 - 2017

Roberta Stell

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Good, Clean Fun: BAM Body and Mind Afterschool Program

By United Way of Southeast Alaska

It's no secret: the last few decades have seen fundamental changes to the way we live and work.

These days, most families are either single-parent families or families with both parents working; when school lets out for the afternoon, many children return to an empty home.

"Yes, giving kids something positive and healthy to do in the hours after school is important," says Jordan Nigro, who, as manager of the Zach Gordon Youth Center, spearheads the "Body and Mind" (BAM) afterschool program at both Floyd Dryden and Dzantik'i Heeni Middle Schools.

"More than that, afterschool activities let kids develop skills and explore interests," she explains. "Maybe most importantly, they foster connections with the community and each other."

Now in its fifth year, BAM offers a wide variety of 90-minute activities—at least one per day, although sometimes several—free to all Juneau middle-schoolers. From 3:00 pm to 4:25 pm, Monday through Thursday (activity buses don't run on Fridays) students can sign up for workshops in everything from babysitting to bike repair, cooking to co-ed flag football, archery, juggling and outdoor leadership—even hip-hopping. BAM courses are free to all students, and led entirely by partner organizations and community volunteers (all thoroughly background checked).

"People teach all sorts of things," says Nigro. She,

herself, recently taught Italian cooking. "If the adults are really excited, the kids are really excited."

BAM represents a coordinated approach to community service—"Live United," in action. In addition to individual volunteers, the program combines the efforts of Sealaska, Discovery Southeast, AWARE and Bartlett Regional Hospital, all of which fund BAM workshops, as well as Juneau Public Schools, benefactor of program space.

"And, of course, school staff is so instrumental, not only helping us seek out students, but also how to reach them," Nigro says.

The BAM afterschool program enjoys strong support from the United Way of Southeast Alaska in several different ways. For one, the United Way helps fund healthy snacks; as anyone who works with kids can attest, a program's success often hinges on the strength of its snacks. United Way grants also assist with program supplies, professional support for more involved activities and even "special" equipment such as ice cream machines, for ice cream-making workshops sponsored by Coppa, and athletic shoes for "Heart & Soul" Girls on the Run, sponsored by AWARE.

"Over the years Zach Gordon Youth Center has worked with United Way of Southeast Alaska on so many projects," says Nigro. "It really is a priceless community resource."

BAM traces its start to the 2009 closure of the Juneau

Boys and Girls Club, a devastating loss for a city already struggling with childcare. But, as they say, with every end comes a beginning. Soon, a broad alliance formed—the Juneau Afterschool Coalition—comprised of the school district, multiple youth serving agencies and Juneau's Rotary Clubs.

"The group starting by asking... what do we really need?" Nigro says. The answer: wholesale adult-supervised afterschool activities.

"Developing a comprehensive afterschool program presented a unique opportunity to reach a whole bunch of kids at once," she says. "We had the students, we had the facilities. All we needed was the programming, and the volunteers to lead it."

Quickly enough, the community rallied to supply the missing piece, and BAM!—the Body and Mind Afterschool program was born, originally managed by Catholic Community Service. Two years ago, BAM officially moved under the purview of Juneau's Parks & Recreation Department; Zach Gordon Youth Center is a division of CBJ Parks & Rec.

"Not only does BAM fit nicely with Zach Gordon Youth Center's overall mission of encouraging wellness and growth, connecting youth and engaging the community," says Nigro. "I think it demonstrates the city's commitment to its younger citizens."

And the program keeps growing, which can be both a burden and a boon.

"We rely heavily on volunteers for programming, and those volunteers turn over as life presents new opportunities; growth becomes a challenge," she says.

To that end, BAM seeks to develop a deeper, less fluid volunteer pool through stronger training, stressing consistency, transitions and classroom management.

"Everyone has something to offer," Nigro says. "We can help volunteers figure out what would be the best fit for them. The rest is just a matter of structuring a 90-minute class."

Of course, the students aren't the program's only beneficiaries.

"The kids get something out of it, but so do the volunteers—volunteering at BAM is fun," says Nigro.

"I spend most of my day taking care of admin work," she says. "It's a pretty great perk to get to teach a group of middle schoolers how to make tomato sauce."

"Good, Clean Fun: BAM Body and Mind Afterschool Program" appears courtesy of United Way of Southeast Alaska as part of a project profiling the achievements of its Community Impact Grant Recipients. To learn more about, donate to or volunteer with the Zach Gordon Youth Center, visit <http://www.juneau.org/parkrec/youthcenter>. To learn more about "Living United," the United Way of Southeast Alaska or any of its partner agencies visit www.unitedwayseak.org.

