



UNITED WAY
of Southwestern
Pennsylvania



2025-2026

**VOLUNTEER
TOOLKIT**
FOR CORPORATE PARTNERS

UNITE YOUR EMPLOYEES AND CUSTOMERS IN ACTS OF SERVICE.



United Way has a 100-year track record of organizing volunteer events that create impact while offering meaningful experiences that engage your employees. United Way volunteer engagement strengthens your team and gives employees hands-on opportunities to change the lives of your customers and neighbors.

United Way volunteers uplift and serve communities across Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette and Westmoreland counties.

First access, greatest impact. We reserve our most robust experiences for our donors and for companies that partner with or run workplace campaigns to benefit United Way. Existing partners have first access to special opportunities. Our Volunteer Engagement team handles all the logistics. You enhance your brand and community connection while fulfilling with your company's values and philanthropic priorities.

MAXIMIZE YOUR ENGAGEMENT

Our partner agencies are reporting unprecedented demand for food, rent and emergency assistance from the community. To rise to these great needs, United Way is directing our volunteer efforts to meeting specific requests from our partner agencies. Because our resources are limited, we will limit corporate-directed volunteer engagement offerings to one per company. This will ensure we have capacity to lead events that directly align with unmet needs.

Why offer volunteer opportunities to your employees?

Employees who volunteer have a 27% higher overall job satisfaction rating than those who do not. People who volunteer through their workplace are twice as likely to recommend their organization to job seekers.*

Ready to partner with United Way to run a workplace campaign?

Contact Adam Baron, director of campaign, at adam.baron@unitedwayswpa.org to learn more and get involved.

To discuss how to best engage your group in meaningful volunteering or with any questions, contact Wendy Koch, senior director of regional engagement, wendy.koch@unitedwayswpa.org for assistance.

*Philanthropy, Purpose and Professional Development:
[Why Workplace Volunteer Programs Matter.](#)

GROUP VOLUNTEER OFFERINGS



Volunteering is a proven way to help build trust and comradery and a culture of giving back.

United Way offers our corporate partners activities that foster connections among employees and demonstrate your company's commitment to the community. Options include hands-on activities, learning opportunities and on-location programs at our partner agency locations

Packing for Impact **\$1,500 minimum investment***

Many partner agencies urgently need specific items. Our Packing for Impact events deliver exactly what's needed. We bring everything to your workplace, handle setup and begin each event with a short activity that provides insight. You'll learn why these items are needed and how United Way is working to address root causes. Packing for Impact events can be booked around your schedule.

These events are best suited for groups of 10 to 50 volunteers and range from 30 minutes to two hours, depending on the number of kits and the size of your group. Fees cover the purchase materials, our staff time and are scaled to the number of kits your team prepares. For existing corporate partners, United Way provides all planning and administration free of charge.

Companies that are not current United Way partners may be charged administrative fees. Availability depends on United Way staff capacity.

Maximizing Impact: No other organization offers the deep community knowledge and the volunteer experiences and infrastructure of United Way. As community needs have grown more urgent, we've shifted our focus to meeting those needs and have scaled back on other activities that are less critical. If you don't see a fan favorite activity from years past, ask us why so that we can connect you to new projects that have even greater impact.

Pricing: \$10-15 per kit + \$100 transportation fee (covers delivery, setup, and distribution to partner agencies)

For questions about kit packing events, please contact us at volunteer@unitedwayswpa.org. A member of our staff will contact you.

Interested in running a workplace campaign or becoming a United Way partner? Contact Adam Baron, director of campaign, at adam.baron@unitedwayswpa.org.

PACKING FOR IMPACT OFFERINGS

First Aid Kits



First aid kits provide local youth, families and seniors with basic first aid items such as Band-Aids, antiseptic, gauze and gloves are distributed through local schools and shelters.

Period Care Kits



Across the country, one-third of adults and almost a quarter of teens struggle to afford period products. These kits provide comfort and dignity and include a variety of menstrual care products such as tampons, pads, hand sanitizer and toiletry bags. Kits are distributed through local schools, shelters and partner agencies.

