



**UNITED WAY**  
Greater Milwaukee  
& Waukesha County

# 2025 COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT

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®



## UNITED IS THE WAY

### What does it mean to have a strong community?

A strong community is about neighbors looking out for other neighbors.

It's about providing a support network that creates opportunities and hope.

It's about addressing big problems with big solutions.

### How do we build a strong community?

We do it United. When we come together, we don't just respond to the challenges of today. We create lasting solutions that shape our community for generations to come.

- United is the way we end family homelessness.
- United is the way we reduce barriers to employment and start someone on a stable career path.
- United is the way we bridge the digital divide.
- United is the way we provide mental wellness support and services so that high school students are equipped to face life's challenges.

For over 115 years, our United Way has had one simple purpose: **help people live better lives.**

## LOOKING BACK <<<

At United Way, we know the importance of stepping back and reflecting on the history of our organization. We are proud of the support we've provided our four-county footprint. We are especially proud where our support has effectively addressed needs in the community leading to big solutions to big problems.

Two examples of this include the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program that reduced the teen birth rate by 65% in Milwaukee, and our Safe & Stable Homes Initiative, where we met the criteria of ending family homelessness in Milwaukee and Ozaukee counties in 2023, and are pacing to do the same in Washington and Waukesha counties in 2025.

## LOOKING FORWARD >>>

Today, we want to ensure that our United Way is maximizing the impact our donors and volunteers are making.

Beginning with our 2025 campaign, United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County's funding model will focus on Impact Based Funding. Investments will be made to organizations that demonstrate that they can advance the work of our Key Initiatives. This will allow us to more effectively drive community-wide progress on important issues by allocating more funding and staff capacity to these initiatives. Investments in the updated funding model will begin to be implemented in July 2026.

This is about investing more effectively and efficiently in our community. Our goal is to solve important issues faster, with you, our donors.

**United Way mobilizes people to action so that all can thrive.** Each year, thousands of corporate partners, donors, volunteers, and local nonprofits all work together for lasting change in Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington, and Waukesha counties.

# TOGETHER, WE'RE CREATING A FUTURE WHERE EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE CAN REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.

## WHY UNITED WAY?

Each year, thousands of people support United Way. Here are three reasons why:

### We are a member of a trusted network.

We are part of something big. As one of the world's largest privately funded charities, United Way serves 36 countries and territories, making life better for 48 million people every year. Local United Ways are deeply rooted in their communities, understanding the specific needs and challenges they face.

### We are effective.

Our United Way has been recognized nationally and locally for a high rate of fiscal accountability. We've been recognized by both the Better Business Bureau and Charity Navigator for our track record of efficiency. Charity Navigator awarded us a Four-Star Charity rating, their highest rating.

### We are changing lives.

Our United Way is focused on addressing the most pressing issues in the community. Your donation directly supports solutions to big problems in our community, and uplifting individuals and families in need.



- 55%** Strategic Program Grants & Community-wide Initiatives
- 40%** Donor Designations
- 5%** United Way's Programmatic Oversight & Volunteer Services



- 44%** Employee & Retiree Workplace Contributions
- 22%** Corporate Contributions
- 15%** Government Grants
- 8%** Individual Contributions Outside of Workplace
- 8%** In-kind Gifts & Sponsorships
- 2%** Private Foundations
- 1%** Workplace Special Events



# PEOPLE SERVED IN OUR FOUR-COUNTY AREA

MILWAUKEE CO.  
130,291

WAUKESHA CO.  
23,028

OZAUKEE CO.  
3,001

WASHINGTON CO.  
2,618

**197,429** 

people were served by United Way-funded programs and partnerships across our community last year.\*

An additional 240,075 individuals were served by United Way-funded partner IMPACT 211.

\*38,491 individuals who were served in our community did not provide a ZIP code at intake.



