

Western Maine Community Action

Campaign “Justice League” Award

Representatives Jim Trundy, Judy Frost, Katherine Lary, Patty Lovell, & Bill Crandall

Since 1965, Western Maine Community Action (WMCA) has been a social service agency that provides assistance to low- and mid-income families living in the western mountain region of Maine. WMCA is a non-profit organization that covers Community Services, Housing & Energy, Services, Nutrition Services, Employment and Training Services, and Health Navigator Services in the Greater Franklin County Area. The United Way of the Tri-Valley Area is honoring WMCA with the *Justice League* award, which honors those who have significantly collaborated with United Way and whose partnerships are key to United Way’s success!

WMCA has consistently collaborated with United Way to help us meet broader needs within the county. Some of these opportunities include sharing resources at our Packs for Progress backpack stuffing event; promoting the Community Energy Challenge program at LIHEAP fuel assistance appointments; and promoting and collaborating on the Western Maine CaSh Coalition free tax preparation program. I sat down with five members of WMCA who are truly some of the powerhouses behind making this organization so valuable to Greater Franklin County. Current Interim Executive Director for Employment and Training Services Jim Trundy; Nutrition Services representative Katherine Lary; Community Services Program Manager Judy Frost; Program Manager for Housing and Energy Bill Crandall; and lastly Health Navigator Patty Lovell.

I asked the group why WMCA partners so often with the United Way. “The values that the United Way have are the same as ours at Western Maine Community Action,” says Jim Trundy. “We’re both doing our best to help others to better their lives.” It is true that United Way and WMCA hold the same beliefs and are both promoting each other frequently to get the most out of each other’s services. “Most of the people we serve,” says Katherine Lary, “are those who are already being served by the United Way, so it always makes it easier in regards to referrals and getting people to the services they need quickly.”

I asked the group what it meant for WMCA to be recognized by the United Way. “Everyone likes to be recognized,” says Jim. “Most of us have been here for a fairly long time and it’s because we genuinely love what we do!” Judy Frost adds. “I also think that to be recognized by a partner that we’ve worked so closely with is an honor, and another feather in our cap!” The staff at both United Way and Western Maine Community Action love what they do, and relish having the opportunity to work so closely alongside each other for the good of others.

Many of those who I’ve spoken with regarding how to encourage others to get involved with the community, have all stated something similar; such as “It feels so good to see the impact you have on the community.” For Bill Crandall, seeing this impact is what drives him to change lives as a career. “I just recently got back from a client’s home where we had just been able to get running water back in for the first time in *years*.” Bill says, while pausing for a moment to reflect, “seeing the appreciation, and the positive change in someone’s life is what makes it all worth it. It makes it worth it for all of us who do work similar to what we do here at WMCA.”

We at United Way of the Tri-Valley Area are proud to partner with an organization that shares that same values and the same mission as we do, to provide comfort and stability into the lives of those who live in the Greater Franklin County Area. We look forward to what the future brings, and brainstorming alongside the bright minds of those who work at Western Maine Community Action.