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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **United Way of York County Awards Largest Increase in Grants Since 2008**

The value of contributing to the United Way Community Fund is a message that is widely promoted during the annual campaign. It is the most effective and efficient way for donors to make an impact on York County residents in the areas of Education, Health, and Financial Stability. Thanks to an increased focus in communicating this message, the Community Fund received additional contributions of \$111,000 in 2016. This is the first time since the recession of 2008 that such a significant increase has occurred.

Every year, a group of community volunteers form the United Way of York County Allocations Panels. Each panel specializes in one of the United Way focus areas. Panels in education focus on access to early education, ensuring that kids enter kindergarten ready to learn and have successful transitions throughout school. Health panels focus on ensuring that individuals in York County have access to health care and healthy activities, and older adults are able to maintain their independence. Financial stability panels focus on safeguarding county residents in times of disaster and financial crisis, as well as learning skills to help them achieve financial security. Together these panels work to allocate the 2.48 million dollars raised through the Community Fund.

With these the increase of funds this year, allocations volunteers were able to award additional grants to programs in the Community Fund that showed outstanding performance. Along with the \$2,482,852 in grants allocated to the programs as part of their 3-year funding cycle, some programs were able to receive additional grants of up to \$5,000.

Highlighted below is one program from each of the United Way focus areas that received an increase due to exemplary performance that met the following criteria:

- Increases the likelihood that children will succeed in school and graduate high school.
- Increases clients' ability to become more financially secure leading to self-sufficiency.
- Increases clients' ability to lead safe and healthy lives.
- Demonstrates a "community level" impact in education, health, or financial stability.
- Enhances, expands, or improves specific program services.

Education:

YWCA York's Quantum Opportunities Program (QOP) received a \$5,000 increase to help with expansion of the program to include 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. QOP has maintained an impressive record of working with York City youth in grades 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> to help them with education and life skills. For the past nine years, 100% of the students who successfully completed QOP have graduated high school and been accepted into college.

Students earn credits to go on college tours through their hours of community service. For many of these students, the college tours they take with QOP are their only opportunity to visit a college outside of York. This allows them to make a better decision about which school will be the best fit for them and increase their chance for success in college.

Health:

York County Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) received an increase of \$3,043 for their Child Forensic and Advocacy Services. This grant is to help cover the agency's caseload which has steadily increased over

the past few years. In 2014, CAC served 554 children in York County. In 2016 they served 816 children. The increase is attributed to changes in reporting due to the Child Protective Services Law (2015). The changes require that injuries of a lesser extent are reported as well as include more people responsible for reporting potential abuse. Thanks to a greater awareness about potential child abuse, more cases are referred to the CAC so that children can receive the care that they need during times of potential trauma.

#### Financial Stability:

SpiriTrust Lutheran's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program received a \$5,000 increase to recognize the community impact the program has by annually increasing the number of tax returns for low income families and older adults. For the 2016 tax year, returns increased 8% and brought \$7.43 million back to York County through refunds. For many of these individuals and families, these much needed funds allow them to buy food and clothes that they otherwise couldn't afford.

VITA utilizes volunteers who train with the staff at SpiriTrust Lutheran to help file taxes for over 4,000 individuals and families in York County. In many cases, the volunteers work with individuals who were charged hundreds of dollars previously when they filed their taxes. SpiriTrust also provides financial planning to program recipients to help them make the best use of the funds and to position them for future financial stability.

As demonstrated through these three programs, which represent only three of the sixty-nine programs in the Community Fund, the need for additional dollars is great and every dollar granted goes to a program that is impacting our mission of building a stronger York County. The goal of United Way in 2017 is to raise additional funds to support the work of these programs and other special initiatives that will create lasting, positive change for people in our community.

#### **About United Way of York County**

For over 95 years, United Way of York County has worked in the York County community to improve people's lives. It began as The York Welfare Federation, an organization that raised funds on behalf of 17 member agencies. Today, as the United Way of York County, the mission of raising community funds remains the same, but the strategies have broadened in order to meet the growing and changing needs of people living in York County.

United Way has adapted over the years and now collaborates with other public and private organizations to engage the community in addressing the complex issues facing York County. By developing initiatives that get at the root causes of these issues, United Way and its partners find solutions and fund programs that improve the lives of one in three people in York County. Through gifts to the Community Fund, United Way is able to invest those dollars into 69 programs supported by 36 Partner Agencies. These programs address human services needs across three Focus Areas: Education, Health, and Financial Stability. This enables United Way to tackle the immediate and continuing needs of York County families and individuals and to create real, lasting change that matters to you and the community

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