

LIVING UNITED: Community Builder Award Winners

- Food Security Coalition of Mid Coast Maine
- John Blamey
- Susan Wygal
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At United Way's 2010 Annual Meeting, Community Builder Awards were presented. United Way started these awards in 2003 as a way of recognizing and celebrating individuals, businesses, and groups who exemplify the spirit of giving back to their communities.

As outgoing Board Chair Bob McCue stated, United Way has found that "to find true solutions to the important issues facing us, it takes someone who is willing to ask the next questions, take the next risk, find the needed resources, or create community in new ways. We thank and celebrate these Community Builders."

*** Food Security Coalition of Mid Coast Maine.**

Remarks by Board Chair Bob McCue

"A few years ago United Way's Basic Needs Solutions Council became concerned about the small, all-volunteer pantries scattered across the mid coast that were struggling to keep up with 30 and 40% increase in demand for food. A new strategy was put in place – United Way would convene and facilitate the pantries working together and would try to help them increase their capacity without adding to their already heavy workload.

The first meeting of what would become the Food Security Coalition took place in July 2007 with pantry representatives and organizations which support them. Many of these people had never met and may never considered the value of working together.

To assess the needs of the pantries, Terry Howell, former executive director of Mid Coast Hunger, was lured out of her recent retirement. Terry was able to connect pantries with free freezers, shelving, and food. She helped do outreach and marketing to increase funding, food donations and volunteers. Materials that would be helpful for pantry clients were identified and made available for distribution.

Coalition members worked together.

Relationships were strengthened with other organizations, such as the Letter Carriers and their annual Stamp out Hunger Food Drive, and new relationships were formed.

Chaplain Staples recognized the value of having inmates at the Two Bridges Regional Jail learn to grow food which could be distributed to the local pantries. Despite the weather working against them, *a great deal of food* was able to be distributed in its first year.

The value of the Coalition was clear but the program needed a home. Working together with Mid Coast Hunger Prevention and the Davenport Foundation, funding was made available. Mid Coast Hunger's board approved the expansion of their mission to include support for other pantries and in January of this year, Mary Turner was hired as a part-time Food Security Coordinator.

The future of the Coalition is secure and the work that has been done will serve as a foundation for even more far-reaching success thanks to the many participants of the Coalition.

Congratulations to all of the Coalition Members who demonstrate what it means to be Community Builders and exemplify the value of Community Impact work. THANK YOU ALL for all you the work that you've done to help make a sustainable improvement in how successfully our communities can address hunger.

Thank you for LIVING UNITED!"

***John Blamey**

Remarks by Executive Director Barbara Reinertsen

"Our Community Builder Award goes to **John Blamey** of Waldoboro. John couldn't be here today due to medical treatment, but I'd like to ask his friends and colleagues Kyle Santheson, Mark Briscoe, and Jim Lutteney to come forward.

United Way got to know John when we started our Community Solutions Councils, and people said: John Blamey is the one you want – he knows everyone and everything that's happening in the Waldoboro area. We found out that was true, and John served on our Safe & Healthy Community Council.

Years later, after John had retired from the Council to focus on Waldoboro issues and his painting, our Winter Preparedness group was looking at how individual communities throughout Mid Coast Maine were looking out for isolated people who were at risk over the winter. I don't think any of us were too surprised when we found that Waldoboro was a community that had a thorough, well-thought out plan that could be a model for others – and that John was at the heart of it.

John grew up in a military family and moved around a lot then, and in his own 20-year career with the Air Force. When he and his wife Pam settled in her hometown of Waldoboro, (and he had a second career in banking at 1st National Bank of Damariscotta) he intentionally set out to make Waldoboro his home.

Susan Jackson, Director of Elementary Instruction in SAD 40, says "He had a strong positive vision of what the community of Waldoboro could be, and he brought groups together in ways that made a difference."

John's involvements include: getting **Waldoboro Volunteers** off the ground (gathering up volunteers, determining their skills and sending them off on needed tasks), President of the **Medomak Valley Community Foundation**, **Board of Selectmen**, **Treasurer of his church**, **VPW**, **Weed & Seed**, a program bringing **police officers in to work with schoolchildren**, raising funds for **scholarships to summer school**, raising funds to complete **baseball fields** for Waldoboro just recently dedicated, the **Tidemark Gallery and its "Paint the Town" event**, bringing in artists from all over who work and then auction off their works for the good of the community, **Waldoboro Community Gatherings**, getting excess fruits and vegetables from farms into food pantries. And I'm sure there's more! John now has a vision to **re-use the A.D.Gray school** into a community center and a place to bring in services for the people of Waldoboro.

More remarkable than the number of groups, what I heard from his friends and colleagues was John's manner and abilities. Minister Nancy Duncan said "he is the best person at running meetings in ways that people were heard, and things got done – a rare combination!"

I also heard that John was never pushy or bossy, but, as Kyle Santheson said, "a great listener," "very polite," and "kind and patient to everyone." Sue Jackson said: "He's my idol. He's been my mentor. When I retire I want to be his assistant!" Town manager Bill Post said: "He personifies community, but he also personified friendship and leadership." And Kyle summed it up: "He's an incredible man."

We agree. And that's why United Way of Mid Coast Maine is honored to give **John Blamey** our Community Builder Award."

***Susan Wygal**

Remarks by Board Chair Bob McCue

“**Susan Wygal** has had an extraordinary career in helping make life better for others. A Topsham resident, she and her husband Greg Shea are long time leaders in community service.

