
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is United Way of the Columbia-Willamette?

United Way of the Columbia-Willamette is a local, nonprofit organization that works to advance the common good by focusing on the basic things we all need for a good life: education, income, and health. Our goal is to create long-lasting changes that prevent problems from happening in the first place. United Way has been helping people in the four-county metro area since 1920. We work with community leaders and service providers to identify and prioritize the needs, leverage contributions, and achieve measurable results. Our grant-funding model identifies partners and projects that promote collaborations, efficiency, innovation, and results. By working together, united, we can inspire hope and create opportunities for a better tomorrow. That's what it means to LIVE UNITED.

What makes United Way different from other charities?

What makes us unique is that we address a wide range of needs and distribute funds strategically through a grant funding process. United Way goes beyond fundraising by researching and assessing the needs of the community and bringing the right resources and people together to solve tough local issues. We fund programs that are meeting people's emergency needs and we're working on innovative solutions for lasting change in the lives we touch and our community. United Way monitors performance, holds programs accountable and reports results to donors on a regular basis. United Way funded programs have been so successful they have effectively leveraged funding from other sources and as a result, many have become self-sustaining over time. The projects United Way selects for funding are improving access to health care, increasing the high school graduation rate and reducing poverty.

Why give to the United Way Campaign?

- **It makes a difference.** United Way is the most efficient, effective and accountable way to make a positive difference in the lives we touch. And, 100% of your gift goes to help children, individuals, and families right here in the Portland/Vancouver metro area. You are making an investment that benefits the entire community, not just one program, issue, or population and this leads to a stronger, more sustainable place to live and work. We all win when a child succeeds in school, when families are financially stable, and when people have good health. United Way can also connect you with opportunities to volunteer and advocate for change in our community.
- **It's a smart investment.** We are experts at managing donor investments and bringing the right people, ideas, and resources together to solve the most pressing needs of our community, and finding innovative solutions for lasting change. United Way leverages your contribution by combining it with others and strategically investing in results-driven program and initiatives to maximize the impact we have in the community. For every dollar you invest, United Way returns \$1.83 to the community.
- **It's easy and convenient.** With payroll deduction, you decide once a year how much you want to give to support your community and the donation comes right out of your paycheck. Spreading your giving throughout the year makes it easier to give significantly and still stay within your own budget. You may also give online through our website or make a direct donation to United Way by check.

Can I give in other ways besides payroll deduction?

United Way offers several other convenient ways to give:

- Online at www.unitedway-pdx.org
- Cash or check
- Credit or debit card including Visa, MasterCard, American Express or Discover. Make a one-time gift, or contribute monthly.
- Donate stock, securities or real estate. Thanks to tremendous tax advantages, donating appreciated securities has become very popular, provided you have held the securities for at least one year. When you donate appreciated securities to United Way you pay no capital gains taxes and 100% of the stock is tax deductible. Consult your broker and United Way for further tax-saving information.

What if I don't think I can afford to give?

Think about volunteering but remember that by using United Way's payroll deduction plan, you can invest even a small amount each pay period, and see it add up to a significant gift by year's end. Your investment combined with thousands of others will have real, measurable impact in the community. A contribution of just \$5 a month can change lives!

Can I designate my gift to a specific nonprofit or community partner?

Yes. Through United Way of the Columbia-Willamette you can give to any registered tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations. However, you should know that we can't hold agencies to our standards of accountability if we don't have a grant-funding relationship with them.

Why should I give to United Way's Community Impact Fund?

The best way to make the greatest difference in our community and achieve results is to donate directly to United Way. Giving to United Way's Community Impact Fund, Community Relief Fund, or our specific focus areas ensures that you are investing in programs that see measurable results and meet the needs of the community. We multiply the effect of your donation because we are able to help agencies leverage more public and private dollars. United Way invests strategically to create long-term systemic changes. We encourage you to support causes that are important to you, but also consider giving a gift to United Way to provide the building blocks people need for a good life and create opportunities for everyone in our community.

What is United Way's operating cost?

Thanks to Cornerstone Partners, who cover our operating expenses, every dollar you give goes to fund critical programs in our community. However, we think it's important for you to know that we work hard to keep costs as low as possible. In the most recent audited fiscal statements (year ending June 30, 2010), United Way's operating cost was 14.6% percent. Of this, 8.4% was for fundraising and 6.2% for administrative costs, including pledge processing.

What guides United Way of the Columbia-Willamette's investment of donor dollars?

United Way uses a grant funding model that strategically invest in partners and projects that demonstrate collaboration, efficient and effective use of resources, and measurable results. We conduct research to identify and prioritize the needs of the community so we know the best avenues for investing your dollars to create measureable results. About 75 well-trained volunteers and expert United Way staff work together to determine funding priorities and to identify the best ways to solve issues in the four counties we serve. Our priority is funding programs that help children and youth reach their potential, help families and individuals become financially stable, and provides access to health care.

United Way supports health care access, isn't the government health care plan taking care of people?

Most of the components of the national healthcare act will not be implemented until 2012 and even then there will be gaps. United Way is working to ensure that people without insurance or those who are underinsured have access to a wide variety of healthcare services to support physical, emotional, and mental health. We are also funding projects that help to create safe and healthy environments to improve the overall health of individuals and our community.

Does United Way condone pressure to give?

No. United Way is based on the concept of voluntary giving and we believe that no one should ever be pressured into giving. In our experience, the best and most responsive giving comes voluntarily from a person's understanding of the needs and a desire to make a difference. If you feel pressured, we want to know about it. Please contact Carolee Lee, Vice President of Marketing and Communications at 503.226.9287 or email caroleel@unitedway-pdx.org.