

United Way of Valdez

The United Way is a national organization with the mission of 'improving lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities.' Local chapters of the United Way help to fulfill this mission by serving as a conduit between local businesses and local non-profits.

The United Way of Valdez provides a safe and easy way for Valdez businesses to be involved in a single organization that helps many agencies. Their mission is to 'support organizations that make lasting, measurable changes in community conditions that improve lives.'

They fulfill this mission by encouraging local businesses to raise funds through their employees that can be donated to United Way and dispersed to a variety of local non-profits.

Businesses are encouraged to run a campaign by raising money from employees. Some businesses give extra incentive by matching the funds donated. When all employees of a business come together for one united purpose, the results can be extraordinary. In 2007, the United Way of Valdez raised approximately \$135,000. This enabled them to provide funding to 38 local non-profit agencies.

A kick-off event jump starts the campaign season. The event is to encourage businesses to run a fundraising campaign and provide an opportunity for businesses and non-profit organizations to interact.

The non-profits bring desserts and are on hand to answer questions about their organizations and their need for funding. A short presentation also gives the businesses ideas and sugges-

tions for how to run their campaigns.

According to United Way of Valdez President, Will Stark, "Agency participation was very strong at this year's event. It appeared that both business leaders and agencies enjoyed the event and the opportunity to share information and ideas."

The United Way believes that all businesses have the ability to run a campaign and encourage everyone to participate. You don't have to be big or have a large number of employees. Many businesses come up with cre-

the community to include corporate, small business, and non-profit representation.

Directors serve three year terms and can serve two consecutive terms before being required to take a year off. This enables the Board to maintain a healthy mix of new and experienced Directors and keep ideas fresh. The Board is also assisted by volunteers who are typically recruited based on their ability to help with specific projects.

One big responsibility of the United Way is determining where the money raised will go.

To do this effectively, the Board defined four core areas of care and requires non-profit agencies to submit a statement outlining how the organization supports one of these areas as well as the mission of the United Way of Valdez.

These four areas of care are defined as:

1. Meeting the basic needs of people in crisis to promote wellness
 - Organizing comprehensive health and human services for people in crisis
 - Providing a 'safety net' for those facing hunger and homelessness

2. Working to increase the health and safety of women, children, families, and neighborhoods promoting wellness and self-sufficiency
 - Providing education, counseling and assistance to individuals working toward self-sufficiency
 - By providing enhancement and enrichment opportunities to develop healthy children, families and community

3. Helping children and youth succeed by enhancing the quality of



Above: Members of the Valdez Civil Air Patrol whose programs are funded in part by United Way of Valdez.

ative ways to raise additional funds for the United Way. A business could hold a special event or designate a portion of proceeds for a predetermined amount of time.

There is no shortage of good ideas and following the kick off, the United Way Board of Directors will contact business leaders to assist them with their campaigns.

The United Way of Valdez is run by a volunteer Board of Directors, elected from a cross section of



Above: Recipients of the first AVV Women of Distinction Awards, funded in part by the United Way of Valdez. Right: Janese Chrystal and Flynn Stuparich volunteering for the Valdez Community Hospital Auxiliary. Bottom Right: United Way Board member, Mayor Bert Cottle, presenting a check to AVV Executive Director Octavia Thompson.

childcare and mentoring services
 -Involving youth in community service and leadership
 -Supporting the elderly and people with disabilities

4. Coordinating mental, emotional, physical health and terminal illness services
 -Helping people with disabilities lead active, productive lives

Non-profit agencies who believe they have programs or projects that support one of these areas of care should contact the United Way.

Agencies seeking financial participation will be required to submit a completed application and present to the United Way Board of Directors.

In addition to the United Way's core programs, the Board of Directors and volunteers participate in the United Way Day of Caring.

This is a signature event of the United Way and allows the organization to make a hands-on impact in the community.

In 2008, the Day of Caring was celebrated by painting the cafeteria/community area at the Valdez Senior Center. In the past, they built a storage

unit for Advocates for Victims of Violence and repaired the roof on the informational kiosk for visitors as they enter town. These projects are proposed by board members and agreed on by the Board of Directors.

The group is hoping to make the Day of Caring an annual event in Valdez and are always looking for good project ideas.

The United Way of Valdez is looking forward to the upcoming year and anticipates more participation than ever.

According to Meg McKinney, United Way Marketing Coordinator, "It is really exciting that United Way is raising and spending the level of funding that they are in a small town like Valdez." She enjoys seeing the business leaders and agencies come together for positive change in our community.

Copper Valley Electric would like to recognize the local non-profits for their dedication to the communities we serve and thank the United Way for helping to support these organizations.

For more information on the United Way of Valdez, contact Will Stark at 834-4815.

