



Progress Edition
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For Immediate Release
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United Way Focuses on Education, Income and Health

In today's challenging economic climate United Way of Southwest Wyoming's (UWSW) work is more important than ever. Over the past year they have been innovative and proactive in generating new sources of income and investing community resources in ways that will produce long-term results in the areas of education, income and health. UWSW believes that there are basic things that we all need for a good life: a quality education that leads to a stable job, income that can support a family through retirement, and good health.

UWSW funds organizations that have measurable goals and outcomes that are in line with the education, income and health initiatives and that serve residents in Lincoln, Sublette, Sweetwater and Uinta Counties. To have a strong representation of all funded counties the UWSW Board of Directors approved changes to the by-laws to include: "The Board of Directors shall consist of not less than two representatives from each of the four counties (Lincoln, Sublette, Sweetwater, and Uinta)."

In addition, advisory councils in Lincoln, Sublette and Uinta Counties have been formed. The councils are responsible for assisting in the determination of policy and procedures, reviewing budgets and assisting in setting goals for their respective counties. Together, with board members, the advisory committees are ethically and morally responsible for all activities of UWSW. The Board of Directors are legally accountable for all aspects of UWSW which includes approving the budget and monitoring its implementation, assuring that oversight mechanisms are in place and is fully aware of UWSW's financial situation. The Board also approves or denies all grants/funding applications.

To help accomplish the education, income and health goals additional staff was added. UWSW "hired" Thomas Fricke, Emily George and Molly Foulds. They joined the UWSW team as AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers In Service to America) Volunteers for the 2009-2010 year at no cost to UWSW.

“I wanted to become a VISTA to give back to the community and to make a difference in the lives of others,” said George. “Becoming a VISTA at United Way of Southwest Wyoming seemed like a great opportunity to make a positive impact in the community, and would be a great learning experience.”

VISTA Volunteers work to create sustainable programs that will endure and expand beyond their service. These VISTA Members have committed to serve full-time for one year to UWSW. Benefits provided to each VISTA Member are covered through the AmeriCorps VISTA program. Benefits include a living allowance, health care benefits, childcare assistance, student loan deferment, one year non-competitive status for a federal government job, and access to a network of 170,000 VISTA Members and VISTA Alumni. At the end of the year of service the VISTA Member will receive a monetary stipend they can put towards college or pay off school loans, all of which is funded through AmeriCorps VISTA Program. In addition, the VISTA Member opportunity allows recent college graduates or current college students to gain real-world experience they would not be able to find in a typical entry-level position.

UWSW has also added two part-time support staff positions by being a host agency through its partnership with Experience Works. Experience Works is an organization that helps senior citizens get job training by placing them with host agencies. Their wages are paid through this program.

“United Way looks forward to working with any organization that produces long-term changes that align with the education, income and health initiatives. During times like these we must be creative and open to new ideas and partnerships. United Way works to create opportunities for a better tomorrow, part of this is stretching donor dollars to advance the common good,” said the UWSW board president, Commander Dwane Pacheco of the Rock Springs Police Department.

EDUCATION

Invest in our children and youth to help them become healthy and productive citizens, is the mission statement for UWSW’s education initiative.

Working towards this initiative UWSW applied for and was awarded a \$50,000 Wyoming Kids First Initiative Planning Grant by the Wyoming Kids First Initiative and the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services. These funds are allocated to UWSW to continue building a Regional Partnership, made up of dedicated United Way Volunteers, community stakeholders, and various community partners. The Regional Partnership, Wyoming Kids First of Sweetwater County, will build an early childhood network by identifying needs and gaps in services for children 0 to 8 years of age. The goal of the Planning Grant is to ensure the delivery of quality early childhood education and early child care, comprehensive family support systems and

inclusive quality health and mental health services. UWSW hired Katie Monroe as the Director of Regional Partnerships. Monroe coordinates the planning, implementation and evaluation of the Planning Grant. “Community volunteers have specified children as one of our targeted areas of need in Sweetwater County. This grant, along with United Way’s matching funds of \$15,000, will provide valuable resources as we move forward in investing in our children and youth from 0 to 17 years of age,” said Suzanne Zutter, United Way executive director.

