



# Newsletter

March 2008

## All Day Tax Clinic

On Friday, March 28, 2008, Community Impact Coalition and West Central Minnesota Communities Action will offer free tax preparation from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. This service is in addition to the weekly tax clinics that have been available throughout the tax season.

The all day tax site is in response to the upcoming economic stimulus package that many local residents will receive come May if they file a tax return.

Individuals who don't normally need to file a tax return may need to do so this year to qualify for the economic stimulus package

payment, according to an Internal Revenue Service press release. Certain individuals, such as low-income workers or those who receive Social Security benefits or veterans' disability compensation, pension or survivors' benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs in 2007, are eligible for the stimulus payment. However, they will need to file a tax return in order to receive it.

For more information visit the IRS web site at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov). You can also refer to page two

Find Frequently Asked Questions on page 2 of this newsletter.

## Activities & Events Calendar

### Free Tax Preparation Clinics

Thursdays, Noon to 8:00 p.m.  
Saturdays, Noon to 4:00 p.m.  
Marian Building, 700 Cedar Street

### United Way Allocations\*

Douglas County: April 7th & 8th  
First Congregational Church, Alexandria

Pope County: April 14th  
Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Glenwood  
\*Panel volunteers needed

### 8th Annual UW Golf Classic

Geneva Golf Club, June 16  
Early Bird registrations due March 31.

### Partner Agency Events:

Young People's Place Spaghetti Supper, April 18th  
Eagles Club - Alexandria

## Your Dollars at Work



Registrations for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Program continue to out pace our projections.

Using population estimates from the MN Department of Health, there were

a total of 2,780 children under the age of 5 eligible to register in Douglas and Pope counties. Based on results of other United Ways, 40% of the eligible children are registered in the first year. For this area, that is 864 in Douglas and 248 in Pope.

After the first 6 months, we already have 995 children in Douglas County and 337 children in Pope County who are now receiving books, surpassing projections.

Each of these children get an age-appropriate book, free of charge, mailed to them each and every month. Dollywood Foundation provides the books and United Way of Douglas & Pope Counties donations pays the \$30 annual postage.

This program has been a wonderful way to introduce children to the wonderful world of books. Early exposure to reading increases a child's vocabulary threefold by the age of 5, better preparing them to enter kindergarten. The interaction of parents reading to their children is also beneficial.

As the popularity of this program increases, we continue to look to area residents, businesses, and service organizations for support. A number of service organizations have committed their support for 2008.

If you would like more information on this program or are interested in sponsoring one or more children, call our office at 763-4840. You can also find details on the web at [www.uwdp.org](http://www.uwdp.org). There is a link to the Dollywood Foundation website for online registration as well.

*Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body.*

Sir Richard Steele

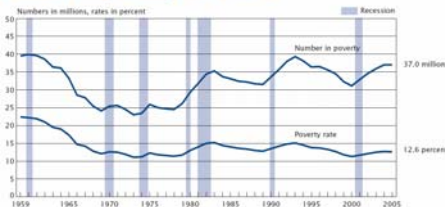
### Inside this Issue:

Poverty .....	2
Frequently Asked Questions .....	2
Agency Spotlight .....	3
American Red Cross Month .....	3
Honoring Loved Ones.....	3
Volunteer Spotlight .....	3
Minnesota Food Share .....	3
Board of Directors.....	4
Funded Agencies .....	4

## Poverty - by Jessica Boyer

*“Poverty is hunger. Poverty is shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time. Poverty is powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom.”—World Bank*

Number in Poverty and Poverty Rate: 1959 to 2005



The graph shows that over the last 50 years the poverty rate as recognized by the Federal Government has fluctuated anywhere from a high of 22% to a low of 11.3%, to the current 12.3%. While the poverty rate is not at its all time high the numbers of those living in poverty is nearing an all-time high.

Poverty is not just an inner city issue, it exists right here in Central Minnesota. Over the past few weeks we have shared many facts on poverty in this region. We know that the basic needs income for our region is double the Federal Poverty Guidelines of \$20,000, indicating there are more families struggling daily to meet their basic needs than indicated on the chart above.

