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For immediate release

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United Way of Hampshire County Announces Grants to Improve Lives of Children
Ten organizations to receive program support

NORTHAMPTON –United Way of Hampshire County has awarded \$765,000 in three-year funding to 10 area programs that best demonstrated their ability to make a significant and lasting difference in the lives of children in the region.

James Ayres, executive director of United Way, said 35 organizations pursued funding this year, in the area of Children, Youth and Their Families, and after an extensive process, involving hundreds of experts and community volunteers, the United Way Board of Directors announced the funded programs today.

“We’re looking for those programs that are equipped to address the most pressing needs in our community,” Ayres said. “Our process and approach is open and thorough and involves extensive conversations with experts on community need and the data that supports that need. We look deeply into the challenges that exist and where we can have the greatest impact.”

Funded initiatives will address: comprehensive family support, child advocacy, support for homeless youth, quality childcare, youth mentoring and mental health for children impacted by trauma.

The following are the funded programs and the agencies they are managed by: Big Brothers/Big Sisters, a program of Center for Human Development, serving Hampshire County; Healthy Families, a program of Community Action, serving Hampshire County; Friends of Children, serving Hampshire County; Hampshire County Youth Outreach, a program of DIAL/SELF, serving Northampton; Under Five Thrive, a program of the Behavioral Health Network, serving Ware and Belchertown; Child & Family Clinic, a program of Cutchins Programs, serving Northampton; People’s Institute, serving Hampshire County; the Hilltown Collaborative for Children & Families, a program of the Hilltown Community Health Center, serving the Hilltowns; Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts, serving Hampshire County; and

Community Centered Family Support, a program of Berkshire Children & Families, serving Hampshire County.

“Our objective is to nurture the healthy development of children and youth through approaches that are preventative in nature, address needs early and engage whole families,” Ayres said.

In addition to these three-year awards of \$30,000 to \$135,000, Ayres said, smaller investments of \$1,000 will also be awarded to emerging initiatives.

“These smaller investments are going to organizations that aren’t yet at a level where we’re able to offer full grants as they are still developing,” Ayres said. “Yet, they are engaging key populations, and we want to support their growth and potential. We want to help bring these organizations along and to do so strategically.”

Those receiving what Ayres called “capacity-building support” are the Amherst Boys and Girls Club and Tri-County YMCA, which provides services in Ware.

United Way offers funding to its organizations in multi-year awards, so that their efforts will continue for the next three years. In addition to its Children, Youth and Their Families support, United Way also funds initiatives focused on Economic Security and Health and Safety. Grants for these areas will be awarded in 2017 and 2018, respectively.

In making grants, United Way looks for organizations that can reach families and individuals in greatest need, engage diverse populations and demonstrate the capacity to have a long-term effect, Ayres said.

Also valued are organizations that are: interested and able to collaborate with one another; able to measure their own success; and dedicated to building on best-practices in their field.

Ayres stressed that United Way relies on a proactive and deliberate funding process and approach that makes decisions based on the changing needs and resources of our community.

“Each year, beginning in the fall, that approach begins by gathering a panel of experts on the focus area, this year Children, Youth and Their Families. These professionals offer new and critical information on need in the county and identify approaches and interventions with the greatest potential to address these challenges,” Ayres said.

A survey is then conducted in the general community, seeking additional perspectives on the region’s greatest needs. A Community Review Team made up of about 35 local volunteers review all applications, and after a meticulous process that also includes site visits to each organization that applied for funding, a recommendation is made to the full United Way Board of Directors.



United Way of Hampshire County engages and inspires the people, employers and organizations of Hampshire County to give, advocate, and volunteer on behalf of our community. Our vision is that all individuals and families have the tools and resources to reach their full potential through education, economic security and wellness.

Lifting together, we build strong, vibrant, and inclusive communities.

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