- 0-11: 26%
- 12-17: 14%
- 18-34: 23%
- 35-64: 26%
- 65+: 11%



- Female: 57%
- Male: 43%
- Transgender: >1%
- Nonbinary/Prefer to self-describe: >1%



- Caucasian: 33%
- African American/Black: 33%
- Hispanic: 22%
- Multi-racial: 5%
- Asian: 3%
- Other: 2%
- Native American: 1%
- Middle Eastern: 1%



- \$0-9,999: 42%
- \$10,000-14,999: 18%
- \$15,000-24,999: 15%
- \$25,000-36,999: 11%
- \$37,000-49,999: 7%
- \$50,000-74,999: 4%
- \$75,000+: 3%

## UNITED WAY KEY INITIATIVES

United Way is using collective impact to drive solutions to our community's problems that are too big for one organization to solve. Collective impact is the commitment of a group of people from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem, using a structured form of collaboration.

We know there is no shortage of great nonprofits in our region, but there is a shortage of efficient ways to collaborate more effectively.

**FEW NONPROFITS ARE RESOURCED TO LEAD THIS KIND OF NEEDED WORK. UNITED WAY IS READY TO LEAD THE WAY.**

### Reducing Barriers to Employment & Advancement

Our goal: 15,000 people will be ready to start stable careers having overcome key employment barriers by 2029.

### Safe & Stable Homes

Our goal: End family homelessness in our entire four-county footprint by 2025.

### Techquity

Our goal: We will provide 50,000 computers to people who need them by 2027.

### Teen Mental Wellness: Empowering Minds

Our goal: Empowering Minds schools will elevate the mental wellness of 21,000 high school students by 2030.

### In the 2023-24 grant cycle:

- Over 9,900 people were served by Reducing Barriers to Employment & Advancement programs.
- Over 17,500 people were served by Safe & Stable Homes programs.
- We expanded Teen Mental Wellness: Empowering Minds to nine high schools. We are on track to elevate the mental wellness of over 6,500 students at these schools.
- Over 7,900 computers were distributed through Techquity.





“When people consider barriers to employment, they don’t often think of people with disabilities,” said Rachel Reit of the United Way-funded Down Syndrome Association of Wisconsin (DSAW). “People with disabilities are some of the most marginalized among us.”

Lukas has been attending DSAW since he was a child. DSAW provided him classes, training, and opportunities for a job. “DSAW has helped me a lot,” said Lukas. “I learned life skills, I learned how to make new friends, and how to make connections.”

“We learn from the individuals themselves,” said Rachel. “What do they want their lives and careers to look like? We have programs that allow individuals with disabilities to test out different industries to see what fits their skills and their interests.”

**2025-26 Grantees**

- Benedict Center
- Down Syndrome Association of Wisconsin
- Employ Milwaukee
- Forward Careers
- Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Wisconsin
- JobsWork MKE
- La Casa de Esperanza
- Legal Action of Wisconsin
- Literacy Services of Wisconsin
- Milwaukee Christian Center
- Milwaukee Community Services Corp
- MobiliSE (MetroGO)
- My Way Out
- Neighborhood House of Milwaukee
- Next Door Foundation
- Project RETURN
- Wisconsin Community Services (WCS)
- WRTP | BIG STEP



**How We’re Changing Lives**

In 2023-24, United Way provided funding to 16 organizations focused on:

- Supporting people with disabilities.
- Empowering justice-impacted individuals.
- Addressing the need for skilled healthcare professionals.
- Moving members from “low-skill” positions to “mid-skill” positions that require more than a high school diploma, but less than a four-year degree.
- Offering opportunities to participate in English language learning, adult education, and GED preparation.
- Providing transportation to help someone get to well-paying jobs.

**Our community saw the following results in 2023-24:**

- Over 45 industry-recognized credentials were obtained, including high school equivalency diplomas, IT services, and construction certifications.
- Over 75 nonviolent arrest records were expunged, in addition to seven pardons.
- Over 120 driver’s licenses were recovered.
- Over 540 individuals gained employment after being part of a Reducing Barriers to Employment & Advancement-funded program.



**KEY INITIATIVE**

**REDUCING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT & ADVANCEMENT**

**Why It’s Important**

Reducing employment barriers isn’t just about finding jobs. It’s about creating a more equitable, resilient community where everyone can thrive.

When we, as a community, focus on Reducing Barriers to Employment & Advancement, we address:

- **Individual well-being.** Having a good job provides financial stability, improves mental health, and enhances quality of life.
- **Long-term impact.** Collectively, we are addressing employment disparities, ensuring all community members have opportunities to succeed.
- **Economic growth.** A fully employed population contributes to increased consumer spending, higher tax revenues, and overall economic vitality.

