



United Way
of the Tri-Valley Area

President's Report

Shaun Riggs, President

As I write this, I observe the one-year anniversary of my business, The Dugout Bar and Grill, being forced to close due to COVID-19 (though back then we were all still calling it by the virus's name – Corona). The pandemic has dealt everyone in the UWTVA community blows – our donors, volunteers, staff, agency partners, and especially those whom our work is aimed at helping. The March 2020 shutdown was on the heels of the September 2019 LEAP explosion, and was less than a month before an explosion destroyed a digester at the Pixelle Androscoggin mill, leading to greatly reduced capacity for the mill and significant job loss at our largest workplace campaign.

Suffice it to say, we are living in extraordinary times. But where many see difficulties, UWTVA, behind the leadership of our all-star staff, see opportunities. With charity fundraising models changing nationwide, we have focused more on corporate partnerships and seeking philanthropic grants than in the past. While disaster relief hasn't historically been seen as in United Way's wheelhouse, UWTVA stepped up to raise over \$218,000 to help those affected by the LEAP explosion. Also, we've raised and distributed over \$107,000 in our Very Basics Fund to help those struggling to meet basic needs due to the pandemic.

Finally, the staff and Board of Directors of UWTVA have constantly been strategically planning for our future. Over the years that I have been involved, we've been constantly asking the question: "Is our impact a mile wide, but only an inch deep?" We have made some decisions that we are excited to be sharing with you and the greater community to address this question. Our finalized plan will be hitting the press in the coming weeks and months.

The challenges have been severe over the past year. Our staff has worked from home at times, and enacted protocols at the office sufficient to keep everyone safe. Like everyone else, our meetings, full board and committee, are on Zoom. And giving, it must be said, is down. Our budget for FY 2021 is significantly smaller than the past few, and, in order to keep up our investments in the community, we decided to dip into our Fail Safe Reserve. But the future is bright for UWTVA! We've demonstrated a great ability to roll with the punches, and also to be proactive in avoiding lots of them, too. I wish to thank you, our membership, for continuing to support our work in the community. With your help, UWTVA will continue to bring positive change to greater Franklin County.