Wyoming Kids First of Sweetwater County will write for a two-year continuum grant at the end of April 2010. Wyoming Kids First of Sweetwater County has completed their 2009-2010 Needs Assessment and it is available at www.swunitedway.org.

Monroe also coordinates UWSW’s Youth Programs Action Council. Through this Council a partnership was formed between Sweetwater County 4-H and the Holy Spirit Parish School to create the Rock Springs 4-H Afterschool Program. UWSW awarded Sweetwater County 4-H a \$56,000 Targeted Needs Grant that will be used as start-up funds for the program that will be housed at the Holy Spirit Parish School. The afterschool program will provide education enrichment to any kindergartener through eighth grade students. It will give youth the opportunity to develop additional academic mastery through supervised homework guidance as well as recreational activities that provide education in life skills essential for a productive and healthy lifestyle. For more information on the Afterschool Program contact Tabitha Fleak, 4-H & Youth Development Educator at 352-6775.

Molly Foulds, a VISTA member, is working closely with Wyoming Kids First of Sweetwater County to create and develop partnerships with community organizations to provide additional quality and affordable child care, creating after school programs and will be providing marketing assistance to child care programs.

Foulds has also been instrumental in helping UWSW form a partnership with Dolly Parton Imagination Library. This program seeks to provide every child, under the age of five, with a new, age appropriate book by mailing them one every month. UWSW is seeking funding for this program. Sponsorships pay for the books and mailing, and promoting the program. UWSW registers the children and the Dollywood Foundation manages the system to insure the delivery of the books to each child’s home.

UWSW Targeted Needs grants were awarded to the Children’s Learning Foundation in Mountain View, WY for \$40,000; and to Expedition Academy Child Care in Green River, WY for \$20,250. The YWCA Childcare in Rock Springs is a past recipient of this grant for \$58,717.

Two UWSW Ray Lovato grants were awarded to the Young At Heart Early Learning Center in Rock Springs. The first grant for \$20,000 was awarded to the Early Learning Center to contract with Bright Horizons

Family Solutions. An additional \$72,000 was awarded to purchase supplies for the start up of the Early Learning Center. In addition, with UWSW grant writing assistance, Young At Heart Early Learning Center was awarded a \$17,000 EnCana Oil & Gas grant for educational materials.

Current UWSW Funded Community Partners that meet the UWSW education initiative goals in Sweetwater County are: Sweetwater County Child Developmental Center, Sweetwater County Child Development Center At Risk Preschool, Young At Heart Early Learning Center, and YWCA Big Brothers Big Sisters. Funded Community Partners in Lincoln County are: Lincoln County Library Foundation, Lincoln Uinta Child Development Association, and Lincoln County Teen Center. The Funded Community Partner in Sublette County is Sublette County 4-H. Funded Community Partners in Uinta County are Evanston Child Development Center and Lincoln Uinta Child Development Association.

INCOME

Provide quality services to support independent living, is the mission statement for UWSW's income initiative.

Through this initiative, UWSW's Primary Health Action Council was formed and is pursuing a community health center with a focus on oral health. They have formed the Regional Health Network to assess needs and create solutions for access to mental, dental and medical care.

Emily George, a VISTA member, is assisting this initiative by exploring options, forming partnerships and collaborations to provide psychiatric care for all ages. George is also researching affordable and accessible options for health, optical and dental services for residents in Southwest Wyoming.

UWSW staff received training on community Financial Stability initiatives and a Financial Stability Team has been formed and is meeting bi-monthly.

In addition, UWSW works to stretch their Community Partners' budgets by organizing and distributing donated items. These items range from office furniture and supplies to hardware items. Community Partners can then give them to clients in need or use them for repairs and upgrades, lowering their overhead expenses allowing more of their budget to meet clients' needs. Part of this program includes donations from The Home Depot in Rock Springs, WY. UWSW has been matched with The Home Depot through Gifts In Kind International. UWSW picks up products donated by Home Depot as they become available.

