

For immediate release

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United Way of Chittenden County Program Featured as Center of Excellence

BURLINGTON, VT, OCTOBER 30, 2014: United Way Worldwide and the FINRA Foundation selected United Way of Chittenden County to host a Center of Excellence seminar October 28-29 that welcomed thirty five CEOs, community development leaders and volunteers from United Ways around the country. The two-day seminar featured Working Bridges, a strategic initiative of United Way of Chittenden County that is being studied for national scalability for its proven success in improving financial stability of low wage earners.

Working Bridges is an innovative model that brings together different partners to address family financial stability using the workplace as a platform for services. United Way of Chittenden County first developed Working Bridges in 2007 as an employer collaborative dedicated to developing and testing new employee benefits and management practices. It has grown to be an effective strategy that promotes family financial stability through job retention and advancement. “We welcome others to join the conversation about this program and share what we’ve learned. We designed a solution for the unique needs of our community and are excited that it could be the right solution for others as well,” said Working Bridges Program Director Lisa Falcone.

Results demonstrate that Working Bridges employees are overcoming barriers to successful employment. Employers take pride in changed policies and practices that retain workers and save on turnover costs, and the overall community benefits from the multi-sector response to a complex social issue—improving family financial stability. Working Bridges demonstrates the effectiveness of the workplace as a platform for community impact, while also helping to solve a business problem, increase employee retention and improve employee performance.

The Center of Excellence seminar provided attendees with an in-depth look at the Working Bridges model and how it has changed United Way’s relationship with local businesses. Attendees visited toured workplaces of Working Bridges employers Sheraton Burlington Hotel and Conference Center, Rhino Foods and Fletcher Allen Health Care. A panel of human resource leaders from Engleberth Construction, Keurig Green Mountain, Burlington Labs, Community College of Vermont and Rhino Foods hosted a panel discussion about engaging employers, developing partnerships and shared their success stories. Attendees also visited North Country Federal Credit Union to learn about the Income Advance Loan, an important aspect of Working Bridges program designed by North Country Federal Credit Union, United Way of Chittenden County and Rhino Foods as an alternative to predatory payday lending services. Last year, more than 400 local families used the Income Advance Loan program to respond to financial emergencies, build credit and begin saving.

“Working Bridges is a shining example of how United Way brings people together to solve community issues. When we share information, resources and energy, we achieve great things and truly make a difference. We’re so proud of Working Bridges and the impact that it is making in Chittenden County. I want other United Ways to benefit from our work and use these strategies to unite their business communities to be part of the solution,” said United Way of Chittenden County Executive Director Martha Maksym.

About United Way of Chittenden County:

United Way of Chittenden County unites our whole community to solve complex problems and harness the power of people to create a stronger Chittenden County. United Way convenes advocates, organizations and institutions to address the community's most pressing issues, focusing on the building blocks of a vibrant community: Education, Income and Health. The problems facing our community are complex; they are issues that no single organization or individual alone can solve – real change is possible when nonprofit, public and private sectors work together. United Way has the networks, partnerships and strategic initiatives to improve the lives of our family, friends and neighbors.

For more information or to get involved, visit www.unitedwaycc.org.

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