



**United Way**  
Central & Northern  
Vancouver Island

**For Immediate Release**

## **United Way Honours Leading Local Donors at Annual Spirit Awards**

**Nanaimo, BC** May 9, 2017 – Twelve workplace and individual donors from the Nanaimo and North Cowichan region were honoured at United Way’s annual Spirit Awards on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at the Nanaimo Golf Club. The Spirit Awards event (sponsored by Grant Thornton LLP) included nine award categories, and highlighted 25 nominees and 12 recipients from our 2016-workplace campaigns.

The recipients of this year’s Spirit Awards included Vancouver Island University, Laura Blackburn of Catalyst Paper, Tamara Schmidt and Jay Xia of CIBC, BC Ferry Marine Workers’ Union, Terrapure, CIBC – Duncan, BMO Bank of Montreal, Catalyst Paper – Port Alberni, BC Hydro, Costco, and TimberWest Forest Corporation as the recipients of the Spirit Awards.

Each fall, more than 80 workplaces host fundraising campaigns for United Way in the North Cowichan and Central Island regions. The Spirit Award recipients made special efforts to increase employee participation and raise more dollars. They volunteered, hosted special events, spoke about being change makers in their community, led by example in their generosity and ultimately, helped raise more funds than United Way has ever done before locally. Thanks to the outstanding fundraising efforts of these and other United Way donors, 17 community programs in the Cowichan Valley and 44 in the Central Island received much needed grants for 2017-18 including 12 new grants given for the first time this year.

“The hard work and generosity of our Spirit Award recipients and all our workplace campaigns meant we could renew long standing effective programs that our community counts on,” said Signy Madden, United Way Executive Director. “Because they raised more dollars than ever before, we were able to fund new programs such as the LBGT support program, an early learning Saturday Breakfast Club for low income working families plus the teen bereavement program.”

Many of the agencies that deliver United Way funded programs were at the Spirit Awards to thank the donors and share how the grants are changing peoples’ lives for the better. “United Way provides the most stable and effective funding in our region for community organizations like Community Options Society,” said Michelle Bell, Community Options Society Executive Director. “We can’t do the

work we do or create positive change in the lives of our community members if it weren't for the work of United Way and its donors".

United Way raises money to fund community programs as well as researches underlying causes of social issues and unites community partners to discover solutions. With a mission to improve lives and build community by engaging individuals and mobilizing collective action, UWCNVI invests in strengthening people and communities in the Central and Northern Vancouver Island region. Funds donated by local businesses and individuals for United Way's Community Fund provide an essential network of social services in your community.

United Way would like to thank Grant Thornton LLP for generously sponsoring the Spirit Awards Luncheon. Grant Thornton LLP is a proud supporter of United Way, and is focused on making a difference to clients, colleagues and the communities in which we live and work.

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