

# 2024 MSECCA Federation Stories

## America's Best Charities



Ronnie, born wild in Asia in 1966, endured the common fate of many circus elephants—captured as a young calf, separated from her family, and transported to the United States for circus performances. Acquired by the Hawthorn Corporation at age nine in 1975, Ronnie spent three decades in circus acts, enduring confinement in dark barns and chains when not performing. In 1993, following a lengthy USDA investigation into the Hawthorn Corporation for Animal Welfare Act violations, Ronnie found refuge at The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee. Arriving on February 7, 2006, shortly after Asian elephant Minnie and before Asian elephant Billie, Ronnie and her companion, Asian elephant Debbie, joined The Sanctuary as the fifth and sixth Hawthorn elephants relocated from Illinois that year. Constant companions, Ronnie and Debbie explore their habitat daily, splashing in the many ponds and mud wallows, with Ronnie often leading the way. Referred to as the "tie that binds" the Q Habitat Herd, Ronnie fosters connections with Debbie, Minnie, and Billie through frequent interactions and shared experiences. Each year, to celebrate Ronnie and the others on the anniversary of their arrival, Care Staff meticulously craft enrichment items using an array of her preferred foods, including vibrant red melons and fragrant hay. The Sanctuary's Staff also gather not only to witness Ronnie, Debbie, Minnie, and Billie celebrating but also to commemorate one another, acknowledging the challenges overcome and the remarkable care provided to each individual elephant over the years.

# Global Impact

When 21-year-old welder, Rahma's family didn't have enough money to send her to school she was sent to live with her older sister in Kampala. This is where she heard about the IRC and Ikea Foundation's Re:BUiLD Program. "My sister told me to fill the forms and I took them" said Rahma, "the good thing is they called!"



*International Rescue Committee: 21-year-old Welder in Kampala, Uganda*

Rahama studied Welding and was ready to take her training to the next level. Looking for local opportunities for a work placement wasn't easy as a young woman. "I went to ask for a place to do my work from to study but the guys told me we cannot give girls a job, they told me to go to the hotels and start serving foods."

Even some of her colleagues where she works now didn't believe in her when she first arrived. "The first day I came here I met some guy here. The guy told me what have you come here to do? I tell the guy I'm here for welding and he said 'you cannot do this job.' I said yes if you can learn that means that I will also learn. So, the guy gave me the opportunity and said: 'if you can compete with the guys, then you can stay here and work.' So, I had to compete with them and I'm still here, not giving up." Rahma said that after a while her male colleagues started to help her and her female colleague at work.

Working as a Welder has meant Rahma is able to support herself and her sister and even send money back to her mother. "This job has changed a lot for me," She says, "I can own my own phone. I lived for a bit without a phone. I came to my sister without a phone. I couldn't afford to buy for me a phone because even some time could sleep without eating."

As for the future, Rahma dreams of running her own business and training other young

people like herself. "I would love to offer trainings to anyone who's willing, especially the girls. I can learn today and share that opportunity to anyone."



## **CHC: Creating Healthier Communities**

Maine Cancer Foundation (MCF) is dedicated to reducing cancer incidence and mortality rates in Maine. 100% of the funds we raise are invested back into our communities to benefit the people of Maine. MCF leads a statewide endeavor to foster and grow

the most promising and effective cancer-fighting efforts available to the people of Maine through a combination of grant-based financial support and coalition building.

In 2024 MCF granted \$80,000 to Greater Portland Health to increase breast, cervical, and lung cancer screenings in Maine through this project. The target population includes patients experiencing homelessness, people of color, and the under- or uninsured eligible for these screenings. A community health worker will enhance screening rates by promoting healthcare accessibility through culturally, linguistically, and situationally sensitive outreach, education, transportation assistance, and care connections.

