Annual Report 2020: Highlights

The year like no other significantly challenged our community and our organization. However, neither a pandemic nor a major explosion at our long-term supporter Pixelle could prevent us from striving to meet our mission to improve people's lives.

The resiliency of staff and volunteers was on display throughout the year and I offer my sincerest thanks and appreciation to Kendra Baker and Nichole Ernest for grabbing an oar and rowing hard upstream. Shaun Riggs, board president was a stalwart captain and Becky Davis-Allen, Chris Hollingsworth, and Matt Fournier ably served on the Executive Committee and helped chart our course.

We have many things to celebrate as we conduct our Annual Meeting and reflect back on 2020:

These slides are available at uwtva.org.

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Creative Solutions

Almost all scheduled events and programs were safely offered during the pandemic. It took a massive undertaking, but there was very little disruption in our schedule. We learned a lot about PPE, social distancing, virtual auctions, and contact-free bins, but we did it! We also remained accessible to the public working remotely, hybrid, or fully in the office depending upon the time of year.

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Continued Commitment

Each year we make scheduled payouts to our Community Partners. 40% of our allocations are paid out in December. These allocations were decided on the previous January.

With all the turmoil, pledge loss, and concerns about how we would run our Annual Campaign in the Fall of 2020, we were able to honor our commitments to our Partners. Each organization received 100% of what we had committed, and their budgets and programming were not affected.

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Collaborations

We didn't stop reaching out and fostering relationships. Afterall, working together is at the heart of what we do. Maine Harvest Bucks, in collaboration with the Farmington Farmers Market showed a 57% increase over the previous year in local food sales ($6,748). SNAP purchases (formerly known as food stamps) that generate a dollar match in fruits and veggies increased 135%. That's a lot of nutritious local food makings its way to bellies and tables across our communities and a significant contribution to the economic stability of local farms.

We hosted a Virtual Transportation Summit in partnership with a number of organizations including Franklin Community Health Network, Community Concepts, Greater Franklin Development Council and Western Maine Transportation.

We collaborated with NewsCenter Maine and the United Ways of Maine to host two state-wide telethons - Keep ME Warm (raising $172,855) and Maine United (COVID-Relief) (raising $623,981).

211 Contacts Soar

All United Ways in Maine and the State of Maine partner to coordinate a helpline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. This year, an unprecedented 97,273 calls were fielded by 211 call specialists. These same specialists answered more than 8,000 emails and texts. Of the 99,273 calls, 1,566 were from Greater Franklin County.

Maine 2-1-1™
Get Connected. Get Answers.
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Volunteer Engagement

We are committed to increasing our capacity and providing rich learning experiences at the same time. In 2020, students from Mt. Blue High School, Central Maine Community College, and UMF engaged in practicum and internship opportunities. We also enjoyed getting to know mature workers through the Senior Community Service Employment Program.

In 2020, 4,935 hours were served by volunteers, equating to $119,476.*

*Value of volunteer service is determined by Independent Sector https://independentsector.org/

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Mask Making

More than 4,000 masks were made by remarkable volunteers and distributed to individuals, businesses, and organizations throughout the region. United Way continues to have free masks and, thanks to a partnership with Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, shields are also available.

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Very Basics Fund

The Very Basics Fund was established just before COVID-19 hit with a focus on funding food, fuel, and shelter programs. Pandemic-related generosity and need fueled giving and just over $107,000 was raised. Just over $81,000 was allocated to 36 programs in 2020. We continue to fund basic needs with an upcoming deadline for applications of April 30, 2021.

