



United Way of Anchorage

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **BP Alaska Employees Launch the Janet Weiss Education Opportunity Fund**

*Help for East High students a legacy of respected Alaska business leader*

**Anchorage AK** – As a surprise retirement gift, colleagues of BP Alaska’s former President Janet Weiss launched a fund that recognizes her and her husband Troy’s passion and commitment to expanding educational opportunity at East High School in Anchorage. Contributions of nearly \$25,000 quickly rolled in from Weiss’ team members and others in the community who wanted to honor her career and community commitment.

Funds from the Janet Weiss Education Opportunity Fund will provide a flexible source of funds to get the right help to the right student at the right time to break down barriers that prevent academic success.

“Janet is an amazing leader in business and in the community,” said Damian Bilbao, BP Alaska vice president of commercial ventures. “For her retirement gift, we wanted to express gratitude and respect in a way that speaks to who she really is. Helping students reach their potential feels exactly right.”

“I think, knowing Janet, her heart is really toward compassion for the kids,” said Sam Spinella, East High School principal.

The beauty of the Weiss fund is that it will be tailored to students’ needs, and those don’t always fit neatly into grant or program requirements. Spinella said that includes students who are homeless, or don’t know where they’ll get their next meal outside of school. Sometimes a winter coat, a pair of glasses or even a haircut can do wonders for a student’s morale. “The Weiss fund will give us an opportunity to give some encouragement to kids.” Spinella said.

Both Weiss and BP Alaska have been major supporters of 90% Graduation by 2020, a community collaboration to raise Anchorage School District’s graduation rate, which has seen an increase of over 25 points since 2005. Weiss, who served on the United Way of Anchorage Board of Directors, has long been involved in private-public partnerships at East High, the most diverse high school in the United States, and one that counts 70% of its students as economically disadvantaged.

“What amazing and generous colleagues I have!” said Weiss. “It has been an honor to serve shoulder to shoulder with them in the community and in the Alaska energy business. Partnering with United Way and East High School to help students in this way is certainly a tremendous gift.”

The fund will be managed by United Way of Anchorage in collaboration with Weiss. The fund is open to all donors who want to support East High School students.

### **About United Way of Anchorage**

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

[www.liveunitedanc.org](http://www.liveunitedanc.org)