We also know that a family of four living at or below the poverty line does not have enough income to meet basic needs such as housing, utilities, transportation, food, child care and health care. They are over

budget and still do not have everything they need.

Finally, we have shown the profound impact that living in poverty has on a child’s life. These conditions affect children’s development; readiness to learn and succeed in school; and ultimately their ability to build better lives for themselves.

United Way believes local children should have the opportunity to reach their full potential. We understand that in order to do this we, as a community, have to step up and take action that ensures that this happens.

Working with the community, United Way will strive to identify key areas to help parents secure income and build assets so they are better able to successfully address the physical, emotional, and educational needs of their children. We will assist and/or explore programs that provide food and safe housing for children in need.

We encourage community members to get involved in United Way’s efforts to create pathways out of poverty. A large part of our work is to make visible often what is not seen. To give voice to those without. On November 30, 2007 the “MN Legislative Commission to End Poverty by 2020” will travel to our region to conduct a community discussion on poverty and to hear from many who are struggling day-to-day with poverty.

Community members are encouraged to get involved in activities such as United Way’s Allocation Process. This process enables the community to see and fully

understand the scope and impact of local agencies and their programs at work within our communities with the support of United Way. This process also allows community members to have a voice in how much funding goes to the agencies and the programs they are funding.

We encourage community members to volunteer for United Way activities conducted throughout the year. This past fall we once again conducted an annual coat distribution that provides coats and warm clothing to local families. We have also relied on numerous volunteers to assist with the kickoff of United Way’s new reading program “Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library.” Many other opportunities will also be presented in the coming months for you to give directly back to your community by becoming an active volunteer.

Community members are further encouraged to support United Way as we continue our local fundraising efforts. Funds raised in both Douglas and Pope Counties during this time will directly impact and serve residents of Douglas and Pope Counties.

If you would like to learn more about United Way of Douglas & Pope Counties or want to become involved, please contact our office at 320-763-4840. We can also be found on the web at [www.uwdp.org](http://www.uwdp.org).

*“We have the largest income gap since the 1920’s. You can’t sustain an economy with the income gap we have. You can’t sustain a society with the income gap we have.”*  
 Brian Gallagher, President, United Way of America  
 (Remarks made during February 12 speech at the United Way Great Rivers Conference)

## Stimulus Payment Program - Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. What do I need to do to get an economic stimulus payment?**

**A.** All you need to do is file a federal income tax return for 2007. Even if you are not otherwise required to file a tax return, you must file a 2007 return in order to receive a payment this year. Although some filers, such as high-income filers, will not qualify for a stimulus payment, most will.

**Q. How do I find out if I’m eligible?**

**A.** Most people with a 2007 net income tax liability will qualify. Families with children under 17 generally will qualify for an additional payment. Some people with no tax liability also will qualify. This includes Social Security and Railroad Retirement beneficiaries, recipients of certain veterans’ payments, low-income workers with earned income and/or benefits of at least \$3,000 and individuals who have combined income of at least \$3,000 from any combination of these sources.

**Q: I normally don't need to file a tax return. How do I know if I'm one of those people who may be eligible to receive an economic stimulus payment?**

**A:** Qualifying income includes Social Security benefits, certain Railroad Retirement benefits, certain veterans’ benefits and earned income, such as income from wages, salaries, tips and self-employment. For people filing joint tax returns, only a total of \$3,000 of qualifying income from both spouses is required to be eligible for a payment.

**Q. I want to estimate my payment. Please explain how it is figured.**

**A.** Basic Amount of Payment: Taxpayers who had a net income tax liability will receive a payment, unless they can be claimed as dependents on someone else’s return, are high-income individuals or do not have a valid Social Security Number. The payment is equal to the taxpayer’s net income tax liability, but no more than \$600 for a single person or \$1,200 for a married couple filing a joint return. The minimum payment is \$300 for a single person or \$600 for a married couple filing jointly.

