UNITED WAY OF WELD COUNTY PROJECT
DEVELOPING TOMORROW’S LEADERS

Ethan Alcazar had such a positive experience serving on the United Way of Weld County Youth Allocations Committee that he can’t wait to do it again next year.

Alcazar, a sophomore at Eaton High School, said he plans to serve on the committee until he graduates. Alcazar was one of 16 Weld County high school students who determined and oversaw the awarding of funds raised from local youth campaigns. A total of $16,581 was distributed to area nonprofit agencies. “I wanted to be more involved in the community. I figured what better way to see all of the nonprofits in the community and what they need to function in terms of money,” Alcazar said. “I just thought that this was a great place to start at United Way. It’s a really great organization, and I really like it.”

Annika Miller, a junior at Frontier Academy who co-chairs the committee, said she’s always looking for new opportunities to get involved in the community.

“...I learned a lot about the nonprofit organizations and how hard everyone works in our community,” Miller said. “This was really unique for me, and I really had a good time. It was an eye-opening experience.”

Karol Patch, executive director of A Woman’s Place that received $1,000 in funding, said she liked how the students on the committee took their time to learn about the agencies and to decide where the funds should go. “They're the future of our nonprofits. They're our future supporters. They're our future employees. They're very important to us,” Patch said. “This is a great program for them to learn about us, to learn about how to budget and what we do. I think it’s very important to know that money isn’t unlimited and there were some difficult decisions that they had to make.”

The 2015-16 agencies receiving youth campaign funds are:
- A Woman’s Place - assistance ($1,000)
- Habitat for Humanity of the St. Vrain Valley – neighborhood revitalization ($2,000)
- Boys and Girls Clubs of Weld County – junior staff ($1,000)
- Catholic Charities – emergency assistance and homeless prevention ($1,000)
- Connections for Independent Living – youth public advocacy workshop ($500)
- Partners Mentoring Youth – community based mentoring ($1,000)
- Greeley Dream Team – Brother to Brother mentoring ($581)
- Greeley Transitional House – emergency shelter program case management ($1,000)
- Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains – Safe Touch: Body Safety for Children program ($1,000)
- Northeast Behavioral Health – Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters ($1,000)
- Right to Read – Summer English Academy ($1,000)
- RISE – emergency rent assistance ($1,000)
- SAVA Center – SART Peers ($1,000)
- Turn Around Bikes – Turn Around Bike Shop ($500)
- Turning Point – Coaching/mentoring ($500)
- Weld Food Bank – backpack program ($2,500)

Photo information: Annika Miller, left, presents a check to Stephanie Gausch of the Weld Food Bank.
YOUR DONATION HELPING YOUTH THROUGHOUT WELD COUNTY

Stacey Keanaaina, youth sports and fitness coordinator for the City of Fort Lupton, said the $3,200 in recreation scholarships from United Way of Weld County will be used for all the youth sports programs including softball, baseball, soccer, basketball and volleyball. “It’s very important because there are many families that need United Way for helping them pay for the programs they participate in,” Keanaaina said. “They apply for it and they get the funds through United Way for our programs here at the rec center. It is very much needed.”

UWWC has been distributing recreation scholarships for more than 30 years. Recreation programs or districts in Weld County were eligible for scholarships. The recipients will use the money to assist children and youth participation in programs that they otherwise could not afford to participate in.

Receiving the $20,000 worth of scholarships were: City of Evans Recreation Department ($1,000), City of Fort Lupton Recreation Department ($3,200), City of Greeley Culture, Parks and Recreation ($1,000), Highland Recreation Department ($1,900), Thompson Rivers Park and Recreation District ($3,000), Town of Eaton ($1,500), Town of Kersey Recreation ($1,600), Town of LaSalle Recreation ($800), Town of Mead ($1,000), Town of Platteville ($3,200) and Town of Windsor Parks, Recreation and Culture ($1,800).

Q&A WITH BOARD MEMBER DAVID BRUNI

Q: Why did you decide to become a United Way of Weld County board member?
Bruni: As a Weld County resident and employer, I believe the United Way of Weld County is one of the best ways to give back to the community. I have been a United Way donor throughout my professional career.

Q: Why do you support United Way of Weld County?
Bruni: United Way makes a tangible difference in people’s lives.

