

## ***Corporate Champion Circle: Celebrating those who Support our Community***

*United Way of the Tri-Valley Area launched its Corporate Champion Circle in the summer of 2018. Circle members partner with United Way for one year, support their community, and receive unique marketing benefits. Corporate Champion Circle members contribute at one of three giving levels - Platinum (\$5,000), Gold (\$3,000), and Silver (\$1,500). To recognize Corporate Champion Circle members, and to get to know those who are passionate about United Way, we have started a series that profiles these dedicated businesses. First in our series is Shaun Riggs, owner of The Dugout Bar and Grill in Farmington.*

Shaun Riggs arrived characteristically early for our conversation. Wearing his signature baseball hat and a golf shirt, he sat down to share a bit about himself and why he joined the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area's Corporate Champion Circle. Talking about himself is not something Shaun typically does. He eased into the conversation as he began to answer questions about United Way – something he is clearly passionate about, having partnered with United Way's Champion Circle at the Platinum level, contributing \$5,000 this year.

Shaun was born in Brunswick, Maine. Shortly after he was born he was adopted and moved to Monmouth where he spent his early years, growing up with two siblings who were also adopted. His family moved to nearby Readfield where Shaun attended Marranacook High School. After graduation, he attended Bryant College to study business. After a short time, he found that Bryant was not fast-paced enough for him, and his interests had changed. So, he applied to the University of Maine at Farmington to study political science which he did for several years until his interests changed again and he began to think about returning to his roots in the restaurant business.

He had worked in restaurants since he was 13 cooking for his grandmother who owned a “greasy spoon” that served up a good dose of fun topped with a healthy serving of community. A six-month trip to Liberia “to experience something new,” gave him more experience as he worked in a catering company. When he returned, he worked at the Granary eventually becoming General Manager.

With his strong sense of community, a head for business, and food service experience, Shaun bought the then eleven-year-old Dugout Bar and Grill in 2010 when he was 30.

The Dugout is the ‘Cheers’ of Farmington. Good food at good prices keep people coming back, but it is also the atmosphere. Much like his grandmother's restaurant, the Dugout is a place where people of all walks of life gather for a good burger, Trivia Tuesdays, or to see if they can beat Shaun at cribbage. (Shaun prefers team cribbage, though, because there is more strategy.) He tries to eat a lot of salads but noted with his awesome laugh, “the pizza's pretty good too.”

Shaun did not know much about United Way until he met United Way's Finance and Operations Coordinator, Kendra Baker. Always passionate about her work, she invited Shaun to sponsor the Great Charity Auction and in typical style, he came to the event to learn more about the organization. It was not long after that, he was recruited for the board. Fidgeting in his seat, Shaun shrugged and said, “I take a sense of community really seriously. I can only do what I can do but that is only a portion... it takes a community. My eyes were opened when I got involved with United Way. I see now that there are a whole lot of folks in our community that cannot afford a ten-dollar pizza. I had to do something about it. These folks are not my customers, but it is still my community.”

Shaun is passionate about the area's needs, and, in particular, kids. He wanted to see the United Way's Hope Fund take off, so he began contributing to the fund which provides opportunities for kids to attend summer camps, register for sports, participate in therapeutic recreation other opportunities that build a brighter future. "I remember when I was growing up that there were kids who had everything ... and kids that had nothing. I felt for that kid on the basketball court who had nothing but ratty old sneakers."

After investing in the Hope Fund, Shaun took advantage of the Corporate Champion Circle. "UWTVA serves so many needs in our community, and they have come up with a great plan to encourage businesses to participate. The Corporate Champion Circle makes it easy and rewarding for the Dugout to contribute to this great cause. I hope I am inspiring other businesses to contribute as well. It's a good deal."

Shaun knows a good deal when he sees one, and he knows his way around numbers. He is putting these skills to good use currently serving as the treasurer of the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area board of directors.

His community service includes being a member of the Elks Club for seven years.

When not at the Dugout, Shaun likes to visit his camp at Moosehead. He likes to go "way up the woods" as much as he can where he can bird hunt, fish and get away to enjoy the sounds of silence.

As my conversation with Shaun concluded because he had to get to another meeting, I thought about all he has done. I don't think Shaun is going to be silent as he learns more about the community's needs and United Way's efforts to address them. He has found his voice.

- Lisa Laflin – Executive Director, United Way of the Tri-Valley Area