She spent over 20 years in management positions in Maine’s **Department of Adult Mental Health Services**, including a period as Acting Commissioner of Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services. Her commitment to others has hardly abated since she retired from state government.

She has served as Chair of the United Way **Safe & Healthy Community Council** for the past two years and has now accepted nomination as Second Vice Chair of the UW Board. Beyond providing strong leadership and vision to the Council she has overseen two major initiatives.

In 2008, she was the leader for the **Winter Preparedness Action Program**, an initiative United Way started because of widespread community concern over rapidly rising heating costs. There were many groups that wanted to do something. United Way decided to play a role coordinating efforts to make them as effective as possible. We were making it up as we went along, and rushing to be ready for winter! But with Susan as the leader, that was not a problem. We ended up with a very successful initiative with many projects, many teams, and many new partnerships, that helped many needy individuals get safely through the Maine winter.

Almost immediately after that major effort, the Safe & Healthy Council decided to take on the issue of **mental health**, because they were hearing anecdotally about gaps in services, and because mental health problems were seen as the root of so many problems. In 2009 and 2010, Susan has led a large and diverse team in the United Way’s mental health initiative: “**Taking Stock**”. This involved 4 teams and over 80 contributors. A number of tangible, achievable recommendations have been identified, with some of them already implemented. The team was successful in the first stage of a grant request from the JTG foundation and the team is now preparing a formal proposal.

She has not only provided strong leadership to these projects, she’s done much of the work, putting in hundreds of hours. Retirement is different things to different people.

Her efforts go far beyond the Safe & Healthy Community Council. She was a board member of **Tedford Housing** for 6 years and their Board President for two. Susan was also Chair of the Board of **Independence Association**. One of her achievements during that service was working with Jim Pierce, their Executive Director, in creation of the **Mid Coast Collaborative for Access to Transportation**. She co-chaired this important

initiative for much of its existence. That work has resulted in the creation of the Brunswick Explorer, a 5 day per week bus service which debuts this fall.

Susan is an extraordinary leader, and we are proud to present you with this **Community Builder Award**. Thank you for all that you have done, and continue to do to improve the lives of those in need in our communities.”

***Mid Coast Health Services**

Remarks by Executive Director Barbara Reinertsen

“Mid Coast Health Services and its many employees over many many years have been key partners with our United Way and have been deeply involved in so many community-building efforts.

The Hospital was a founding partner when United Way was started in both the Bath and Brunswick communities. After the two early United Ways merged, **Herb Paris** provided leadership and served as our Board Chair in 1983 and 1984. *(You can see him there with his United Way team!)*

We have been blessed with having a steady stream of excellent volunteers from Mid Coast who have participated and provided exemplary leadership on our Councils, our many committees and our Board. Our current **Board Chair Bob McCue** has continued this tradition and partnership with his excellent leadership this past year.

Mid Coast Health Services employees also have jumped in and helped us define and lead many of our **community initiatives**. **Herb Paris** was a founding member of **Success By 6**, later Chair, and still serves on this Council. And you may remember seeing him in our United Way campaign video reading to a group of young children during our Community Read Aloud event! **Lois Skillings** (who had to be out of state today for her daughter’s graduation) has held almost every volunteer position at United Way and continues to serve on our Overview Committee. **Pat Conner** and **Marla Davis** have helped our Safe & Healthy Community Council develop its initiatives around youth drug and alcohol prevention and the misuse of prescription drugs among seniors. **Darlene Chalmers** was our very successful Campaign Chair a couple of years ago.

As we talked in our staff meeting about whom to honor this year, we kept coming up with examples of Mid Coast’s involvements in community building.

In this past year, **many staff members** at Mid Coast Health Services have spent hours helping with our **Mental Health Initiative** to improve services to people struggling with mental health disabilities. Mid Coast staff helped start **Sexual Assault Support Services** in this community. Recently the hospital participated in the campaign to raise awareness around domestic violence by having a purple spot light shining on the front façade of the

hospital. They helped to start initiatives such as the **Prescription Medication Collection** process that happens twice a year. They have supported and helped to staff **Access Health** – our region’s local Healthy Maine Partnership that works to reduce smoking and improve overall health in the region. And physicians and other staff associated with the hospital have volunteered and provided leadership for **OASIS**, the free health clinic in our region.

As I said, the list of Mid Coast’s involvements goes on and I am sure I am scratching the surface of the many ways that the employees and the overall organization have contributed to community-building efforts and initiatives in our region.

So, Herb and Bob, for all of these reasons, I’m very privileged to give **Mid Coast Health Services** this year’s United Way **Community Builder Award.**”

List of Previous Award Winners:

Community Builder Awards

Recognized in 2003

David Smith
Brunswick Housing Authority
Coastal Enterprises, Inc.

Recognized in 2004

Al and Grace Stone
Coastal ACCESS Child Care Coalition
Downeast Energy

Recognized in 2005

Holly Stover
FHC, Inc.
Mid Coast Collaborative For Access to Transportation

Recognized in 2006

Pete Lizanecz
The Times Record
Lincoln County Community Energy Fund

Recognized in 2007

Janet Grondin and Margaret Wilson
L.L. Bean Employees
School Union 47

Recognized in 2008

Boothbay Region Youth Assets Coalition
Brunswick High School Service Learning program
Hannaford
File of Life Task Force

Recognized in 2009

Charlie Wing
Winter Preparedness Action Program Volunteers
Le Garage