



United Way of Anchorage

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: Feb. 4, 2020

Contact: Jason Grenn

Senior Director of Communications

Phone: 907-263-3823

United Way of Anchorage to lead Walk 4 Warmth, keep families housed

Anchorage AK – One of the best actions people in Anchorage can take against homelessness is to prevent it, and at 5:45 p.m. Friday, Feb. 7, we'll have a chance to walk that talk.

That's when United Way of Anchorage leads the Walk 4 Warmth from First Presbyterian Church of Anchorage to the Anchorage Museum. The Walk will raise awareness and money for families and individuals on the brink of eviction and/or utility cutoffs to keep them housed, warm and working through hard times toward financial stability. Contributions will go to Lutheran Social Services of Alaska, a UWA partner and a long-time provider of rent and utility assistance.

"Everyone has felt how cold it's been lately, and I know that my utilities reflect that," said Kelsey Preecs, United Way's Director of Volunteer and Community Engagement. "These funds that are raised will go to help people in our community stay housed and warm. The people of Anchorage deeply care about their neighbors, and this is their chance to show it."

The Walk renews an event last held in 2017. The need for renewal is clear. Up to 17,000 families in Anchorage struggle to keep up with rent or mortgage payments, medical bills, utilities, groceries and other expenses. For many of them, the specter of eviction or foreclosure, the pressure of that utility cutoff notice door hanger, is a real worry. At the same time, many wells of help have run dry. Alan Budahl, Executive Director of Lutheran Social Services, said they didn't have a dime to offer for rent or utility help throughout 2019. Lutheran Social Services had to turn away 47 calls for help last December – help that in the past they've been able to give.

The Walk 4 Warmth will enable Lutheran Social Services to offer that help again.

It's a short walk from First Presbyterian to the museum, but the evening's focus on homelessness and prevention won't be over. At the museum, walkers are welcome to a panel discussion at 6:15 p.m. that will include Budahl and United Way President Michele Brown. United Way's responsibility in the city's Anchored Home project to make homelessness rare is prevention and diversion, so Friday's walk is a perfect fit.

"Every day in Anchorage, families who have never been homeless face the fear of finding themselves in a shelter or the streets," said Brown. "The impact of homelessness on the people affected and our whole community is profound, particularly for children.

"Our goal is housing stability for families. It's far more effective and far less expensive to keep families housed in Anchorage than to help them recover housing once they've become homeless," she said. "That's why we're walking on Friday."

"Evicted," the museum's immersive exhibit on evictions and homelessness in the United States, will open that same night, with the related program "Houseless." Admission is free for First Friday.

First Presbyterian opens for walkers to gather at 4:45 p.m. Friday.

People can register for the walk and donate at liveunitedanc.org/w4w.

The Walk 4 Warmth presenting sponsor is ENSTAR. Other warm-hearted sponsors include AEDC, The Alaska Club, PIP Signs and Marketing and Visit Anchorage. Media sponsors include Anchorage Daily News, KTUU and Ohana Media. There's still time to become an event sponsor, call 263-3833 for details.

About United Way of Anchorage

United Way of Anchorage is a community of donors, advocates, volunteers, and partners who fight for the health, education and financial stability of every person in our community. LIVE UNITED.

www.liveunitedanc.org