Through Reducing Barriers to Employment & Advancement, we focus on the root causes of barriers to employment. These are the barriers that are preventing people from getting a good job and supporting their families.

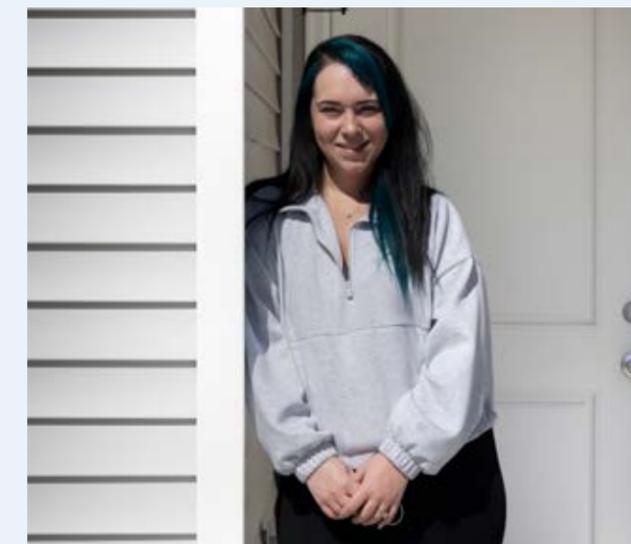
**What We’re Doing Together**

**Our goal: 15,000 people will be ready to start stable careers having overcome key employment barriers by 2029.**

Reducing Barriers to Employment & Advancement is guided by these strategies:

-  **Education, training, & credentials.** Supporting organizations that help adults learn to read, earn their GED/HSED, or other employment credentials that lead to a high-demand certification.
-  **Transportation.** Supporting organizations that provide innovative transportation solutions or assist with driver’s license recovery.
-  **Involvement in the justice system.** Supporting programs with a focus on strengthening justice-impacted-individuals in the workplace and advocating for policy changes that help these members of our community.

**FOR MANY, FINDING A JOB IS NOT THE PROBLEM. THE CHALLENGE IS FINDING JOBS THAT PAY A WAGE THAT ALLOWS THEM TO HAVE A STABLE CAREER.**



## KEY INITIATIVE SAFE & STABLE HOMES

### Why It's Important

United Way started working with an advisory council of experts on homelessness six years ago. We learned:

- About 5,000 students were reported as homeless during a typical school year in our four-county school districts.
- Around 40-50 families entered our local shelters each month, and in Wisconsin, 1/3 of the population experiencing homelessness were families with at least one child under the age of 18.
- School mobility can create behavioral issues and lowers educational achievement for that student.

**WE CAN'T ALWAYS CHANGE THE REASONS FOR FAMILY HOMELESSNESS, BUT WE CAN CHANGE THE WAY OUR SYSTEM RESPONDS TO THESE REASONS.**

### What We're Doing Together

**Our goal: End family homelessness in our four-county footprint by 2025.**

According to the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness: A community has ended family homelessness when you can show you are preventing homelessness whenever possible, and when it isn't possible, you are ensuring that it is rare, it's brief, and it's a one-time experience.

Safe & Stable Homes is guided by these strategies:



**Centralized resources.** The Rental Housing Resource Center is a central resource center for landlords that might be considering filing an eviction but want to know what other options exist, and for tenants that have been or feel they might be served an eviction notice and want to know their next steps.



**Legal aid.** EvictionFreeMKE is paired with the Eviction Defense Project to provide no-cost housing attorneys for low-income parents to prevent evictions.



**Flexible financial assistance.** Progressive tiers of flexible financial assistance and housing case management are available for families that would otherwise be using crisis services to avoid homelessness. The Family Flex Fund has prevented or ended homelessness for over 300 families since its launch in 2021.



**Wraparound support.** This focus identifies students in schools experiencing housing instability and connects their whole family with wraparound supportive services. The goal is to keep children in their homes so they can focus on their learning.

### How We're Changing Lives

In 2023-24, United Way provided funding to 22 organizations, focused on:

- Providing community case management.
- Offering financial assistance.
- Covering closing costs for homeowners.
- Coordinating access to resources and supportive housing for individuals and families.
- Delivering wraparound supportive services for families.

