



United Way and small businesses like Warren's go together like lobster and butter

As you cross the Route 1 bridge from Portsmouth to Maine, you're greeted, naturally, by a giant lobster. It's the iconic sign for [Warren's Lobster House](#), a New England seafood staple that dates back nearly 75 years.

A family-owned business since its inception in 1940, it changed hands in 1984. Scott Cunningham and his family took over the restaurant and since then, have worked to instill a friendly working atmosphere in the dining room, kitchen and offices. A big component to this: a relationship with United Way

"We think of our staff here as pretty special," says Cunningham, himself a United Way donor and volunteer (he served on the allocations panel years ago). "We're a family business and they are part of the extended family, we try to encourage that giving philosophy."

Staff are encouraged annually to participate in a giving campaign and managers offer the added incentive of a jeans day once a month for those that give over \$100. They even do a little bit of PR: a sign is hung in the dining area letting patrons know their denim-clad servers gave to United Way.

"It's a way for us to recognize their generosity," Cunningham says.

"We feel so fortunate to have the opportunity to work with amazing local businesses and employees and Warren's Lobster House is a great example," said Janet Guen, Senior Director of Resource Development for United Way of the Greater Seacoast. "The Cunningham family is personally generous to United Way and they multiply their impact by providing employees a way to give back as well. The chance to donate by payroll deduction makes giving accessible for everyone."

The lesson? While United Way does boast an unparalleled partnership with some of the biggest companies and corporations out there, the heart of the organization is still local and nothing quite says local like the small business sector—or an iconic seafood restaurant with a legendary salad bar.

"There's absolutely an opportunity for small businesses to engage with United Way," Cunningham says. "For us, we feel the payback of being connected with them is more than worth the effort."