

Commonly Asked Questions

What is United Way?

United Way of Bemidji Area is a nonprofit organization supporting health and human service programs in our community. United Way strives to improve the lives of local residents by raising funds through an annual community wide campaign. United Way of Bemidji Area is governed by a LOCAL volunteer Board of Directors which ensures the organization is run efficiently and effectively. Our Mission: improve people's lives by mobilizing the caring power of the community.

Is United Way a national or local organization?

United Way of Bemidji Area is a separate and autonomous organization from United Way of America. Like the more than 1300 United Ways across the country, our United Way is directed by a local volunteer Board of Directors so that the most critical issues in the Bemidji community can be addressed. The United Way of Bemidji Area pays 1% of its annual campaign in dues to the United Way of America. These dues provide important cost-saving measures such as staff training, community research information, campaign products, networking opportunities, free NFL advertising and on-going consultation.

Does United Way of Bemidji Area allow donor designations to its partner agencies?

United Way of Bemidji Area has always made designations to its partner agencies possible. We do not promote or encourage designations because to do so bypasses United Way's Volunteer Allocation Process. Designations sometimes result in funding based on an agency's popularity or public recognition rather than the agency's or the community's actual need. Experience has shown that trained and informed volunteers make the most equitable, responsible funding decisions based on the community's needs.

Where does my local contribution go?

The United Way of Bemidji Area currently supports 31 nonprofit human service agencies in our community who provide a variety of programs that create long-lasting changes that prevent problems from happening in the first place and advance the common good by focusing on the building block for a good life –

Education – helping children, youth and adults achieve their full potential through education

Income – promoting financial stability, increasing self-sufficiency and independence

Health – improving people's health and social well-being and providing emergency services

In addition, the United Way sponsors and/or co-sponsors the following year round programs:

Helping those in need:

- Coats for the Community
- Holiday Gifts For Kids
- "Stamp Out Hunger" National Letter Carriers Food Drive
- Senior Clean Up Day
- Week of Caring

Recognizing those who make a difference:

- "Inspire by Example" Volunteer Recognition Program
- Someone Special Volunteer Recognition Program



United Way
of Bemidji Area

Will my designations impact the amount of funding an agency receives?

Designations are considered the “first dollars” toward the allocation amount determined by the United Way Volunteer Allocation Committee, and in effect, become the minimum guaranteed amount an agency will receive. In this way, designated contributions are not given to agencies over and beyond normal United Way allocations, like a “bonus.” This would undermine United Way’s need based allocations process and turn the funding process into a popularity contest among member agencies. However, in the event that the sum of designated dollars to an agency exceeds the United Way’s allocation figure, the larger designated sum will be given to the agency. United Way always honors donor designations.

How does the United Way monitor the expenses of funded agencies?

Each year member agency programs and budgets are thoroughly reviewed by a diverse group of local volunteers. The citizen review process ensures accountability and assures that your contribution is meeting the most critical needs in our community. These experienced Allocation Committee volunteers examine the programs to make sure every dollar of your contribution is spent wisely – just like you would.

Can I designate my contribution to an agency that is not a United Way member agency?

No. Such designations will be returned to the contributor. United Way of Bemidji Area strongly believes in our Volunteer Allocation process and as such will not fund non-member agencies whose accountability it cannot guarantee.

Why should I contribute if I don’t use a United Way agency?

United Way partner agencies provide services that benefit the community as a whole. Last year services were provided over 30,000 times just in the Bemidji area alone allowing people to be helped and lives to be changed. Your contribution helps make the community a better place to live. Chances are a neighbor, friend, co-worker, or family member has benefited from a United Way funded program. (For example – Boy or Girl Scouts, Bemidji Senior Center, North Country Hospice, the Bemidji Community Soup Kitchen and more!)

Is my United Way contribution tax deductible?

YES – if you itemize your deductions. Donors will receive a receipt from the United Way that meets IRS regulations. If you need one and did not receive one just call the United Way office and one will be sent to you.

Why was I charged for services when I went to one of the United Way agencies?

Many agencies do charge on a sliding fee scale according to the client’s ability to pay. This makes it possible for United Way programs to help people who need help the most.

Who is helped by the United Way of Bemidji Area?

The United Way of Bemidji Area funds the need of 31 human service agencies; invests in strategies and programs for community change; strategically engages and builds relationships with diverse community stakeholders, contributors, and partners to implement strategies which focus on our communities greatest needs in the areas of: Education – helping children, youth and adults achieve their full potential; Income – promoting financial stability, increasing self-sufficiency and independence; and Health – improving people’s health and social well-being and providing emergency services.

