

A rapid—and continuing— response to the hard economy

SPRING 2010



As the economy has tumbled, thousands of people in King County have lost their jobs. Others have seen their hours slashed. The threat of foreclosure has loomed for some. Others have been 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 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 70 new projects around King County. The results to-date include:

- » 1,010 individuals avoiding homelessness.
- » 6 million pounds of additional food for hunger relief organizations over three years, including fresh produce and infant formula.
- » 42 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.
- » 4,500 families becoming connected to Basic Food (food stamps) and other public benefits.
- » Development of a "Where to Turn" brochure to help families navigate the social service system.

A sampling of grants:

- » **\$39,600 | South King County Food Coalition's "Yes We Can!" Cannery Project.** This collaboration among area hunger groups will enable existing food surpluses (such as frozen vegetables) to be canned, then distributed through food banks in south King County. This project will produce additional cans of food for the emergency food

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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 have surged, we have stepped up to do more. The frontline organizations that we support have been in a vise: more call for their services, and lessened resources.

To respond, we have 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 has been extraordinary. See the sidebar at left for details.

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

- » The unemployment rate in King County rose to **8.8%** in January 2010.
- » Nearly **1 in 5** Washington households couldn't afford enough food in 2009.
- » Food-stamp use across Washington state has grown sharply, and **17%** of children in King County are on food stamps.

Given the continued harsh toll being taken by the economy, our Response for Basic Needs will continue. *In the next phase we intend to raise \$1 million.*

"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

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 **\$1 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 volunteerism to help struggling families.

“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, and 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

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system.

- » **\$25,000 | Food Lifeline: Technology Improvement Project.** Automating agency reporting to Food Lifeline means that hunger relief organizations will spend less time doing paperwork and more time delivering services.
- » **\$25,000 | WithinReach.** Our support will expand outreach and access to summer food programs for kids who qualify for reduced or free lunch during the school year.
- » **\$25,000 | White Center Food Bank: Mobile Food Distribution Project.** The food bank will be able to increase its capacity through the purchase of refrigerated trucks to transport food.
- » **\$95,000 | Food Lifeline.** This grant provides funds to package and transport donated products that are otherwise not reaching Food Lifeline. The agency will also work with key retail, wholesale and nonprofit partners to get more nutritious foods, such as salmon, halibut, citrus, hard winter vegetables and eggs. The amount of food involved will exceed 900,000 pounds.

\$650,000 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 \$500,000 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 experiencing homelessness.
- » \$200,000 to increase access to fresh, nutritious food through farmers markets, community gardens, The Healthy Corner Store and local farms.
- » \$150,000 to expand outreach and access to summer food programs for children who receive free and reduced school lunch. The goal is to double the number of summer meal sponsors and add 30 new summer meal sites. Only 11% of children eligible for this program are receiving services.

\$350,000 Access to public benefits, tax credits and economic opportunities

[On top of \$344,612 already committed]

United Way will continue to invest in efforts that help people obtain public benefits for which they are qualified.

- » **\$250,000 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), utility assistance, the Women, Infants and Children supplemental nutrition program, and the Apple Health Insurance Program for kids. 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.
- » **\$50,000 for recruitment, training, equipping and marketing of the Bridge to Basics program.** Certified volunteers screen clients to see if they are eligible to receive money for food, reduce their utility bills, sign up for low-income health care and much more. Bridge to Basics volunteers can answer questions, speak many languages and do not require appointments. They will fan out to dozens of targeted community locations and help an estimated 2,000 eligible families learn about and sign up for appropriate benefits.

United Way of King County’s Free Tax Preparation Campaign—using highly trained volunteers—helps greater numbers of low-income people benefit from tax credits and deductions. The campaign also helps users avoid the high-interest charges at “rapid-refund” outlets. Being financially stable reduces the risk of becoming homeless.

The Earned Income Tax Credit is for working families earning less than \$48,279 and may be worth as much as \$5,657. Additionally, the Child Tax Credit is worth up to \$1,000 per child. Yet many of those who are eligible will not make a claim.

- » **\$50,000 will continue to expand the campaign**, including intensified outreach and extended hours. The 2010 Free Tax Preparation Campaign has already returned \$13 million to clients, including \$5.1 million in the EITC.

United Way’s Volunteer Impact Program

United Way of King County has partnered with Executive Service Corps to implement the Volunteer Impact Program. VIP is a special initiative to help King County hunger organizations effectively recruit, use and retain volunteers.

Over the course of the year, 20 hunger relief organizations will improve their ability to engage volunteers in activities that help programs run smoothly and efficiently. Programs will soon be able to provide more assistance to people in need because of improved volunteer management. Participating organizations will also be eligible to apply for additional consulting support made possible by a grant from the HandsOn Network to implement key activities within their plans.

Hunger relief organizations participating in the Volunteer Impact Program: Catholic Community Services—Issaquah Meals, Church of Mary Magdalene Day Center, Compass Housing Alliance, El Centro de la Raza, Emergency Feeding Program, The Food Bank at St. Mary’s, HopeLink Kirkland Food Bank, Immanuel Community Services Food Bank, Millionair Club, MultiService Center—Food Bank, North Helpline Food Bank, Phinney Neighborhood Association, Pike Market Senior Center & Downtown Food Bank, Puget Sound Labor Agency, Rainier Valley Food Bank, Recovery Café, Senior Services—Meals on Wheels & Community Dining, Teen Feed—University Street Ministry, Volunteers of America Greenwood Food Bank, White Center Food Bank.

Supporters of the Response for Basic Needs

as of March 2010

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.

Donors of \$10,000 or more include the following (listed in descending order of gift amount):

INDIVIDUALS & FOUNDATIONS

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And three donors who wish to remain anonymous

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Grantees of the Response for Basic Needs

as of March 2010

Asian Counseling & Referral Service
Auburn Youth Resources
Ballard Food Bank
Beacon Avenue Food Bank
Center for Human Services
Chief Seattle Club
City of Seattle Aging and Disability Services
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 at 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 King County Food Coalition
South Park
Tukwila Pantry
United Way Bridge to Basics Program
United Way *Hunger Relief Now!* Plan
United Way Tax Preparation Campaign
University District Food Bank
Valley Cities
Vashon Food Bank
White Center Food Bank
WithinReach
YouthCare
YWCA

For further information about the Response for Basic Needs, please contact
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For the latest on the Response for Basic Needs, visit unitedwayofkingcounty.org/response.