## **United Way of Kennebec Valley**

Robert and his mom participated in Southern Kennebec Child Development Corporation (SKCDC) programming at the Magic location for over two years. When he enrolled as a toddler in Early Head Start, Robert had some significant health and development needs, including a brain tumor. SKCDC completed health and development screenings and supported the family through Robert's referral and evaluation process, resulting in an individualized education plan (IEP).

Robert received speech, occupational therapy and mental health services as part of his SKCDC programming. Staff also supported the family in getting Robert up to date on health

and dental appointments. When the public health emergency-related closure occurred, SKCDC supported the family through delivery of food, diapers, health supplies and clothing.

Robert's mom faced challenges including eviction, legal issues and intermittent employment. SKCDC education and family services staff worked with the family to get their needs met, and United Way funding supported child care fees during employment interruptions.

Robert transitioned to specialized programming with an IEP in place and a strong foundation due to his Head Start experience.

## Doctors Without Borders

Nyakena gathered her six children, hopped on the bus, and hoped they would be safer in Old Fangak, a town where the

only family she has is her mother-in-law. She said she hadn't heard from her husband since September, though she believed he was still in Khartoum.

Once she reached South Sudan, she waited in line all day but didn't reach the end to be registered as a returnee to South Sudan, which is necessary to receive assistance like food and cash to help people restart their lives. Instead, she and her children made their way to Old Fangak with only what they brought with them from Sudan.

Now her two-year-old daughter, Chudier, is fighting for her life after being admitted to the hospital for malaria and malnutrition. Here and in many other parts of the world, one of the main health issues associated with extreme flooding is malaria, since stagnant water is a breeding ground for mosquitoes. As a result, most patients we see at the hospital in Old Fangak have malaria, especially during the rainy season.



# EarthShare

In early 2023, EarthShare set out to produce a piece of interactive, educational content all about the United Nations' 30x30 target. The goal? To broaden 30x30 beyond the expert environmentalist silo where it's most commonly understood and break it down into a solution-oriented, user-engaging format that is accessible to everyone—but especially to those who have never heard of 30x30 before. We wanted to give people actionable ways to learn, get involved, and support 30x30 project work happening where they live.

## What It Looks Like

EarthShare developed a microsite dedicated to 30x30 and the solutions already taking place to ensure 30% of ecologically critical lands and 30% of fresh and marine waters are protected by 2030. We started by building out six interactive solution modules, which users can navigate through similar to an online exhibit, learning about what each solution is, how it works, who it's impacting, where it's taking place, nonprofits implementing the solution, and more.

Our first six solutions are:

- Sustainable Agriculture
- Coral Reef Restoration
- Sustainable Fisheries
- Pollinator Regeneration & Protection
- Resilient Communities
- Forest Regeneration

For each of these solutions, we partnered with an organization in our Nonprofit Network (500+ nonprofits) who is an expert in the solution area and could contribute their knowledge, experiences, and expertise to help improve accuracy and storytelling. We wanted those organizations that are on the ground doing the work to have a strong presence and voice in communicating these solutions.

## Why It's Important



30x30 is one of the most prominent environmental goals of our time, and one with very real stakes. If we don't dramatically address our actions and their environmental impacts right now, we are going to see significant biodiversity loss by 2030—period.

However, this is also one of the most promising goals of our time. 30x30 is achievable. But if we're going to make the sweeping changes that are necessary, public support is key. And the first step to public support is public awareness. This is what EarthShare set out to do with The 30x30 Project, and it's something we hope to continue expanding to 2030 and beyond!



## Heart of Maine United Way

Cathy volunteers at Common Unity Place (CUP) in Skowhegan.

She started as a guest visiting CUP to pick up of some clothes for a family member. Then she started stopping by on a regular basis because she enjoyed the fellowship. She became a regular then Amy Rouse, the former director and a volunteer, invited her to join the volunteer group. She had completed her journey from client

to volunteer and truly enjoys being at CUP.

According to US Census data, one in five Somerset County residents live in poverty. CUP exists to assist those in need by providing clothing, food and support for anyone that comes through the door. When they do, Cathy is there to welcome them.