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Feeding People Affected by Disaster: The Salvation Army Emergency Mobile Kitchen

By United Way of Southeast Alaska

Just before 9 am on December 6, 1917, in the harbor of Halifax, Nova Scotia, a fully loaded French munitions ship collided with a Norwegian steamer, sparking the most devastating human-made explosion of the pre-atomic age. The Great Halifax Explosion, as it came to be known, killed more than 1,800 people, injured another 9,000 and destroyed half the city, including some 1,600 homes.

Those looking for a silver lining to this tragedy may find it here: the origin of the Salvation Army's Emergency Disaster Services Program, which, a hundred years later, has grown into a vast international network with thousands of trained volunteers, responding to everything from house fires to major catastrophic events across the globe.

The cornerstone of this program? The emergency mobile kitchen, or canteen, utilized by the Salvation Army in disasters and emergency situations all over the world. And now, thanks in part to a Community Impact Grant from the United Way of Southeast Alaska, Juneau—and, by extension, the entire Alexander Archipelago—has one of its own.

"Canteens form the basis of the Salvation Army Disaster Ministry," said Lt. Lance P. Walters, Corps Officer of the Salvation Army Juneau Citadel Corps. "They let us get right to the people in need, right to the place they need it."

Emblazoned with a sign reading "Given to

the people of Alaska," the canteen gives new meaning to the phrase "meals-on-wheels": a 26-foot-long truck, outfitted with a full commercial kitchen featuring an oven, a grill, pantries, stainless steel prep areas, giant urns for coffee and other hot beverages, wash water, drinking water and separate stations for hand-washing and dish cleaning.

For years, the Salvation Army Corps in Anchorage and Fairbanks have been operating mobile emergency kitchens to provide support during flooding and wildfires—in 2015 one such canteen served nearly 4000 meals to Willow residents evacuated during the Sockeye fire. Juneau's canteen, refurbished and relocated from Anchorage, marks the first in Southeast Alaska; it's the state's third.

"Up in the Interior, the Salvation Army regularly dispatches mobile food units to first responders and disaster survivors," Lt. Walters said. "We really felt we needed one in the Capital City."

Although the truck is based in Juneau—specifically, it's parked behind the Salvation Army Family Store at 500 W. Willoughby Ave.—the canteen can readily be deployed by ferry throughout the region. This allows for rapid mobilization to Southeast Alaska's more remote, geographically isolated communities.

"In the past, it would've taken several days for a mobile kitchen to drive down from up north," said Lt. Walters.

Not anymore. Aside from winter months, when the water tanks must be drained to prevent freezing, the Salvation Army keeps the canteen in a constant state of readiness. In a matter of hours—or, in Juneau, minutes—the Salvation Army can deliver food and hydration to survivors and first responders, alike.

"Obviously, no one ever hopes for a disaster," Lt. Walters said, listing avalanches, earthquakes and tidal waves among the most potential emergencies in Southeast Alaska.

"Still, it's prudent to stay prepared," he continued, "so when something does happen, we're all set to go."

Thankfully, the mobile kitchen has yet to be used in an emergency situation. However, the Salvation Army brought it to last year's earthquake simulator in Juneau, serving hot dogs and drinks. It also plans to be part of the Juneau-Douglas Fourth of July parades, as well as beach picnics and other community events, if for no other reason than to raise community awareness.

"Plus, it keeps our skills sharp at running the thing," said Lt. Walters.

The canteen, he explained, is almost entirely staffed by volunteers, both from the Salvation Army congregation and the community at large, as well as through organizations like the Moose Lodge, which has offered cooks as well as its own commercial kitchen to the effort.

"One of many great things about this

community: everyone pulls together," he said.

Of course, the United Way was also quick to jump on board. Its Community Impact Grant helps stock the mobile kitchen with soups and other dry goods, bottled water, propane and fuel, in addition to funding regular truck maintenance and use permits, when necessary.

"It's wonderful any time anyone supports any public service initiative," said Lt. Walters. "We're especially grateful to the United Way for embracing this new community resource."

Anyone can be trained to staff the mobile emergency kitchen, which includes both Salvation Army instruction and Alaska Department of Health certification in safe and proper food handling.

"Most importantly, the mobile emergency kitchen delivers emotional support at a very stressful time," Lt. Walters said. "Even something as seemingly small as a hot drink can provide immeasurable comfort."

"Feeding People Affected by Disaster: The Salvation Army Emergency Mobile Kitchen" appears courtesy of United Way of Southeast Alaska as part of a project profiling the achievements of its Community Impact Grant Recipients. To learn more about "Living United," the United Way of Southeast Alaska or any of its partner agencies visit www.unitedwayseak.org.

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