### Our community saw the following results in 2023-24:

- Over 650 households benefited from mediation between tenants and landlords.
- Nearly 3,500 households had housing attorneys in their eviction cases at no cost to them.
- Over 1,000 tenants and landlords were supported with eviction prevention resources from The Milwaukee Rental Housing Resource Center.
- Over 20 programs were in place across our four counties offering flexible financial assistance to meet families' unique needs to remain stably housed.
- Seven families become first-time homeowners through Habitat for Humanity in Waukesha.

Molly knew she needed a place for her family to thrive. "We were struggling. My son has cerebral palsy and recently had some surgeries. We needed a place that was affordable, but also accessible."

United Way-funded Habitat for Humanity of Waukesha & Jefferson Counties' vision is to create a world where everyone has a decent place to live.

Safe & Stable Homes plays an important role in the Habitat for Humanity process.

"There are so many obstacles to home ownership, especially for low-and-moderate-income buyers," said Melissa Songco, CEO at Habitat for Humanity of Waukesha & Jefferson Counties. "United Way's Safe & Stable Homes helps make sure we get to the closing table, using the funds for closing costs or anything that comes up. We want to be able to support our families all the way to the very end of the home ownership journey. United Way makes this a reality."

### 2025-26 Grantees

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Advocates of Ozaukee                  | Habitat for Humanity of Waukesha & Jefferson Counties |
| Cathedral Center                      | Hebron Housing Services                               |
| Community Action                      | Hope House of Milwaukee                               |
| Coalition for South Central Wisconsin | Legal Action of Wisconsin                             |
| Community Advocates                   | Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee                        |
| Family Promise of Ozaukee County      | My Way Out  |
| Family Promise of Washington County   | Pathfinders   |
| Family Promise of Waukesha County     | Rooted & Rising                                       |
| FRIENDS                               | Salvation Army Waukesha                               |
| Guest House of Milwaukee              | Sojourner Family Peace Center                         |
|                                       | VetsNet   |



Techquity Digital Navigators are local individuals who help clients gain digital skills and troubleshoot technical issues. Their goal is to help users feel confident using their device, and to support their everyday needs for education, employment, health monitoring, and more.



In 2025, volunteers are supporting the Techquity initiative by distributing laptops to people in need. Volunteer Brion Nash of Landmark Credit Union said: "Getting a free computer means so much to the people I meet. It gives them the access to study for a class, apply for a new job, or start a new business. They're getting connected and making it personal."



Patrick was living at a crisis resource center as he worked on the next steps of his life. Patrick told us: "Getting a computer is huge for me at this time in my life. Doing anything without a computer is almost impossible." He is going to use the computer to look for a job, to search for housing, and to go back to school. "I'm starting over," said Patrick. "Everyone has their own journey in life, and for me, this is such a big step in helping me move forward."

## KEY INITIATIVE TECHQUITY

### Why It's Important

This initiative began as an emergency response to COVID-19, providing devices and other essential digital resources to people who had technology needs.

Early Techquity-focused efforts included the distribution of smartphones and hotspots, along with data plans. For example, we provided 9,000 students with earbuds or headsets with microphones for virtual learning between 2020-21.

It was during this time that we learned more about the digital divide.

Individuals and families without access to computers or the internet struggle to stay connected in our technology-driven world.

Across our four counties, over 93,000 households lack a basic computer, and over 120,000 households lack a basic home internet connection.

A report by Employ Milwaukee indicates that 1 in 3 unemployed workers in Wisconsin lack foundational digital skills. According to the National Skills Coalition, 89% of jobs in Wisconsin require digital skills. This means people are not getting the jobs they want because they lack important digital skills.

### What We're Doing Together

**Our goal: We will provide 50,000 computers to people who need them across our four counties by 2027.**

The vision of Techquity is to ensure the digital equity and inclusion of every resident in Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington, and Waukesha counties.

Techquity connects stakeholders from business, governmental, educational, and social sectors to promote digital equity and inclusion.

Techquity is guided by these strategies:

-  **Broadband.** Promoting access to affordable, fast, reliable broadband throughout our community.
-  **Devices.** Ensuring all members of our community have access to the digital devices needed to flourish.
-  **Skills.** Equipping our community with the digital skills and literacy to better prepare people for a good job.

