

# History of United Way

In 1887, a Denver woman, a priest, two ministers and a rabbi recognized the need for cooperative action to address their city's welfare problems. Frances Wisheart Jacobs, the Rev. Myron W. Reed, Dean H. Martyn Hart, Msgr. William J. O'Ryan, and Rabbi William S. Friedman put their heads together to plan the first united campaign for ten health and welfare agencies. They created an organization to serve as an agent to collect funds for local charities, to coordinate relief services, counsel and refer clients to cooperating agencies, and make emergency assistance grants in cases which could not be referred. That year, Denver raised \$21,700 and created a movement that would spread throughout the country to become the modern United Way. Now, 125 years later, United Way is still focused on mobilizing the caring power of communities and making a difference in people's lives.

Fast forward 50 years to 1937 and find that a group of caring citizens in Bremerton created the first cooperative action here for the purpose of addressing the needs of their city. That organization was called the Bremerton Community Fund. That year they raised \$12,630.63.

During the war years the fund was referred to as the Community War Chest. In 1947 the Bremerton Community Fund became the Kitsap County Community Chest. By 1948 more than 1,000 communities nationwide had established Community Chest (United Way) organizations. In 1954, Kitsap County Community Chest became known as United Good Neighbors and established the first unified federated campaign for Kitsap County.

By 1967 United Way campaigns across the country raised more than \$700 million dollars despite work shortages (similar to today) and civil unrest. United Way helped 27.5 million families, 31,300 agencies were members; 8.5 million people were volunteering; and 32.8 million people made donations.

In 1970 the United Way name was formally adopted and the vast majority of Community Chests and United Good Neighbors all became known as United Way. In 1977 United Way fundraising growth across the country exceeded \$100 million for the first time. In 1981 the United Way organizations across the country raised \$1.68 million dollars.

In 2007 United Ways raised over \$4 billion dollars and became the nation's largest charitable organization. Here in Kitsap County, United Way had its largest campaign raising \$1.86 million dollars and then the great recession hit.

In 2012, United Way of America, now United Way Worldwide turned 125 years old and United Way of Kitsap County celebrated 75 years of service to Kitsap County.

As part of our transition to Community & Collective Impact, in 2014, we became the Presenting Partner for the Kitsap Great Give, coordinated by the Kitsap Community Foundation.

In 2015, we formally transitioned to Community Impact as a key partner and funder of Kitsap Strong. A collaboration & network of organizations throughout Kitsap County whose mission is to: Improve the well-being and educational attainment of Kitsap Residents, through a focus on empowerment and equity, the prevention of ACEs, and the building of resilience.

2017 we embarked on our 80<sup>th</sup> year of fighting for the health, education, and financial stability for all in Kitsap County.

2018 strengthening our collaborative work with: Kitsap Strong Network, Homes for All, and gearing up to tell the story of A.L.I.C.E., and responded to emergent needs due to a near EF3 Tornado in Port Orchard.

December 2019, our local Crisis Clinic services were moved to Everett, leaving our local 211 of the Peninsulas' without a home. The United Way of Kitsap County Board of Directors voted to bring 211 into United Way of Kitsap County. Moving 211 into the United Way of Kitsap County building gives them a permanent home.

## History of United Way continued

2020 COVID-19, 2-1-1 of the Peninsula's is also a key element in times of disaster and national emergency. In March, approximately 12 operators, volunteers & new staff, along with the technical capacity, were added to our local 2-1-1 team as part of the WA211 team handling all of the Department of Health COVID-19 hotline calls. In addition, the United Way of Kitsap County and Kitsap Community Foundation partnered to create, manage, and raise funds for the Kitsap COVID-19 Response Fund, along with funding partners Windermere Foundation (Poulsbo Office), Town & Country Markets, Orchard Foods, Puget Sound Energy, Medina Foundation, Perigee Fund, Ballmer Group, Sparky's Fund, Ghiselin Foundation, and the First Federal Community Foundation.