

# SPOTLIGHT

Dedicated to informing and connecting Tocqueville Society Members | Summer 2025



**UNITED WAY**  
of Southwestern  
Pennsylvania

# WELCOME

## On the cover



In May, Big Book Drop volunteers gathered at Acrisure Stadium to pack 35,000 high-quality children's books that were distributed to 110 agencies across our region. Check out the story on page 3 to learn how Big Book Drop and other United Way volunteer engagement events make a major impact.

*Image by Jason Cohn for United Way, 2025.*

## New website

Have you seen our new website at [UnitedWaySWPA.org](https://UnitedWaySWPA.org)? Our goal: help people learn what we do and feel inspired to donate, volunteer and collaborate with us. Check it out!



## 2024-2025 Tocqueville Society Committee Members

James D. Newell, Buchanan  
Ingersoll & Rooney PC, *co-chair*

Darrell Smalley, EY, *co-chair*

William Blose, KPMG

Christopher Brennan, Reed Smith

Jayne Butcher, Blank Rome

Marc Cordero, UPMC

Augustine Faucher, PNC

Anne Foulkes, PPG

Kate Gionta, KPMG

Jennifer Haggerty, Merrill Lynch  
Private Wealth Management

Kevin Miller, Northwestern Mutual

Joseph Parsons, Jones Day

Mary Richter, Mosaic Soup

David Riehl, Baird

Thomas Ryan, K&L Gates

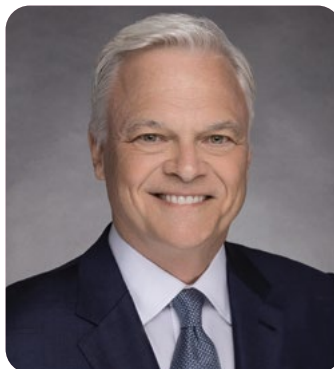
Brian Trudgen, Jones Day

James Yard, Schneider Downs

Ray Zipay, PNC

## Thank you to our committee members

We extend our gratitude to the committee for their service and leadership. Tocqueville Society Committee members serve for one full campaign year, acting as spokespeople for United Way's work in their workplaces and social circles and leading the society's outreach and recruitment efforts regionally. We are grateful for all of our Tocqueville Society members and to our co-chairs, Jim Newell and Darrell Smalley (pictured left to right), and all of our committee members whose terms end this June.





# IMPACT FEATURE

## For the love of reading: Big Book Drop.

United Way volunteers advance literacy for young readers.



United Way runs one of the most robust and meaningful volunteer programs in the region. While the connections our volunteers experience are profound, what truly matters is how these activities benefit individuals and families in need. This includes access to

books that spark a love of storytelling, setting children up for a lifetime of curiosity, adventure and learning.

At our recent Big Book Drop event, volunteers sorted, labeled and packed 35,000 children's books. The books were distributed to 110 literacy-focused organizations including early learning centers, libraries and schools. The books feature relatable characters and positive themes and are selected for age groups based on the organizations' requests.

Since 2019, Big Book Drop volunteers have packed 214,000 books for area youth. For the third year in a row, hundreds of those books went to East End United Community Center in Uniontown, where Casey Sirochman directs the 21st Century Community Learning Center. This free after-school program runs Monday through Thursday at two locations and is open to students in grades one through five.

Students in the program enjoy academic enrichment opportunities outside of the school day and receive a healthy meal. Casey said kids get to take home three books at the end of the program as a reward. While the community center has books onsite for students to read, Casey says the students are "overjoyed" when they get their very own books.

Casey called early literacy skills "critical" to a young person's outlook in life and for building the foundation for success in any career and in life.

Wendy Koch, United Way's senior director of regional engagement, explains that United Way's focus on early literacy as a pathway to success is the core of Big Book Drop.

"At United Way, we know that reading is one of the most effective ways to support early brain development and improve

school readiness in children. Guaranteeing access to high-quality books is just one way we're working to give every child in our region a strong foundation to succeed," Wendy said.

Lifesteps, a nonprofit social services agency based in Butler County, utilizes books received through Big Book Drop in numerous ways. Stacy Slater, the organization's early education vice president, said the books grow the libraries in classrooms and provide age-appropriate and exciting books. Lifesteps surveys families about book access at home and offers books to households in need of reading materials. Books from Big Book Drop are also part of the graduation send-off packets for every Lifesteps preschool graduate, Stacy added.

### Volunteer impact 2023-2024

Our 6,400 volunteers make an outsized impact. Last year people in need received items including:

58,782 Educational supplies for kids and schools.

49,244 Personal care packages.

5,308 Meal kits for families and individuals.

4,764 Care packages for older adults.

