

Angels Community Comment: January 28, 2016 Mike Goldsby

In Humboldt County, in the early 1900's, workers who were injured on the job found the cost of care at local private hospitals to be devastating. The timber and mill workers formed a union and that union formed General Hospital in Eureka in 1908.

Ninety years later, the Union Labor Hospital Association sold General Hospital to St Joseph Health and a portion of the proceeds established a local charitable foundation, Union Labor Health Foundation. I am very pleased to serve as a Board Member.

Union Labor Health Foundation partners with the Humboldt Area Foundation and works to improve the health and well-being of the residents of Humboldt County. Almost 3 million dollars have been awarded to community organizations and individuals over the past 20 years.

A very important part of the Foundation is the Angel Fund and the Children's Dental Angel Fund. Just like those timber workers over a century ago, people today still struggle with the cost of medical care. These Angel Funds provide fast financial assistance to low income families for health and medical needs. The grants are small but can make a big difference in the lives of local people by paying for medical travel, equipment or procedures that may not be covered by their medical insurance.

The process is simple. Local social workers, discharge planners and case workers contact Union Labor and provide a brief confidential description of their client's condition and needs. Every week, a small group of the foundation board members meet to review the cases and make small contributions where possible. We are fortunate to have Dentists, Physicians and other medical professionals on our board to make meaningful decisions. They go over every case individually. There are always more requests than there are funds, so the group has to prioritize the requests and that is very hard work.

In the past five years, the Angel Fund has made over 3,000 grants, totaling Four Hundred and Eighty Five thousand dollars. Each year, the Children's Dental Angel Fund helps about sixty youth with dental care ranging from a single filling to major oral surgery. This fund has awarded over One hundred and eighty thousand dollars in the past five years.

A large number of requests are for travel to receive specialty care out of the area. But other grants go to purchase eyeglasses, home assistive aids, wheelchair accessories, orthotics, any number of small but important purchases that can make a huge difference in a person's life.

There are angels. Perhaps there are spiritual, winged beings but certainly there are angels in the people around us. You can make a tax deductible donation to the Angel Funds and 100% of your donation goes directly to our local community. You can contact our staff at 442-2417 or go online at www.ulhf.org

This is Mike Goldsby for Community Comment