Q: What excites you the most about UWWC?
Bruni: The more I learn about different programs UWWC has, the more impressed I am that so much gets accomplished. Being a supporting player in an organization that makes such a tangible difference is intrinsically rewarding.

Q: Why is it important for you to volunteer?
Bruni: I was raised that that was what you did - give back to the community, service above self. I watched my father and stepfather make a meaningful difference in the town I grew up in, and that instilled in me the core value of community service.
WELD COUNTY KIDS COUNT DATA SHOWS BRIGHT SPOTS

Nearly 100 people attended the 2016 Kids Count Weld County data presentation put on by the Colorado Children’s Campaign in the Evans City Complex on April 14. The Colorado Children’s Campaign is a public policy nonprofit that fights to alleviate childhood poverty in Colorado. The annual presentation provided data to child care providers and agencies in Weld County on 42 different indicators on child well-being.

Sarah Hughes, the research director for Colorado Children’s Campaign, addressed the problems and progress concerning childhood poverty throughout Colorado, with the focus on Weld County. Hughes spoke on economic security, health and education. Three bright spots from the 2014 most recent data were that Weld County was third best out of the 25 largest counties in babies not born with a low birth weight, and sixth best for uninsured children. Weld County’s high school graduation rate was higher than the state average (81.3 percent vs. 77.3 percent).

On opportunities for improvement, Weld County ranked 19th out of the 25 largest counties in fourth-grade reading proficiency (65.4 percent vs. state-average 58.3 percent) and 20th in mothers without a high school diploma or GED. Throughout the United States, Hughes said it is often difficult to measure poverty and economic security because of the outdated Federal Poverty Level. Unchanged since the late 1960s, the cutoff for a family of four considered living in poverty is $23,850, which would indicate 13 percent (9,000 children) are living in poverty in Weld County. Hughes said Colorado has implemented its own poverty level, which is based on updated costs of living and other factors. Named the Colorado Self Sufficiency Standard, for a family of four in Weld County, the poverty cutoff is $66,360, almost triple the federal rate. This means that 43 percent of Weld County children live in poverty.

On the good news front concerning childhood health, Hughes said uninsured rates fell from 12 percent to 5 percent within the county, and teen pregnancies have steadily declined. Hughes said regarding full-day kindergarten, it has been proven to be effective during early childhood development, but 65 percent of Weld County children are full-day kindergarten students compared to the state average 76.1 percent.

BRIGHT BY THREE PROGRAM PROVES TO BE INVALUABLE IN PROMISES FOR CHILDREN LINEUP

Bright by Three volunteers Judy Debey and Carol Shropshire understand how important the United Way of Weld County Promises for Children program is to Weld County residents. After volunteering for 20 years for the Bright by Three program, the two UWWC volunteers of the year for 2015 said it’s a proven program.

“Bright by Three has been studied and has been proven that the program makes a positive difference in the lives of young children and families,” Shropshire said. “Bright by Three has provided me an outlet to use my education and experience volunteering in my area of child and family health. Each visit is a challenge and therefore an opportunity to figure out how I can support the family, provide meaningful information and connect them to appropriate community resources.”

DeBey said: “The Bright by Three program was my priority volunteer opportunity when I retired from teaching. Parent education and what Bright by Three does for families are important. It’s my privilege to volunteer for them.”

Judy said the home visits to new parents and their babies for Bright by Three give the volunteer an insight into the families’ environment. She said taking a packet of educational information to the parents, which includes a book to encourage reading, child development, health and more, as well as a keepsake blanket (embroidered by volunteers) for the baby makes the visits special. “All the information encourages the parents to enhance their children’s development,” DeBey said. “Did you know that a child’s brain is like a sponge? It needs to be filled full!”

If you are interested in becoming a Bright by Three volunteer, contact Amelia Ritchhart at 970-304-6174
When you make a gift to United Way of Weld County’s Legacy Endowment Fund, you are truly making a gift with a future! Your endowment gifts guarantee that financial support will remain readily available for the future needs of the community. If you are interested in any of our planned giving options, we will be pleased to work with you and your advisers to develop a planned gift that best suits your particular needs.

For more information or to discuss your needs in confidence, please contact Christi Smith, Vice President of Resource Development, at 970.304.6185 or christi@unitedway-weld.org

Cornerstone Partners donate their resources to help cover administrative and fundraising costs because they believe in United Way. This ensures that individual donations go directly to programs and services that benefit our community.