Penn Hills-based organization Young Black Motivated Kings and Queens also distributes books from Big Book Drop as part of its out-of-school time program, incorporating books into its curriculum and using them as prizes and giveaways. "Our mission is to provide a safe space in the greater Allegheny County area for youth to be creative and expressive as they navigate their role in the community and the world," said Director of Operations Amante Britt.

For Wendy Koch, the joy in partnerships like Big Book Drop is empowering local organizations and families to create bright futures for young people.

"We love when volunteers get involved with and excited about United Way. But more important is giving local organizations books with a character or story that kids truly relate to. The delight kids and their adults get through reading is priceless." 📖

# EVENTS THAT UNITE



## Candid Conversation: March 12, 2025.

Leadership donors attended a Candid Conversation event featuring Carlow University President and Women United Co-Chair Kathy Humphrey, Ph.D., who shared how the generosity of others has inspired her philanthropic journey.

**Row One (left to right):** Bobbi Watt Geer, Women United Co-Chair Maris Dauer, Kathy Humphrey. **Row Two:** Darrell Smalley, Amy Crawford Faucher & Gus Faucher; Denise Smalley, Alison Wolbert. **Row Three:** Bobbi Watt Geer, Kathy Humphrey, Darrell Smalley; Maris Dauer, Darlene Wisniewski.



## United Way goes mobile

With UW4Me, our mobile engagement platform, all your events and activities are customized just for you and available at your fingertips! It's the fastest, easiest and most efficient way to view and sign up for events, track volunteer hours and giving history, donate and more on your mobile device.





**Celebrate to Elevate: April 24, 2025.**

Nearly 300 Women United members and their guests enjoyed food, drinks, prizes and mission-centered engagement activities at this year's Celebrate to Elevate fundraiser at PNC Firstside Center. We also celebrated outgoing co-chairs Maris Dauer and Kathy Humphrey and welcomed incoming co-chairs Christina Morascyzk and Megan Gilson.

**Row One (left to right):** Christina Morascyzk, Kathy Humphrey, Bobbi Watt Geer, Maris Dauer, Megan Gilson. **Row Two:** Stacy Juchno, Stephanie Garbe; Dotti Alke, Christine Bryant, Jennifer Mondi. **Row Three:** Don Vigliotti & Kathy Silvaggi; Debbie Cunningham and the Federated Hermes Group.



# CEO PERSPECTIVE

## A nonprofit R&D innovation fund? United Way is ahead of the curve.

By Bobbi Watt Geer, Ph.D.



Imagine if nonprofits had the resources to think big about solving problems. What could be achieved with research and development funds, like those of major corporations, to test out solutions and prepare for the unexpected?

Since 2019, United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania has been investing in innovation with funds designated especially for that purpose — and seeing results. Thanks to the generosity of individual board members and a private foundation, we were able to set aside funds outside our organizational budget to create the United Way Forward Fund, which has allowed us to develop new engagement tools, respond to evolving needs and maximize the generosity of our donors, all without impact on our regular operating expenses.

**Every year, a designated portion of the fund is made available for internal pilot projects.** Staff are encouraged to submit applications, and a volunteer committee evaluates project ideas on their sustainability and potential outcomes. The evaluation committee reflects a range of perspectives, with board members, community leaders and nonprofit and corporate leaders reviewing applications and providing input.

**Success in action:** United Way Forward funding allowed us to develop UW4Me, our mobile-friendly web portal that lets users stay informed of upcoming volunteer and engagement events and easily register for those you want to attend. Through our early launch efforts, 290 people have already signed up and are providing insights on how to make the platform even better and more useful.

It also helped us bolster United Way Life®, a planned giving tool that helps donors make substantial gifts to United Way through life insurance policies. With United Way Forward funds, we provide 50% matching funds to offset the cost of premiums, making it possible for more donors to make substantial contributions to United Way. The results? Our original \$25,000 in matching funds will generate about \$2 million in policy payouts to United Way to support our mission well into the future.

Based on this success, a second round of United Way Life® matching funding has been approved, which will help us encourage more donors to leave contributions to United Way.

**United Way Forward has also given us flexibility to test new grantmaking approaches.** While United Way normally makes three-year grants through our request for proposal (RFP) process, we recognize that additional needs arise during the off-cycle period. With United Way Forward funding, we piloted three need-specific targeted requests for proposals as well as a few rapid response grants in 2024. These smaller grants, more immediate in their rollout, were made quickly by our community impact staff for such needs as disaster relief, transportation and technology.

The Rapid Response grants and Pilot RFPs have helped us expand our partner pool while enhancing our ability to respond to community needs swiftly and effectively. These targeted grants helped local organizations make critical infrastructure updates, connect community members with transportation solutions and bolster early literacy efforts with support for under-resourced libraries. Based on the feedback we have heard from partner agencies, we're planning on continuing these grants as another pathway to meeting community needs outside of the three-year grant cycle.