Due to the high volume of donated goods, storage was needed. Working with the Urban Renewal Agency, UWSW entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Rock Springs for the use of a building on K Street. With volunteer help the space will be made into a "store" where non-profit organizations

and individuals can go and “shop” for needed items. Contact Katie Monroe at UWSW for a list of available items or to make a donation, 307-362-5003.

Current UWSW Funded Community Partners that meet the UWSW income initiative goals in Sweetwater County are CLIMB Wyoming, Young At Heart Community Based In Home Services and Young At Heart Special Diet Meals. The Lincoln County Funded Community Partner is Lincoln Self Reliance.

HEALTH

Develop a safe and healthy community through partnerships, is the mission statement for UWSW’s health initiative.

UWSW’s First Call for Help program has been placed under the direction of Southwest Wyoming Recovery and Access Programs (SW-WRAP). For the first time, First Call for Help is now providing a central intake and referral service throughout all of Southwest Wyoming. With UWSW grant writing assistance SW-WRAP was awarded a grant from the Wyoming Department of Health to fund a part-time position for a Regional Housing Specialist and their Housing and Urban Development (HUD) application was approved.

Thomas Fricke, a VISTA member, is working closely with First Call for Help to grow their comprehensive updatable information and referral services representing community resources throughout Southwest Wyoming.

UWSW continues to partner with FamilyWize by distributing discount prescription drug cards throughout Southwest Wyoming. Through January 2010, Southwest Wyoming residents have saved over \$500,000 since UWSW’s partnership with FamilyWize began in April 2008.

FamilyWize cards are primarily for people with no health insurance or prescription coverage. However, they can be used for prescriptions not covered by health insurance, Medicaid, Medicare or VA benefits. The cards have no usage or age limits, no income requirements, do not require registration forms and can be used immediately. There is no cost to UWSW to participate in this program. Pharmacies that accept the FamilyWize cards provide the prescriptions at a discount; cards are printed and shipped free of charge by corporate sponsors. Contact UWSW for a FamilyWize card or check with your pharmacy. Cards can also be printed at www.familywize.org.

In 2009, the UWSW Board of Directors awarded a \$1,500 Targeted Needs grant to the Southwest Wyoming Dental Association to administer the Give Kids a Smile program in Sweetwater County.

The Food Bank of Sweetwater County was awarded a \$5,000 Targeted Needs grant to help in the installation of a 12 by 26 foot walk-in freezer donated by Greg Bailey. Rasmussen Construction recruited

volunteers to help tear out the freezer from its original location, moving it to the Food Bank and installing it. The grant was used to purchase electrical equipment, concrete, sealant and to recharge the freezer. This freezer allows the food bank to store more meat, bread and dairy products.

Current UWSW Funded Community Partners that meet UWSW health initiative goals in Sweetwater County are: Basic Needs and Emergency Assistance (BNEA), First Call for Help, Food Bank of Sweetwater County, Hospice of Sweetwater County, Southwest Wyoming Recovery Access Programs (SW-WRAP), Sweetwater Family Resource Center, VIRS Respite Care, Western Wyoming Family Planning, Wyoming Health Initiative, Youth Home, Inc., YWCA Support and Safe House. The Funded Community Partner in Lincoln County is First Call for Help. Funded Community Partners in Sublette County are First Call for Help and Western Wyoming Family Planning. Funded Community Partners in Uinta County are First Call for Help, Sexual Assault and Family Violence, Western Wyoming Family Planning and Youth Alternative Home Association.

UWSW continues to seek federal, state and foundation qualifying grants for UWSW and community partners that will further the education, income and health initiatives. “We all win when a child succeeds in school, when families are financially stable and when people have good health,” said Pacheco.

Contact United Way for more information, 362-5003, marketing@swunitedway.org, or visit www.swunitedway.org.