Hygiene Kits



Help individuals show up with dignity and confidence by providing essential personal care items, such as body wash, deodorant and lotion. These versatile kits are distributed through a wide range of partner agencies, including shelters, schools and agencies serving people experiencing homelessness.

Out-of-School Time Snack Bags



When school ends, hunger doesn't. One in every 10 students in Pennsylvania face food insecurity, and most rely on school meal programs that aren't available during after-school hours. Snack bags provide students with access to nutritious foods while not in school and are distributed to local agencies across the region that support youth and offer after-school programs.

Care Kits for First Generation College Students



College retention studies show that first-generation college students do not receive the same support as their peers from more privileged backgrounds. Through our partnership with local higher education institutions, your team can provide first-generation college students with care packages that include school supplies, comfort items and snacks to fuel study sessions.

Older Adult Care Kits



Support seniors who may be isolated or struggling to afford basic necessities. Senior care kits include first-aid materials, lip balm and tissues, and stimulating activities such as word searches. These kits are distributed through senior service agencies and assisted living facilities.

STEAM Kits



These kits provide a hands-on learning activity for students with a combined emphasis on Science, Technology Engineering, Art and Math (STEAM) to support creative thinking. Kits are distributed to schools and agencies serving children across the region. There are a variety of STEAM kits available, each kit includes materials needed for the activity and a book for the child's home library.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES



Mini-Engagement Activities

Each Packing for Impact event includes one of these 20- to 30-minute activities to engage your employees around the issues facing people and families across our region. The activities simulate conditions related to United Way's investment priorities of meeting basic needs, moving to financial stability and building for success in school and life.

Finding a Way Forward. How hard is it to find the help you need? When you or a loved one is in crisis or needs a temporary helping hand, navigating available resources can feel overwhelming. In this simulation, each participant is assigned a character facing multiple barriers. Using the flyers and materials presented, participants must identify the most relevant resources within a limited time frame. Will they find the right support in time, or get lost in a maze of options?

Outcomes in Action. Outcomes in Action is a matching activity that shows participants the many community programs and issues that United Way works to address. This activity helps participants to understand real-world challenges, potential solutions and how contributions of time and money improve lives.

SNAP Gap. Better understand the reality of food assistance. Participants shop for groceries with only the average daily SNAP benefit - revealing how difficult it is to eat nutritiously on a very limited budget. It's a glimpse into the difficulty too many of our neighbors face getting enough food for their families.

Tough Choices. Walk in someone else's shoes. Participants manage a household budget on low income, making impossible choices between rent, food and medical care -- just like thousands of our neighbors do every day. Participants are faced with income constraints and must allocate their budget, represented by pieces of candy, to each of the expense categories listed on the activity sheet. It's challenging, compelling and eye-opening and a great opportunity to generate understanding and empathy.

A United Way staff member will help you choose the activity and packing event that best matches your group's interests.

UNITED WAY DAYS



Roll up your sleeves for a good cause! We'll match your team with meaningful projects from painting partner agency facilities to sorting donations and packing emergency supplies. Some agency projects have flexible timing, while others have set dates and times. Supporting one of the identified projects to maximize your assistance to the agency.

Past opportunities have included painting and facility maintenance at Glade Run Lutheran Services, packing materials at the Western Pennsylvania Diaper Bank and sorting donations at the Westmoreland Food Bank.

Group size: Up to 15 people (larger groups possible at select locations).

Availability: Based on current partner agency needs.

Project coordination for existing United Way corporate partners is provided at no cost for most projects. Some agency projects may require a financial investment to cover needed materials and supplies. Visit United Way's website for the most up-to-date list of United Way Days projects or contact volunteer@unitedwayswpa.org for more information.

FREE TAX PREP

BE A TAX PREP HERO

Volunteers Needed For Tax Season.

FREE TAX PREP

Sign up at swpafreetaxes.org



Since its inception, our Free Tax Prep Coalition has returned more than \$212 million in tax refunds to low income households, preparing more than 9,000+ tax returns each year for free. The Free Tax Prep Coalition, managed by Just Harvest and United Way, organizes hundreds of volunteers who are trained by the IRS to prepare tax refunds and greet taxpayers. Last year alone, \$13 million in tax refunds were completed without costly preparation fees. Volunteer tax preparers (15 hours training) and greeters

(three hours training) are needed with volunteers committing just three hours per week during tax season. Shifts are available during the day or evening, on weekdays and weekends. Volunteer registration opens in the fall.