### How We're Changing Lives

Since the launch of Techquity, United Way and partners have distributed over 13,000 computers to organizations and residents in need of technology.

We continue to work with over 50 local partners who are supporting our important strategies. Computers have gone to schools, nonprofits, individuals, and families.

In 2024, United Way was awarded a state grant to advance Techquity's computer distribution goal. With just this funding, United Way will be able to purchase and distribute more than 20,000 computers to people who need them over the next two years.

Laptop distribution events connect people with essential digital resources: a laptop computer and guidance on how to use the computer. The events are focused on connecting job seekers, students, and others to computers and internet access to ensure everyone has the technology they need to succeed in our digital world.

# THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IS THE GAP BETWEEN THOSE WHO HAVE WHAT THEY NEED TO ACCESS THE INTERNET AND THOSE WHO DO NOT.



Ericka faced challenges in her life. She told us: "I recently escaped a domestic violence relationship, and I lost everything. Right now, I'm grateful for this laptop." Ericka told us she's going to use the computer to look for jobs, find new housing, and help with her education.



Pius XI Catholic High School focused on improving systems of support for their students' mental health strategies and needs by identifying gaps and efficiencies within their resources and developing a process to ensure students, staff, and families can access the resources they need.



Dr. Howard Fuller Collegiate Academy (pictured above) focused on improving systems of support for their students' mental health strategies and needs by identifying gaps and efficiencies within their resources and developing a plan to improve access to these resources.

Waukesha South High School (pictured left) focused their efforts on collaboration. They brought partners together to share their expertise and insights, with a clear focus on students' well-being. This work isn't a blip in time, but is real, sustained change.

KEY INITIATIVE

# TEEN MENTAL WELLNESS: EMPOWERING MINDS

Why It's Important

It's not easy being an adolescent or a young adult. Not only are they experiencing physical, hormonal, and emotional changes that can be uncomfortable and confusing, but they're also dealing with societal expectations and challenges.

According to the World Health Organization, half of all mental health conditions start by age 14. Most cases go undetected and untreated until many years later or sometimes not at all.

Adolescence is a pivotal time for young people. When we can help kids here, we help launch successful futures.

When we, as a community, focus on Teen Mental Wellness, we are:

- Creating systems level change. Comprehensive school mental health systems will have positive effects at school, in the community, and at home.
- Supporting our children so they feel less sad and hopeless.
- Reducing mental health disparities among students.
- Improving student learning, attendance, engagement, and graduation rates.
- Reducing bullying, risky behaviors, substance abuse, school violence, and involvement in the juvenile justice system.

What We're Doing Together

**Our goal: Empowering Minds schools will elevate the mental wellness of 21,000 high school students by 2030.**

We can change the lives of high school students by focusing on prevention, equity, and access to mental health services.

How it Works

- Achieving targeted milestones is the centerpiece of this initiative; this is how we will measure success.
- The six milestones are based on Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction's School Mental Health Framework.



**Needs Assessment:** mapping the current state and sharing all existing resources with students and parents.



**Collaboration:** building bridges with students, parents, community providers and the school to regularly engage on mental health.



**Referral Pathways:** knowing when and how to triage students who need support into the right level of help.



**Comprehensive Resources:** promoting and supporting overall mental wellness and early interventions, as well as having the ability to get care for students who need a higher level of support.



**Sustainability:** identifying strategies that optimize financial and nonfinancial assets needed to maintain and improve the Comprehensive School Mental Health System.



**Evaluation:** collecting both quantitative and qualitative data to inform priorities and action steps to continuously improve the Comprehensive School Mental Health System.

How will we know when a school has implemented a milestone?

A milestone is achieved when schools implement the necessary components that improve their specific Mental Health System. Both quantitative and qualitative data is collected to ensure each component and milestone functions as intended.

We are not re-inventing the wheel with this initiative. We're helping to scale existing, proven research.

