

Partner Profiles



United Way of the Tri-Valley Area

Lisa Park Laflin, Executive Director

Editor's Note: This article, written in part by Stacie Bourassa, Administrative Assistant of UWTVA, is part of an ongoing series that demonstrates the community impact of the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area (UWTVA), its funded Partners, and recipients of donor-designated funds. To learn more about how you can give, advocate, or volunteer in your community, or to view the article archive, visit www.uwtva.org. To contact staff, call (207) 778-5048 or e-mail info@uwtva.org.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, and the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area would like to take this opportunity to focus on our organization's efforts surrounding children and families, as this is one of the top three priorities of UWTVA. As a follow up to the Governor's Economic Summit on Early Childhood held in 2007, UWTVA partnered with the Franklin County Children's Task Force to identify key stakeholders in Greater Franklin County that would be interested in developing a local focus group charged with the mission of targeting critical gaps in early childhood services in our communities. An initial meeting was held in May of 2009, and from that meeting came an enthusiastic and dedicated core group of individuals committed to inventorying available early childhood resources, with special attention paid to three primary domains: Family, Health, and Early Care and Education.

This group is referred to as the "Early Childhood Initiatives" team, and is comprised of representatives from UWTVA, FCCTF, S.A.V.E.S., Abused Women's Advocacy Project, Community Concepts, the Farmington Police Department, Village Realty, and Franklin Health Child and Adolescent Developmental Pediatrics. After much comprehensive research, the group identified a major gap in each of the three domains that we felt we could impact collectively:

Family: The need for a Supervised Visitation site in our community was illustrated, as none existed, and families in need of these services were traveling more than 45 miles to receive them. The Task Force went through the appropriate training, and as of March 1st, they are serving families that have been referred to the Task Force by local agencies and the district court.

Health: While there are a variety of unmet special education needs in our area, the group looked at what efforts are currently being put forth, to see if we could cooperatively support any ongoing initiatives. We are collaborating with Franklin Health Child and Adolescent Developmental Pediatrics (formerly Evergreen Behavioral Child Health Center) to see what we can do to support their new Parent to Parent program that will be focusing on parents of children recently diagnosed with Autism.

Early Care and Education: We saw a true need to have an inclusive listing of available early childhood resources accessible to local individuals, court magistrates, pediatrician's offices, etc. There are a variety of services offered in our area, but a common barrier that we found is the challenge of getting the information out to the public. Our mission is to do this in two ways: 1) Develop a hand out with a listing of early childhood programs that are offered through the various local agencies (not limited to those participating at the table) and 2) Develop and produce a DVD mirroring these offered services in Greater Franklin County.

We have received permission from the Farmington District Court House, with tremendous help from Heidi Pulkinen Jordan (local Guardian Ad Litem), to mount a T.V. in the lobby so that individuals awaiting legal services can have public access to this information. The DVD and hand out would also be provided to local libraries, potentially shared on public access channels, linked to agency websites, etc.

For meeting minutes, please visit www.uwtva.org. We will continue to meet monthly with the goal of advocating for those who cannot advocate for themselves. For more information, please email Stacie at stacie@uwtva.org.

The United Way of the Tri-Valley Area's (UWTVA) mission is to improve people's lives by focusing the caring capacity of our communities. One of 10 United Ways in Maine, UWTVA conducts an Annual Fundraising Campaign, contributions to which are reinvested in Greater Franklin County, by supporting programs run by area 501 (c)3 health and human service organizations. UWTVA also coordinates the Emergency Food and Shelter Program and collaborates with area volunteers and organizations to conduct initiatives that support the community, including food drives and homeless prevention activities.