Additional information can be found on the web at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

## Agency Spotlight

### BUILDING ASSETS OVER A DECADE

Teen pregnancy rates and sexual activity among youth have declined steadily since 1992 and locally that is something the TePPAC organization is excited to celebrate. The Teen Pregnancy Prevention Action Council, also known as TePPAC, has been coordinating teen pregnancy prevention programming for over a decade by providing asset building tools to young people and the community.

TePPAC, a non-profit organization in Douglas County, serves youth, parents, schools and groups that work with youth. With over a decade of programming, TePPAC has had great successes helping to fund activities such as:

- Baby Think It Over dolls in area schools.
- Choices and Challenges curriculum at the area learning center.
- Hosting the annual "Girl Power – Boy Power" 5<sup>th</sup> grade retreat.
- Postponing Sexual Involvement (PSI) curriculum in area schools.
- Sponsoring an annual movie theatre campaign, providing a key note speaker for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Youth Health Day.
- created 2 adoption videos – Tough Choices I and II.

They have also been instrumental in providing many tools and resources to local schools and organizations to implement asset building activities.



In 2007 Osakis High School, with the help of TePPAC resources, created "Guard Your Heart." Fourteen high school leaders were recruited to help lead 8th graders in this three-hour retreat. Brittany Niehoff, a junior, provided the leadership for putting the retreat together. The goals of the retreat were for the 8th graders to learn the value of sexual abstinence and to build class unity.

During the retreat, students were asked to sign the heart on how or why to guard your heart. Everyone who signed the heart received a white wrist band with the "Guard Your Heart" message. The retreat theme was also carried over to the junior and senior classes during prom.

Contact Crystal Hoepner, Health Educator, Douglas County Public Health, 762-3054 if you have any questions or would like more information on the work TePPAC is doing in our local communities.

## Volunteer Spotlight



Jessica Boyer is the Community Impact Director at United Way. Prior to joining UW, Jessica was a familiar face throughout the Alexandria area through her many volunteer activities. Included among these are:

- Listening Ear Crisis Center
- Diversity Resource Action Alliance
- Rural Aids Action Network
- United Communities Advocating Non-violence

Originally from Elbow Lake, Jessica returned to this area in 2006, along with her husband, Josh, and their two young children, Chance and Maddux.

Thank you, Jessica, for *leading by example*, serving your local community.

## Honoring Friends and Family with Special Gifts

### Memorial Gifts

The following memorial gift was recently received at United Way of Douglas & Pope Counties:

In Memory of **Ruth Watson:**  
from Marcia Gae Schmitt

Thank you to everyone who chooses to make a difference in our community through gifts given in memory of a special friend or loved one.

### Gifts Honoring Special Person or Event

Honor a special event such as a birthday, baptism, or wedding anniversary with a gift that will help others. A great idea for that "hard to buy for" person! These will also be listed in our newsletter.

### Leave a Legacy

Planned Gifts can take many forms. It can be as basic as designating United Way as a beneficiary in a will or life insurance policy. It can also be more complex, such as designating funds from a trust account. Often times, there can be significant tax advantages as well, depending on asset donated. An experienced financial planner or tax advisor can play an valuable role in determining the most appropriate plan.

Please contact our office at 763-4840 for additional information.

## Red Cross Month



In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, first recognized March as Red Cross Month, proclaiming, "I request that during the month, our people rededicate themselves to the splendid aims and activities of the Red Cross." Since that day, each sitting president has renewed the recognition.

The Red Cross was founded in 1881 to assist people during times of disaster. There were no fundraising activities prior to these events. News of the event would spread, the Red Cross would arrive at the scene, and the public would respond from all over the country

with donations of food and supplies.

This 'as-needed' fundraising ended in 1917 with the outbreak of World War I. Setting a goal of \$100 million, Red Cross was overwhelmed with the response as they raised over \$115 million in a few days!

United Way continues to be a strong supporter of the Douglas County Red Cross chapter helping fund various programs including local blood drives and disaster relief.

If you would like more information on the Douglas County Chapter of the American Red Cross, contact Kris Strobel, at 763-3800.