How We're Changing Lives

**In the 2024-25, nine schools participated in Teen Mental Wellness: Empowering Minds.**

- Grafton High School
- Dr. Howard Fuller Collegiate Academy High School
- James Madison Academic Campus
- Messmer High School
- Milwaukee Academy of Science High School
- Pius XI Catholic High School
- Waukesha South High School
- Waukesha West High School
- Wauwatosa West High School

**For the 2025-26 school year, we are adding:**

- Cristo Rey Jesuit High School Milwaukee
- Marquette University High School
- Pewaukee High School
- Ronald Reagan High School
- Shorewood High School
- St. Augustine Preparatory Academy
- Vel R. Philips Juvenile Justice Center School
- Wauwatosa East High School

Mental Health Improvement Fund

To support the entire family, United Way partners with the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership\* on the Mental Health Improvement Fund.

This fund supports organizations that provide behavioral and mental health services for low-income, underserved adult and youth populations in Milwaukee County with the goal of increasing access to mental health care, improving mental health outcomes, and promoting health equity.

2025-26 Grantees

- Aurora Walker's Point Community Clinic
- Ascension Wisconsin Foundation
- Benedict Center
- Bread of Healing Clinic
- City on a Hill
- Jewish Family Services
- Meta House
- Milwaukee LGBTQ Community Center
- Outreach Community Health Centers
- Pathfinders
- Penfield Children's Center
- Sixteenth Street Community Health Clinic
- Wellpoint Care Network

\*Milwaukee Health Care Partnership consists of: Ascension Wisconsin, Aurora Health Care, Children's Wisconsin, and Froedtert Health



## 2024 VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHTS



### GETTING INVOLVED. **VOLUNTEERS TRANSFORM OUR COMMUNITY.**

We believe lasting change doesn't happen by chance—it happens when people show up for their community. In 2024, volunteers across our community did just that. Volunteering isn't just about filling a need. It's about creating a culture of compassion and shared responsibility. Individuals and families gave their time to help neighbors they may never meet, to build bridges across zip codes, and to strengthen the fabric of our community. Because when we all show up, we all move forward.

- In 2024, we created and implemented:**
- Volunteer events at workplaces and meeting locations.** United Way facilitated kit and resource packing projects that benefited our four-county region.
- Volunteer events in the community.** United Way connected individuals and teams to urgent project needs at local nonprofits.
- Custom volunteer projects.** United Way organized initiative-focused, critically needed, one-day projects for individuals, teams, and families.
- Supply drives.** United Way coordinated diaper drives, school supply drives, personal hygiene drives, and more.

# BEHIND EVERY NUMBER IS A STORY, AND BEHIND EVERY STORY IS SOMEONE WHO CHOSE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.



**OVER 31,000 VOLUNTEER HOURS LOGGED.**  
Volunteers supported Project Homeless Connect, Techquity device distribution events, diaper and other kit packings, Backpack Coalition, fundraising support for the United Way campaign, and so much more.



**OVER 345,000 DIAPERS MOBILIZED.**  
Diapers were delivered to Diaper Hubs at local nonprofits for families in need. Since the launch of United Way's Diaper Bank, over 1 million diapers have been delivered to parents and caregivers throughout our community.



**8,000 BACKPACKS FILLED.**  
Grade-appropriate school supplies were packed and delivered to Milwaukee Public Schools, School District of Waukesha, Germantown School District, and schools in Ozaukee County, all part of the Backpack Coalition.



**OVER 440 VOLUNTEERS SUPPORTED NEARLY 650 GUESTS AT PROJECT HOMELESS CONNECT.**  
This annual event held in Milwaukee and Waukesha brings resources and services together under one roof to best serve those experiencing homelessness.



**OVER 25,000 KITS WERE ASSEMBLED.**  
Volunteers packed snack packs, fight the flu kits, house and home kits, personal care kits, winter care kits, and youth mental health kits. These kits were distributed to local nonprofits and schools who get them to the people who most need them.

# WAYS YOU CAN CREATE A STRONG COMMUNITY

## GIVE BACK: DONATE NOW

By making a donation to United Way, you are providing hope, opportunity, and a brighter future for those in need. Every dollar makes a difference—together, we can change lives.

## GET INVOLVED: VOLUNTEER

When you volunteer, you invest in your community's future. Your time, skills, and energy can uplift those around you. Get involved today.

## TAKE ACTION: SHARE YOUR VOICE

Real change starts with action. Strong policies can shape the future of our community, so stand up, speak out, and help lift up those who need it most.



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[UnitedWayGMWC.org](https://UnitedWayGMWC.org)



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