

Partner Profiles



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Editor's Note: This article is part of an ongoing series that demonstrates the community impact of the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area (UWTVA) and its funded Partners. To learn more about how you can give, advocate, or volunteer in your community, or to view the article archive, visit www.uwtva.org. To contact staff, call (207) 778-5048 or e-mail info@uwtva.org.

WMCA puts stimulus dollars to work

The United Way of the Tri-Valley Area funds a portion of the extensive energy education efforts Western Maine Community Action (WMCA) conducts throughout the year to keep area residents warm and save money. Thanks to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), Western Maine Community Action has also been busy putting ARRA dollars (more commonly known as stimulus dollars), to work for our region to expand weatherization and home repair projects. Stimulus money also provided employment and training, outreach, and homeless prevention services. Here is a summary of projects that impacted Greater Franklin as a result of the stimulus money.

WMCA has weatherized 59 homes to date with twenty-two homes in process and twelve audits to issue out to contractors. ARRA dollars have enabled Western Maine Community Action's Housing and Energy Program to hire 2 full time employees and six part time employees. ARRA dollars have allowed local contractors to hire six full time employees and two part-time, while retaining 13 existing weatherization jobs in our region.

Five ARRA Weatherization Technicians in Franklin County were hired on full-time; two with F & E Construction of Phillips, two with Upright Frameworks in Wilton and one with D & H Construction in Turner.

Trans Canada provided ten ARRA youth from Franklin County the opportunity to participate in a program dubbed "Kibby Boot Camp". Stimulus dollars supported a paid work experience for youth interested in careers in renewable energy and construction. Youth gained valuable job and safety training while using the Kibby project site as a learning laboratory. Trans Canada, Reed & Reed, Cianbro, TRC Plum Creek and Vesta all cooperated by sharing their knowledge of what goes into the development of a major wind power project.

Outreach has expanded at Western Maine Community Action with the creation of a call center. WMCA On Call has improved client service with four staff answering phones and making follow-up calls from 7 AM to 6:00 PM Monday through Friday and from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM on Saturday. Many clients, working one or more jobs, expressed that it was difficult to reach WMCA within the traditional hours of operation. Since the program began in October, WMCA On Call has answered 10,312 incoming calls for assistance and made 2,802 calls to clients on behalf of the programs they are working with.

Stimulus dollars also funded a homelessness prevention staff person. Crystal LaBreck is WMCA's Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Specialist. Crystal is providing services in Franklin and Oxford Counties. Since being hired in late November, Crystal has served and/or referred 101 cases. One family, recently wrote, "Thank you so much. Without this grant assistance, my children and I would be on the streets."

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.