

UNITED WAY KEY MESSAGES

September 2024



UNITED WAY
of Southwestern
Pennsylvania

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LET'S GET THE CONVERSATION STARTED!

A great way to get your audience engaged is to ask people how our work connects directly to and impacts their own lives and the lives of people they know. Suggested questions:

- Does anyone here know anyone who wasn't sure they could afford to buy groceries, also known as "food insecurity"?
- Have you ever known anyone who was worried about housing and having enough for rent and utilities? Or couldn't afford health care or child care?
- How about finding a good job: do you know anyone who has a loved one who has had difficulty finding a job that paid enough to cover all the bills?
 - So many people across our region have experience with these issues.
 - These are all examples of human services, which is what we invest in at United Way.
- Do you ever wish there was something you could do, some way you could engage, to lend a hand to neighbors who can't seem to get ahead no matter how hard they work?
 - United Way has a robust volunteer engagement program that connects 6,350 people to pack meal kits, books for kids, and school supplies every year.
- Do you wish you knew which agencies were doing the best work to help people in need in our community, so that you were confident that your donations would make a difference?
 - When you give directly to United Way, we make sure your contributions go to agencies who are skilled in meeting community needs.
 - United Way has staff experts who work with nonprofits and community leaders and know which agencies are doing truly excellent work and making a difference.
- Last question: Have you ever wondered how you could find other people who care about this community as much as you do, so that you could meet them, learn about what they do and connect with people who share your values?
 - United Way organizes leadership donor events year-round that bring people together from the for-profit, nonprofit and public service sectors to socialize, network and give back.

No other organization does all of these things. I'm excited today to talk with you about how, by giving to United Way, you can partner with us in making this community better for everyone.

KEY MESSAGES

1. **Why United Way? United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania has three superpowers, called the Three Cs, that set us apart. We are a:**

- **Connector**, bringing people together to volunteer, engage, donate and contribute their knowledge and life experience.
- **Convenor**, gathering community experts and affected populations to think through issues, plan, innovate and act together.
- **Catalyst**, encouraging community-wide investment in effective solutions with the greatest potential to help people thrive.

2. **What does United Way actually do?**

We invest. We solve problems. We inspire people to give. We are a hub of volunteering and engagement. We are experts in community needs. And we are a lifeline for people who need assistance.

Drill down:

- **First, United Way invests in our community.** Each year, United Way invests approximately \$30 million in the community. Our investments fall into three main areas:
 - Meeting basic needs so families and individuals can thrive.
 - Moving people to financial stability and independence.
 - Helping young people build the skills to succeed in school and in life.

Nearly 1.34 million individuals, families and children received assistance from United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024.

- **Next, United Way uses our three superpowers — Connecting, Convening and Catalyzing — to solve problems** faced every day by individuals and families across our region. How do we do this?
 - **We are the glue, connecting all sectors of the community** who share our goal of making southwestern Pennsylvania a thriving place. This includes businesses, individuals, nonprofits and government. We can do more together than any of us could ever do on our own.
 - **We solve problems by convening experts**, including people affected by challenges, to figure out what’s needed beyond money so the communities we all love and belong to can thrive.
 - **We inspire others to give.** We have nearly 100 years of expertise in community needs, so companies and individuals give to United Way because they know that their investments go farther when they do.
 - **We are a hub of volunteering and engagement.** Each year, we provide meaningful volunteering opportunities for 6,350 people. This helps our partner agencies complete critical tasks, helping our donors and volunteers see community needs and showing them that they can make a big difference by giving back.
 - **We are a lifeline for people who need assistance.** Through our 211 contact center, we connect people in need – more than 507,000 last year* – to vital human services in times of crisis.
 - **We organize collaborations and special projects** that span nonprofits, businesses and government, often supported by our volunteers. By mobilizing multiple sectors, we provide unparalleled opportunity for everyone to understand what’s holding our community back and how we can create change together.

** July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024.*

3. When you give to United Way, your donations stay local and benefit your community.

Why do we say that?

- United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania invests in five counties: Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette and Westmoreland. Our most recent round of investments benefited 110 agencies across this region. United Way has three offices serving our region. One is in the Strip District downtown, one is in Greensburg and one is in Butler.
- United Way partners with hundreds of local nonprofits to meet the needs of families and individuals in our community, from housing and securing meaningful employment to education and senior services. When you donate to United Way, you are making it possible for us to address many critical needs in our community.
- Issues such as access to safe and affordable housing and high-quality education are never confined to geographic or political borders, but we've found the most effective way to help local communities is through guidance by people who know the local challenges and opportunities.
- We have expert staff members who live and work in the five counties we serve. They understand the issues facing each community and work with donors, volunteers and partner agencies to collaborate and act together.
- Our local operating boards are comprised of residents who understand the needs of the community and provide expertise and insight, particularly in Armstrong, Butler, Fayette and Westmoreland counties.
- Our staff also serve on and chair committees that work with health and human service groups to coordinate services and fill in the gaps. This network extends far beyond our partner agencies.
- *NOTE: County-specific data will be provided on our website starting in November 2024.*

4. United Way uses data to make decisions.

About our 211 Helpline

Because United Way is a global network, we have access to data resources available only through our network. These data resources provide in-depth insight into existing and emerging needs. Specifically:

- **United Way's 211 helpline.** Our resource navigators are available by phone, text and chat 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year.
- **How many people reach out?** The helpline we run in Pennsylvania receives about 400 contacts daily.
- **What happens in these interactions?** Our highly trained Resource Navigators assess the needs of each person and offer connections to thousands of agencies in their area that can help. Resource Navigators often follow up to check on progress and provide additional support.
- **Contacts to 211 are carefully logged.** This provides a wealth of data about the greatest needs in each community, down to the ZIP code.
- **Data is shared in real-time in a public database at pa.211counts.org.** This information helps United Way anticipate and respond to the changing needs of our community and is available to everyone, including nonprofit staff, government officials and the public, so they can also plan to address emerging needs.
- **The data is searchable.** 211 contact data can be searched and sorted by zip code, county, legislative district and need. This means anyone can see, in real time what the greatest needs are in a community and who is need.
- **How do we use 211 data?** The data helps us devise programs that are tailored to emerging needs and to predict needs before they become a crisis.
- **211 also allows rapid and instant connection** to services such as COVID vaccine scheduling, Free Tax Prep and access to low-cost and free internet.

5. United Way uses data to make decisions.

ALICE.

United Way's ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) data tracks the true costs of meeting basic needs and shows how people are faring financially.

- ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) data is the metric United Way uses to track the ability of individuals and families to pay for basic needs.
- ALICE data gives a much more realistic picture of the number of people struggling than federal poverty guidelines, which calculate only how much is needed to afford a nutritious diet.
- ALICE considers the cost of housing, transportation, child care, health care and basic technology.
- ALICE workers are service employees, receptionists, caregivers and seasonal workers.
- What ALICE data makes clear is that far too many of our neighbors do not earn enough to afford the necessities of life. Many also encounter the “benefits cliff” because they earn too much to receive government assistance.
- United Way, in collaboration with our partner agencies, is committed to raising awareness of ALICE and the true cost of meeting basic needs so that we can mobilize the community.
- A common belief among many Americans is that if you show up and work hard, you can support your family. The evidence — supported by United Way's 211 data — shows that, for 41% of households in southwestern Pennsylvania, that is not the case.
- The federal poverty level, which measures only the cost of food, is about \$2,600 per month for a family of four. The ALICE survival budget for Allegheny County is \$8,000 per month for a family of four with two young children in child care.
- *NOTE: County-specific ALICE data will be provided on our website starting in November 2024.*