

A rapid — and continuing — response to the hard economy

OCTOBER 2009



As the economy tumbled last fall, thousands of people in King County lost their jobs. Others saw their hours slashed. The threat of foreclosure loomed for some. Others were challenged with covering their rent, paying their utilities, and keeping food on the table.

United Way's Response for Basic Needs: Background and Accomplishments

United Way of King County launched its Response for Basic Needs in November of 2008 as the economic downturn turned severe. In the space of just a few months, we raised \$3.7 million in dollars to help those most vulnerable to the recession's effects (money on top of \$2.9 million that we had already allocated to basic needs for the year).

The new funds have enabled 58 new projects around King County. The results to date include:

- » 394 individuals avoiding homelessness.
- » 6 million pounds of additional food for hunger relief organizations over three years, including fresh produce and infant formula.
- » 34 food banks and multi-service centers gaining additional storage, refrigeration and transportation capacity.
- » 13,000 low-income individuals and families accessing free tax preparation services, and thereby securing refunds, Earned Income Tax Credits and other credits totaling \$17.3 million.
- » 2,500 families becoming connected to Basic Food (food stamps) and other public benefits.

A sampling of grants:

- » **\$35,000 | Solid Ground.** This grant to the Mortgage Counseling Assistance Program is providing short-term cash assistance and counseling to help homeowners prevent foreclosure and regain financial stability.

continued on next page

Helping meet the basic needs of the most vulnerable in our community is at the heart of our work every day at United Way of King County. As the needs surged, we knew that we had to do more. The frontline organizations that we support were in a vise: more call for their services, and lessened resources.

We turned to the community and asked for additional contributions to aid overwhelmed food banks, rental assistance programs, and other services that help our neighbors in greatest distress. The outpouring of generosity was extraordinary. See the sidebar at left for details.

Conditions remain hard, with recent statistics for King County showing:

- » **98,630 people out of work**, compared to 45,480 a year ago.
- » **A 180% increase in foreclosures.**
- » **4,099 calls to 2-1-1** about rental assistance, up from 2,045 in same quarter a year earlier.
- » **180,931 monthly visits to food banks**, versus 154,672 a year ago.

Given the continued harsh toll being taken by economy, our Response for Basic Needs will continue. *In the next phase we intend to raise \$2 million.*

NEXT FOR THE RESPONSE FOR BASIC NEEDS

Guided by extensive community input gathered in Spring 2009, in the next phase we have set a goal of **\$2 million**. We will build on our past assistance to hunger organizations and housing stability programs. Additionally, with an eye to reaching even more of the most vulnerable, we will mobilize resources for informal faith-based services, for volunteerism, and for a campaign to help struggling families and individuals become more aware of available help.

- » **\$10,000 | South Park Fresh Starts.** With greenhouse space provided by the South Park Neighborhood Center, the Providence Regina House Food Bank will grow thousands of pounds of fresh produce for struggling area residents.
- » **\$10,000 | FareStart.** This culinary training program for people leaving homelessness was supported in buying a new van for a food delivery program serving 43 child care centers and shelters in the Downtown, West Seattle, North Seattle, South Seattle, Beacon Hill, Rainier, and University District neighborhoods.
- » **\$250,000 | WithinReach.** Our support helped expand this organization's capacity to serve people in financial crisis with information about public benefits like Basic Food and low-cost health insurance, and help in getting signed up by telephone or via the web.

\$675,000 Housing Stability

[On top of \$1,470,000 already committed]

In the next phase of the Response, United Way of King County will invest a further \$600,000 to help people maintain or regain housing. The focus will be on those who are especially at risk, including single-parent families, veterans and non-English speakers.

Grant funds will be distributed on a competitive basis to organizations, including faith-based groups, which effectively provide:

- » Counseling and short-term financial support for low-income homeowners and tenants facing eviction, foreclosure or utility shut-off. This would include one-time rent payments or longer-term rental subsidies that decrease over time.
- » Assistance to newly-homeless families and individuals in getting rapidly and stably re-housed. Such assistance would include one-time move-in grants for first and last month's rent and/or damage deposits.

With an average investment of \$1,450 per case, we expect to help approximately **450 more families and individuals** to avoid or escape homelessness.

“There are a lot of people who have fallen on hard times for the first time. They don't know where to go for services and don't know how to navigate the services. Many of these people have recently lost their jobs and are desperately trying to hold onto their homes.”

Participant in a Spring 2009 community listening session convened by United Way

\$475,000 Food assistance for infants, older adults, people experiencing homelessness and those with chronic health issues

[On top of \$1,163,011 already committed]

To address the continuing heavy demand on area food banks and feeding programs, the Response will mobilize an additional \$400,000 for efforts to benefit several thousand area households. The additional investments, to be distributed through a competitive grants process, will include:

- » \$150,000 to increase the physical capacity of food banks and meal programs to store, refrigerate and transport food.
- » \$150,000 for formula and other food for infants, meal delivery for homebound individuals, and congregate meals for people who are homeless.
- » \$100,000 for a two-year effort to increase the capacity of hunger groups to recruit and manage volunteers in food collection, inventory, sorting, preparation and delivery.
- » \$75,000 to increase the capacity of diverse, faith-based organizations to aid people in need from their congregations and neighborhoods, for example by starting or expanding a food pantry, or doing education and outreach on benefits programs.

“The emergency food system is not equipped and doesn't have enough capacity to feed increased numbers of clients. Trucks are too overloaded to be able to haul more food, buildings are too small to accommodate higher client numbers, refrigerators and freezers are too small to hold enough food for more clients.”

