

# Partner Profiles



United Way of the Tri-Valley Area

Lisa Park Laflin, Executive Director

*Editor's Note: This article is written in part by Allison Wood, UMF intern, as part of an ongoing series that demonstrates the community impact of the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area (UWTVA), its funded Partners, and recipients of donor-designated funds. To learn more about how you can give, advocate, or volunteer in your community, or to view the article archive, visit [www.uwtva.org](http://www.uwtva.org). To contact staff, call (207) 778-5048 or e-mail [info@uwtva.org](mailto:info@uwtva.org).*

The United Way of the Tri-Valley Area (UWTVA) is able to provide meaningful volunteer experiences to many individuals over the course of the year. We are particularly fortunate to work with intern and practicum students from the University of Maine at Farmington. We say goodbye to one of those interns this week, Allison Wood. Allison graduates this month with a Community Health Education degree and we are pleased that she is now continuing her interest in community service by applying to the AmeriCorps program. In her final assignment, Allison crafted this article, focusing on how United Way connects individuals to the supports they may need:

The United Way of the Tri-Valley Area helps Greater Franklin County by providing information as well as referral to resources to residents and visitors alike. This is done, in part, by supporting 2-1-1 Maine and by providing direct assistance with referrals to those in need. United Way of the Tri-Valley Area works in collaboration with 2-1-1 Maine to provide the best and most current information possible to those who request - from Farmington to Freeman Township and beyond.

Every day people in Maine need help, whether it is for paying their heating bills, finding financial counseling or locating child care assistance. In these stressful situations, trying to find the right phone number or service can be overwhelming and frustrating. 2-1-1 helps. The 24/7 call center (just dial . . .211!) is part of a national movement to centralize and streamline access to health and human service information and resources. 2-1-1 was established to make finding the help needed easier during some of life's struggles as well as day to day life. 2-1-1 served 1,012 individuals from July 2008 to June 2009 in Greater Franklin County. (2009-2010 data is currently being collected.)

As a Community Resource Coordinator intern at the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area, I have directly assisted approximately 70 individuals during my placement from January-May 2010.

The most frequent request for information for 2-1-1 Maine during 2008-09 was heating assistance, followed by request for mental health services and help with utility payments. The top priority for those seeking help from the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area was housing and emergency shelter. 2-1-1 has seen over a 200% increase in calls from heating assistance alone, and requests to UWTVA have significantly increased as well, with an average of 23 requests per month. It is clear that through the use of 2-1-1 Maine and calls and visits to United Way, that the 2-1-1 and United Way partnership is essential.

As my time at the United Way comes to a close, I am able to reflect on data such as this; and the great level of need throughout this community. I am grateful that even with all the needs this area of Western Maine has, it continues to give so much to University students such as myself; and provide such valuable services through efforts like 2-1-1 Maine and more. I have only been able to provide a snapshot of 2-1-1. I encourage you to visit [www.211maine.org](http://www.211maine.org) to learn much more including monthly reports of calls by county if you are interested in seeing detailed information.

*The United Way of the Tri-Valley Area's (UWTVA) mission is to improve people's lives by focusing the caring capacity of our communities. One of 10 United Ways in Maine, UWTVA conducts an Annual Fundraising Campaign, contributions to which are reinvested in Greater Franklin County, by supporting programs run by area 501 (c)3 health and human service organizations. UWTVA also coordinates the Emergency Food and Shelter Program and collaborates with area volunteers and organizations to conduct initiatives that support the community, including food drives and homeless prevention activities.*