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SOCIETY

United Way gives \$1 million locally

BELLINGHAM — United Way of Whatcom County is giving nearly \$1.2 million in grants to 50 local programs that help others.

Two organizations receiving funding for the first time this year are the Bellingham Food Bank, which received \$20,000, and the Dental Access Project through Interfaith Community Health Center. The dental project received \$12,500 from United Way.

“The demand for services at the food bank are really outstripping any other organization that we see in the county right now,” said Peter Theisen, president of United Way of Whatcom County, referring to a 30 percent increase the food bank has seen in requests for food services this year. The Bellingham Food Bank, the largest emergency food provider in the county, serves as a distribution center for other, smaller food banks countywide.

The Dental Access Project provides dental care to those who couldn't otherwise afford it. “We did a fair amount of research to identify what the most needed programs are and what's the least available for people in Whatcom County, and affordable dental care was the top need,” Theisen said.

Grant amounts ranged from a high of \$118,000 to \$1,200. United Way of Whatcom County announced in April that it raised more than \$2.06 million from local businesses and their employees during its annual campaign, making it the agency's most successful effort yet. The total topped last year's record by about \$35,000.

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