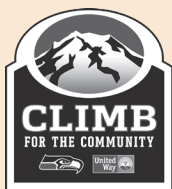
Participant in a Spring 2009 community listening session convened by United Way

\$750,000 Access to information and public benefits [On top of \$344,612 already committed]

People set back by the rough economy may have little idea about where to turn. Perhaps there are cultural or linguistic barriers. Perhaps they are unaware of the public benefits that could get them back on their feet. Or maybe they don't want or need regular benefits, but could use a helping hand short term. To be of aid to people in diverse circumstances, the next round of Response funding will direct \$175,000 to a collection of knowledge resources and outreach services.

- » **\$25,000** to provide information and guidance for people thrown into crisis by job loss, imminent foreclosure or another setback. Dollars will support:
 - » The creation of web-based, step-by-step guides on, for example, negotiating with a lender or landlord.
 - » Expanded publicity for the 2-1-1 community information line and other community resources.
 - » Outreach to area employers seeking to provide resources to laid-off or otherwise financially-burdened employees.
- » **\$450,000 to the organization WithinReach** to help people learn about and sign up for benefits including Basic Food (the state's federally-funded food stamp program); low-income health insurance programs like SCHIP and Basic Health; and rental and utility assistance. In the case of Basic Food, 34% of eligible King County families are not currently enrolled. Response funding will support the hiring of new outreach workers and — over the two years of the grant — result in 5,000 new recipients of support, and have financial impact including \$5 million for food purchases.
- » **\$125,000 for recruitment, training, equipping, and marketing of a new 100-person volunteer program**, Bridge to Basics, that will fan out to dozens of targeted community locations and help an estimated 2,000 eligible individuals and families learn about and sign up for appropriate benefits. (This new volunteer program is modeled on United Way's very successful Free Tax Preparation Campaign, which involves hundreds of specially-trained volunteers in preparing tax returns for low-income people, helping them get the full refunds and credits for which they're eligible.)

Coming together to Climb for the Community



In early July 2009, a group of community leaders stepped up in a big way to raise money and awareness for the Response for Basic Needs.

Community leaders including United Way CEO Jon Fine and Board Chair Molly Nordstrom; Seattle Seahawks CEO Tod Leiweke and Coach Jim Mora, and NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell climbed Mt. Rainier and generated not only \$380,000, but widespread local and national press coverage. More at unitedwayofkingcounty.org/climb.

Supporters of the Response for Basic Needs

as of September, 2009

The rallying of the community has been extraordinary. So many have generously given what they can, and it's made a tremendously positive impact in providing food, shelter and hope for tens of thousands of men, women and children in need.

Givers of \$10,000 and up include the following (listed in descending order of gift amount):

INDIVIDUALS & FOUNDATIONS

Bruce and Jeannie Nordstrom
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Joshua Green Foundation
Theresa E. Gillespie and John W. Stanton
Quiet Harbor Trust Fund
Medina Foundation
The Paul G. Allen Family Foundation
Blake and Molly Nordstrom
Raikes Foundation
Alison and Glen Milliman
Estate of Robert D. and Dorothy S. O'Brien
Ed and Marjorie Ringness
Tom Alberg and Judi Beck
Norman Archibald Charitable Foundation
Jon Fine and Paula Selis
Nick and Leslie Hanauer
Donna Sakson and Jonathan Mark
Craig Ueland

And three donors who wish to remain anonymous.

CORPORATIONS

Microsoft
Costco Wholesale
Bank of America
JPMorgan Chase and Co.
City of Seattle
The Boeing Company
Puget Sound Energy
Safeco Insurance
The Seattle Foundation
Virginia Mason Medical Center
Starbucks Coffee Company
Wells Fargo
Dorsey & Whitney Foundation
KeyBank
King 5
Washington Athletic Club
Washington Federal Savings

We also acknowledge our partner, The Seattle Foundation, whose Building Resilience Fund is a closely allied response to the turbulent economy.

Grantees of the Response for Basic Needs

as of September, 2009

Asian Counseling & Referral Service
Auburn Youth Resources
Ballard Food Bank
Beacon Avenue Food Bank
Center for Human Services
Chief Seattle Club
Community Lunch
Compass Center
Crisis Clinic
Delridge Neighborhoods Development Association
Des Moines Food Bank
Downtown Emergency Service Center
Domestic Abuse Women's Network (DAWN)
Eastside Baby Corner
Eastside Domestic Violence Program
El Centro de la Raza
FareStart
Federal Way Senior Center
Food Bank @ St. Mary's
Food Lifeline
Friends of Third Place Commons
Hopelink
International Drop-In Center
Jewish Family Services
Lifelong AIDS Alliance
Maple Valley Food Bank
Mt. Si Senior Center
Multi-Service Center
Neighborhood House
Northwest Harvest
Operation Nightwatch
Pike Market Senior Center & Downtown Food Bank
Plateau Outreach Ministries
Providence Regina House
Rainier Valley Food Bank
Refugee Women's Alliance
Salvation Army
Seattle Indian Center
Senior Services
Shalom Zone Nonprofit Association | Rising Out of The Shadows (ROOTS)
SHARE
Solid Ground
South Park
Tukwila Pantry
United Way *Hunger Relief Now!* Plan
United Way Tax Preparation Campaign
University District Food Bank
Valley Cities
Vashon Food Bank
WithinReach
YouthCare
YWCA

For further information about the Response for Basic Needs, please contact

Marsha Heaton, Director of Major Gifts, at mheaton@uwkc.org or 206/461-8367.

For the latest on the Response for Basic Needs, visit unitedwayofkingcounty.org/response.