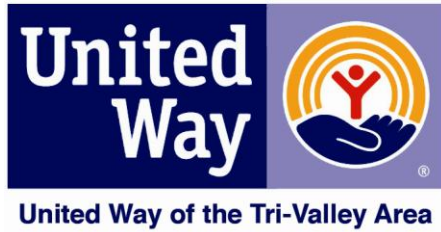


Partner Profiles



Lisa Park Laflin, Executive Director

Editor's Note: This is the fourth in a series of articles that demonstrates the community impact of the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area.

As we have noted in previous columns, the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area (UWTVA) brings people together to address issues in the community, such as the need for additional fuel assistance and emergency shelter. It raises money through workplace campaigns, as well as contributions from individuals and foundations to address these and many other issues. It helps to address the issues by supporting the programs of more than 20 Community Partners. One such Community Partner is Work First. Linda LaRue Keniston, Executive Director, shares this story of how a United Way investment improved the lives of "Cameron," one of many helped through Work First's programs that assist individuals with disabilities gain meaningful experience and lead productive lives:

Cameron is a 40 year old male. He was born with mental retardation and has struggled all of his life to "fit in." He lived with his family through his teenage years. Cameron had a very difficult time in school and was in trouble often. When Cameron was referred to Work First, he had been in and out of jail because of problems interacting with the community. He was not working and was loitering at many of the local establishments. Cameron now receives services from Work First. He has made incredible gains! He now works part time at a local store, and helps at Work First's two local thrift shops. He also completes a number of odd jobs in town. With tremendously valuable support from a job coach, Cameron had has not had any problems with the law or concerns from local establishments, and his life has been enriched. Cameron looks forward to his work rhythm and has found a way to use his energy in a productive, meaningful manner. Work First provides day habilitation to more than 83 adults with disabilities in Greater Franklin County. United Way support is critical to Work First being able to offer these services.

The mission of the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area is to improve people's lives by focusing the caring capacity of our communities. For more information or to give, advocate, or volunteer in your community, visit www.uwtva.org, call 778-5048 or e-mail info@uwtva.org.