## Minnesota Food Share

The 26th Minnesota Food Share Campaign kicks off this month. In Alexandria, individuals and families in need can visit the Outreach Food Shelf. Last year, the local food shelf distributed over 54,000 pounds of food!

As costs of food, shelter and transportation continue to increase, the demand for services also expands. The Outreach Food Shelf is located at 1205 Lake Street. To donate food or make an appointment, call WINGS at 763-6638.

## Board of Directors

<b>Board President:</b> Tom Peterman	Douglas Machine
<b>Vice President:</b> Lisa DeKrey	Tastefully Simple
<b>Secretary:</b> Trudy Blanshan	KIKV/Cool 94.3
<b>Treasurer:</b> Donald Kleine	Wells Fargo Bank
<b>Board Members:</b> Dale Erickson	Henry's Foods
Bill Finley	Unicel
Mark Grandgenett	Bremer Bank, Alexandria
David Gray	Douglas County Hospital
Jody Hanson	Echo Press
Jennifer Haugen	Pope County
Denise Holtkamp	American Diversity Business Solutions
Terry Kennedy	Retired Surgeon
David Kent	3M
Tom Larson	Pope County Sheriff
Sheila Marciniak	American Family Insurance
Terry Quist	School District #206
Chris Schroeder	Merrill Lynch
Susan Skoglund	Viking Savings Association
Mike Woods	Douglas County Social Services

## Campaign Cabinet

<b>Campaign Co-Chairs:</b> Terry Kennedy	Retired Surgeon
Pat Kennedy	
<b>Leadership in Giving:</b> Trudy Blanshan	KIKV/Cool 94.3
Jody Hanson	Echo Press
Susan Skoglund	Viking Savings Association
<b>Annual Golf Classic:</b> Dale Erickson	Henry's Foods
<b>Chili Feed:</b> Marcia Gae Schmitt	Brophy Bay, Inc.
<b>Silent Auction:</b> Sheila Marciniak	American Family Insurance

## United Way Staff

Linda Roles	Executive Director
Jessica Boyer	Community Impact Director
Randy Bredeson	Technology & Financial Assistant
Craig Erickson	Administrative Assistant & Event Coordinator

### Mission Statement

Mobilizing resources to create sustained changes in community conditions to improve the lives of Douglas and Pope County residents.

## 2007/08 Agencies and Programs

Alexandria Area Uncompensated Care	Miracle Horse Riders
Alexandria Family School	North Country Food Bank
Alexandria Literacy Project	Osakis ECFE
Alexandria Senior Center	Red Cross of Douglas County
Boy Scouts, Northern Lights Council	Salvation Army
Brandon, Evansville, Ashby - ECFE	School District #206 - <i>Community Education &amp; Middle School at Risk</i>
Caritas Family Services	Someplace Safe (New 2007/08)
Club 1	TePPAC ( <i>Teen Pregnancy Prevention Action Council</i> )
Confidence Learning Center	The Windmill Project
Douglas County Jail - <i>Anger Management &amp; Inmate Transition Programs</i>	The Village Family Service Center
Elder Network	Wings (formerly Listening Ear Crisis Center) <i>Domestic Violence</i>
Foster Grandparent Program	Young People's Place
Girl Scouts, Land of Lakes Council	
Lakes Area Recreation - <i>Scholarship Program &amp; The Zone</i>	
Legal Services of NW Minnesota	
Lutheran Social Service - <i>Counseling; In Home Family &amp; Parenting</i>	

United Way of Douglas & Pope Counties thanks the many supporters who helped us help those who need it most by providing \$350,000 to fund these local health and human services programs.



### United Way of Douglas & Pope Counties

PO Box 1148  
115 3rd Ave W  
Alexandria MN 56308  
Phone/Fax: 320-763-4840

**Website:** [www.uwdp.org](http://www.uwdp.org)  
**Email:** [unitedw@rea-alp.com](mailto:unitedw@rea-alp.com)  
Linda Roles: Executive Director