As an organization, we're not satisfied with resting on our laurels and doing things the same way just because that's how we've always done them. The United Way Forward Fund reflects our commitment to constantly improving and evolving and our ability to leverage the perspectives of for-profits and our partner agencies to make our community a place where everyone can thrive. 🌱



# DONOR FEATURE

## Get to know Stacy Juchno.

*Board Chair Stacy Juchno has been engaged with United Way since 2009 in various roles including Tocqueville Society emerging leaders and co-chair of Women United. She's EVP & General Auditor of The PNC Financial Services Group, Inc. We talked with her about her early life and why financial stability is the United Way investment priority she resonates with most.*

### How did your upbringing influence the person you are today?

I grew up in Erie, Pennsylvania, with my parents, older brother and my identical twin sister. We were a working-class family. My dad worked for Erie Insurance and my mom was the local elementary school janitor. Honestly, it was hard being an identical twin. Because we didn't have much, we were expected to share everything, so I did everything I could to be an individual. It wasn't until after college that my sister Jen and I got close. Now she is my person, and I call her five times a day.

### What might people be surprised to know about you?

Early in my career, I had a lot of credit card debt. I lived in a small house we rented – my room was a closet really – with two roommates so I could pay off that debt. It was rough and I lived paycheck to paycheck. If something happened to my car or my job, I don't know what I would have done. Financial stability means you can breathe a bit and don't have to worry so much. I know from experience how hard it is to put debt behind you.

### How did you choose your career?

I took a ton of math classes. In 11th grade, I aced Mr. Morrison's accounting class and just loved it. If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing now. Working for a variety of public accounting firms, I learned that I really love applying my skills to helping companies comply with rules and regulations. This work requires accurate and robust internal controls for financial data, which is a major part of my role here now at PNC.

### Who influenced you to give back?

It's something I learned from my peers who showed me by example that I had a lot to give. I see how many people



along the way have helped me, supported me and made it possible for me to do well enough to give back. In 2009, when I was at PNC, I was invited to campaign meetings and met company leaders I hadn't met before. United Way was the connector.

### What community issues keep you up at night?

Seeing people on the streets and not knowing if they have a place to go home to at night is very troubling to me. You never know a person's story. I hand out 211 cards when I give people money. 211 and the agencies we partner with are incredible resources to people in crisis.

### What are your favorite United Way events?

In 2014, I was invited to be part of United Way's proposal review process and loved it. I saw where my dollars were going and had discussions about the number of people impacted and how we could solve a problem, not just mend it. That experience totally hooked me. I joke now that my tombstone will say "I just wanted to help."

Build A Bike is my absolute favorite event. I love the teambuilding it offers. And knowing that all those bikes go to local kids who need them. I was a Gen X latch-key kid and grew up on my bike. I cannot imagine childhood without one. It's amazing to know that we're helping kids have that same freedom.

### Now you are our board chair. What are your hopes and dreams for this position of service?

I'm amazed by the depth and breadth of what the team does. I see my role as supporting Bobbi and her team, by providing help to fulfill the mission. We're focused on finding a way to get more money back into the community. It doesn't happen overnight. 🙌

# — UNITED WAY — TOCQUEVILLE SOCIETY

## ALL LEADERSHIP DONORS

### Advancing the Impact

Tuesday, June 17 | 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

**Location:** PNC Park Home Plate Club

Our theme: Resilience and Innovation in a Rapidly Changing World. Join us for an engaging conversation with partner agencies and United Way leaders about challenges facing the community. Hear how your contributions are addressing these challenges while also boosting the regional economy.

## VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

### 211 Experience

Tuesday, June 17 | 8 to 9:30 a.m.

**Location:** United Way – Pittsburgh office

Get an inside look into the work of our 211 team, learn about the significant needs of our neighbors and the resources made available to those who contact 211.

## VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

### Build A Bike

June 25 to 27. Community parks.

Over three days at locations across the region, volunteers will assemble 600 bikes, which will be distributed through our partner agencies across the five-county region — bringing freedom, joy and the simple thrill of being a kid.

## LEAVING A LEGACY

Whether you are managing a loved one's estate or assets of your own, nothing is more satisfying than leaving a legacy to your community to impact people's lives. When you make a planned gift to United Way, you will support meaningful work while also benefiting from tax-free giving or tax reductions that provide a better financial outcome for your estate. Contact Linda Jones at **412-456-6768** or **[linda.jones@unitedwayswpa.org](mailto:linda.jones@unitedwayswpa.org)** for more information.



More great Tocqueville conversation continues online. Connect with the Tocqueville Society LinkedIn group to be a part of it at [linkedin.com/groups/7461160](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/7461160).