CUP and United Way's partnership started in the beginning with funding to start the program. Then, Heart of Maine United Way was able to provide funding support in 2023 through funds made possible by generous donations from the people and organizations in Somerset County.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwGX0iFdaQ0>



## **Eliane's Story: Increasing Mental Health Supports for Teens**

Eliane was a student at Portland High School when the pandemic began. Like so many other teens, she felt cut off from her friends, teachers, and community as she isolated at home. Her anxiety grew and she started falling behind, even failing some of her classes. Eliane isn't alone. 1-in-5 young people report that the pandemic had a significant negative impact on their mental health.

Many students like Eliane do not have easy access to high-quality health care or mental health services. If adolescent mental health challenges aren't addressed, they can have life-long impacts. United Way of Southern Maine helps break down barriers to mental health for students by investing in school-based mental health programs. With support from United Way, Great Portland Health places social workers and behavioral health professionals in high schools so they can support students in need.

Eliane started meeting with Greater Portland Health staff. "I met [my doctor] and my life was just much better. She was helping me control my anxiety and how to not feel afraid." shared Eliane.

Greater Portland Health's Jennie Yamartino, LCSW, shared, "We see students like Eliane and often that's the first time they're connecting with a provider, whether it's a medical provider or behavioral health provider."

Support from United Way of Southern Maine allowed Greater Portland (GPH) to expand services and open school-based health services in three Portland high schools and Westbrook High School. Our entire community benefits when we connect those in need with the mental health support they need to thrive. United Way of Southern Maine mobilizes the community to promote mental health, prevent substance misuse, and provide treatments and supports to foster recovery while ensuring equitable access and better outcomes.

# United Way of Mid Coast Maine

Sam is a 62-year-old fisherman who has worked for 27 years in Georgetown's harbor. His days spent on the water and in the sun led to a spot developing on his face, one that he ignored. Like many fishermen, Sam didn't have health insurance. Even as the spot grew, Sam didn't seek medical care because of his lack of insurance. Then a friend told him about Oasis. At Oasis, Sam met with their team of caring providers who took care of his health needs and connected him with a dermatologist. Sam was diagnosed with basal cell carcinoma which, left untreated, could cause permanent damage. With Oasis as part of his support team, Sam did not have to face a cancer diagnosis and treatment alone. Now cancer-free, Sam is back on the water, fishing with the Georgetown fleet. He tells his friends about Oasis whenever he can, knowing that many could use their services. He thanks Oasis wholeheartedly, praising the compassion of the staff.

## MaineShare: Consumers for Affordable Health Care (CAHC)

Consumers for Affordable Health Care (CAHC) is a Maine nonprofit and amazing resource that helps consumers with questions and challenges related to their healthcare coverage, advocates for more equitable and person-centered health care policy, and works to improve health equity. Last year, CAHC fielded over 7,200 calls with questions about health coverage. For people who need assistance applying for health insurance, CAHC staff helps consumers with assembling the documentation for MaineCare coverage, enrolling in Marketplace coverage, and can also assist with complaints and appeals related to private insurance. CAHC also has staff dedicated to health policy work who are deeply committed to making healthcare more affordable and accessible for all. They have recently been involved with multiple policy issues, including: participating on a task force that recently released recommendations to address hospital facility fees that increase patient bills; advocating for more affordable prescription drugs; and pressing for "All Means All" MaineCare coverage, which would make coverage available to all eligible people living in Maine, regardless of immigration status. To date, advocacy has been successful in ensuring that all pregnant Mainers and children are covered, regardless of citizenship. CAHC has also been working in partnership with Maine Access Immigrant Network and New Mainers Public Health Initiative to reduce barriers many face accessing Free Care at Maine hospitals. Consumers for Affordable Health Care is an unsung hero in Maine's health and wellness sector. While progress has been made in Maine, there is more to be done to improve access to health care and coverage in our society. We are grateful to CAHC for their passionate and tireless work on this front!