

Connections

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United Way in Medford makes a meaningful impact

The ability to do good things, solve problems and work on impactful projects keeps Dee Anne Everson, CEO and executive director of the United Way of Jackson County, going on 28 years with the same organization.

"Every United Way you talk to will tell you it's a little different," Everson said with a chuckle. "We are a little different. We are locally funded and locally governed, and we work on projects that can have a positive impact on our community."

United Way of Jackson County, which recently received a grant from the Avista Foundation, is focused on work in four different areas: Education, income, health, and transportation. "Why? Because we believe those are the building blocks of a good life," Everson said.

Through Project Big Idea Next, United Way works with students in local alternative schools. Everson said "United Way will buy gym clothes or a choir outfit or help a student with access to transportation. We will encourage and cajole and do whatever we can to help that student reach graduation," she said.

A new transportation project is getting ready to launch. It will seek to install electric wheelchair chargers around Medford, in areas where people gather.

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Continued from front

United Way in Medford

“The idea came from one of our guys who uses a chair,” Everson said. “We were talking about electric vehicle chargers and he asked why there weren’t any wheelchair chargers around.”

It takes 20 minutes for an electric wheelchair to do half a charge plugged into a regular wall outlet. A plug-in converter is sometimes needed, but wheelchair users usually travel with those. If an electric wheelchair is completely out of charge, it’s almost impossible to move because it weighs several hundred pounds. “It literally costs pennies to charge a wheelchair,” Everson said. “Once we launch this project, we will give a free universal adapter to the first 100 locations that sign up.” United Way also provides \$500 emergency grants to low-income people with unforeseen expenses, like car repair or medical bills.

There are many other successful programs under United Ways’ umbrella, and Everson is especially proud of the suicide prevention program — which has saved many lives through a public service announcement campaign. United Way and the local NBC affiliate produced a PSA that won both an Emmy and a Service to America Award because of its impact. “Awards are nice,” Everson said “but they don’t really matter. What matters is that our programs work and have a positive impact on our community.”

At Avista, we recognize our unique position gives us the chance to contribute in an impactful way and make a real difference in people’s lives. Since 2002, the Avista Foundation has made grants totaling over \$13 million to organizations that support vulnerable and limited income populations, education, and economic and cultural vitality. The foundation is a separate, non-profit organization established by Avista Corp., and does not receive funding from Avista Utilities’ customers through rates. For more information on grant applications and geographical areas covered, please visit avistafoundation.com.



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Outdoor Holiday Lighting Safety Tips

While merry little lights are a delight for many, incorrect usage can cause fires, injuries from falls or electrical shocks. To keep the holidays festive and fun, follow these safety tips while decorating outdoors:

- Use lights — and if needed, extension cords — that are approved for outdoor use.
- Before decorating, check all light strands for damages and burned out lights. Frayed insulation, exposed wires and broken plugs

are all hazards and should be discarded. When replacing bulbs, unplug the strand.

- Consider purchasing miniature or LED lights as they use less energy and are long lasting. LED lights are also shatterproof and present no fire hazard.
- To avoid accidentally leaving your lights on, consider a timer. Make sure the timer you use is rated to handle the total wattage of your lights. Visit myavista.com/safety for more safety tips.

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