

Wilkes United Way Grants Help in Watauga

Written by Submitted
Friday, 06 September 2013 05:09

For the second year, United Way of Wilkes County's Board of Directors has committed resources obtained from its annual community campaign to address unmet or under-met needs in Wilkes County. These funds have recently been awarded in the form of Venture Grants to non-profit regional agencies that are addressing specific, board directed needs.

Dane Mastin, United Way Board President, in announcing the grant awardees said, "We, as a Board of Directors, felt that although we sponsor tremendous programs through our partner agencies, there continues to be unmet needs in our community. For that reason, we dedicated \$15,000 for Venture Grant awards to agencies that are focusing on specific areas of need within our primary impact areas of crisis intervention, educational advancement and health improvement."

For 2013, Venture Grant recipients are Circle of Care of Wilkes, Hospitality House of Boone and Samaritan Kitchen of Wilkes. An open invitation to all non-profits assisting residents of the county was extended to apply. United Way's Fund Distribution Committee reviewed all applications and recommended to the full Board of Directors the three for consideration. Venture grants are offered at the discretion of the Board of Directors and vary from year-to-year depending on the needs in the county.

Rick Stegall, Executive Director for United Way, said "These Venture Grants give United Way the flexibility to meet special community needs as determined by our citizens and approved by our Board. In 2013, our Board felt these three organizations exhibited a dynamic push toward addressing poverty with measurable results that improve lives and make lasting changes, not just temporary fixes."

In receiving their Venture Grant, Samaritan Kitchen's Operations Manager Julie Smith commented, "Being awarded the Venture Grant from United Way will allow SKW to send home much needed personal hygiene items with the students who are on our Project Backpack program. Items such as soap, washcloths, toothpaste and toothbrushes will be included. We will be able to provide these items home at least 2 times this year along with the much need food items that is sent home every week."

Jean Graf, Treasurer and board member of Circles said, "What a blessing for Wilkes Circles of Care when United Way of Wilkes gave us the grant to continue our work in getting families out of the misery of poverty. This money will provide us funding to start our fourth class of some fifteen weeks of training and support and to continue the great successes that we have so far had with our program. Thanks again to United Way!"

The final Venture Grant for 2013 was awarded to Hospitality House of Boone. "We are thrilled to receive the 2013 Venture Grant from United Way of Wilkes," replied Tina Krause, Director of Services. She continued, "Out of the seven counties served by Hospitality House, Wilkes County has the highest percentage of the homeless population. In this past year Hospitality House has served more homeless individuals and families from Wilkes County than any other county other than Watauga. We look forward to continuing to serve Wilkes County and to

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helping those Wilkes residents living in crisis, poverty and homelessness rebuild their lives.” United Way of Wilkes County is pleased to work with all local and regional non-profit organizations to further its mission of involving the entire community in identifying our community’s needs, developing financial resources and partnering with programs to meet these needs. For over 60 years United Way of Wilkes has been on the cutting edge of providing programs dedicated to improving lives in Wilkes County and for the citizens of our area.

Venture Grant photo cutline:

United Way of Wilkes County presented Venture Grants to three area non-profits that are working in areas that address unmet and under-met needs. Pictured left to right, Tanya Shire, United Way co-chair of Fund Distribution; Tina Krause, Hospitality House of Boone; Jean Graf, Wilkes Circles of Care; Shirley Inscore, United Way co-chair of Fund Distribution; Todd Carter, Hospitality House; Gretchen Barelski and Julie Smith Samaritan Kitchen of Wilkes.