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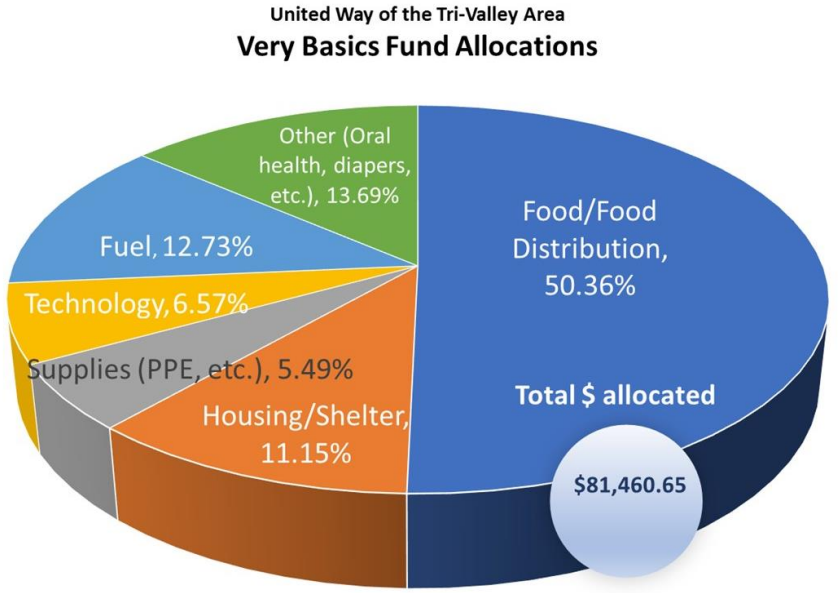

LEAP Explosion Fund

United Way established the LEAP Explosion Fund in the Fall of 2019 and raised more than $218,000 to help those affected by the tragedy. The funds continued to be disbursed throughout 2020 and all but $6,000 has been allocated. A final disbursement of those funds will be determined this year.

The funds went directly to assist families and businesses that were affected. In addition, mental health counseling was offered; site clean-up fees were paid for; a memorial design was approved and funded; and an Affordable Housing Challenge was launched with the Center for Entrepreneurial Studies and Mission at the Eastward receiving $20,000 and $30,000 respectively.

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Capacity Building

We invested in our organizational infrastructure so we can continue to efficiently and effectively meet our mission. This included engaging three contract grant writers, purchasing new hardware for the office, and upgrading internet.

We believe strongly in ensuring the sustainability of non-profits. We are actively seeking funding to help organizations increase their capacity to write grants; improve their technology; use data to inform decision making; and evaluate their programs.

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Diversified Support

It is imperative for United Way to continue to evolve the way it raises funds and impacts our community. To that end we welcomed many creative efforts spearheaded by community members. This includes, but is certainly not limited to the following:

- We celebrated young talent and sold kids' artwork through our Creative Kids program. Sales are split with the artist and the United Way.
- Outdoorsman and author Doug Dunlap walked more than 1,200 miles to raise money and awareness about United Way and to encourage others to get outside and enjoy the beautiful natural resources we have in western Maine. He raised more than $2,600 and talked to many people as he visited every town in Franklin County.
- Good sports who agreed to be locked up in a portable jail outside of Big Lots helped make our No Bail Go Directly to Jail fundraiser a success.
- Our friends at Franklin Savings Bank have been collecting hygiene items and UWTVA has been distributing these throughout the region.

Strategic Planning

The Board of Directors worked tirelessly on drafting a new strategic plan. This plan will be shared in its entirety in the coming weeks. A strategic focus will intentionally align with community needs and help United Way measure its impact.

Focus areas include:

- Increasing access to technology;
- Helping our community become more mobile by investing in transportation programs;
- Improving financial stability and increasing independence by working with youth on financial literacy and funding aspirational activities;
- Improving health with objectives to increase consumers' access to and consumption of healthy foods. We will also fund physical and mental health resources with an eye toward reducing teen suicide, decreasing rates of anxiety and depression in youth and reducing childhood obesity rates.

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Diversity Equity and Inclusion

At the end of 2020 United Way began a deeper dive into its policies, procedures, board and committee make up, and investments to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Efforts to build an organizational framework with DEI at its core include UWTVA executive director joining a cohort of 23 non-profit executives for an intensive Maine Leadership Learning Exchange for Equity sponsored by the Maine Community Foundation.

United Ways of Maine Executive Directors are also having facilitated conversations on DEI funded through the John T Gorman Foundation and UNUM Foundation.

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Thank You!

We are a resilient community and with creativity, collaboration, and determination we surthrived 2020. Thank you for all your support.

A complete list of donors and final campaign totals will be available after the campaign officially closes on April 30, 2021.

We are hopeful for 2021 and the impact we can continue to have by LIVING UNITED.

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