To learn more about becoming a Free Tax Prep volunteer, visit swpafreetaxes.org.



Our impact since 2009:

Nearly 3,900 volunteers have prepared 130,000 tax returns,
generating \$212 million in refunds
and saving families \$29 million in preparation fees.



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POVERTY SPIRAL



Overview:

The Poverty Spiral simulation puts participants in the shoes of families working toward financial stability while facing constant setbacks and impossible choices. Created in collaboration with the Mentoring Partnership, the simulation is a board game-style activity that engages participants in real-life scenarios that span a variety of topics. From dilemmas in child care, transportation and employment opportunities, the activity leads participants through tough decisions and unexpected setbacks.

Engage your team in this activity to foster empathy, spark meaningful conversations and deepen their understanding of how their support for United Way helps create opportunities for those in our community who need it most.

The simulation:

- The simulation runs for two hours and requires a minimum of 10 participants.
- In teams of six, participants will be assigned a profile of an individual experiencing financial challenges.
- Participants move their character tokens into the Poverty Spiral or out of it towards financial stability based on the decisions they make.
- After participating in the activity, a United Way facilitator will lead a debrief and presentation on measurements of poverty in our region.

The goal:

- Build empathy and understanding.
- Help your team recognize the complex barriers that keep hardworking families trapped in poverty and inspire more compassionate approaches to community challenges.
- Inspire people to want to give back and make an impact.

**For more information or to schedule a simulation,
please contact volunteer@unitedwayswpa.org.**

COLLECTION DRIVES

Our agency partners urgently need supplies throughout the year. You can host a collection drive to provide essential items that make life easier for our neighbors. United Way makes it simple by giving you suggested items to collect and communication tools to support your drive.

To learn more or schedule a collection drive with your team or family, please visit United Way's website or contact volunteer@unitedwayswpa.org.



Classroom Essentials Drive

Help provide supplies for elementary school classrooms and after-school programs!

When classrooms are fully equipped with the right materials, students can focus on learning more effectively. Help support teachers and students by collecting unused art supplies and cleaning products. Keeping student spaces clean and fully equipped is a great way to improve learning outcomes.

What We Need:

- Class packs of markers.
- Paint (tempera, watercolor, acrylic).
- Construction paper.
- Paint brushes.
- Hand sanitizer.
- Cleaning wipes.
- Whiteboard markers.
- Box of tissues.

Why It Matters:

Teachers often spend their own money on classroom supplies. Your donations ensure students have the materials they need to learn and stay healthy, while supporting educators who are already stretched thin.

Diaper Drive

Help alleviate diaper needs in our community! Diapers and wipes can cost up to \$100 per month per child. The cost for older adults can be even higher. When families have access to diapers and wipes for infants and older adults, their lives improve dramatically because they can stress less about the expense and more on school, work and the well-being of their loved ones. Older adults who have access to incontinence products have increased confidence and are more likely to engage socially than to isolate.

What We Need:

- Infant diapers of all sizes, especially sizes 4, 5 and 6.
- Adult diapers in all sizes.
- Incontinence pads.
- Wipes.

Why It Matters:

Without enough diapers, parents can't leave children at daycare -- meaning missed work, lost wages, and increased stress for families already struggling financially. Older adults need incontinence supplies so they have the confidence to leave their homes and interact with friends, family and health care providers.

Cleaning Supply Drive

Give families a fresh start by donating essential cleaning supplies!

Everyone deserves to live in a clean and healthy environment. Accessing household cleaning supplies can be a barrier for families living paycheck to paycheck. Collecting household essentials like paper towels or dish soap is a great way to support our neighbors in need.

What We Need:

- Paper towels.
- Floor cleaner.
- Laundry detergent.
- Dish soap.
- Sponges.
- Dishwasher detergent.
- Cleaning wipes.
- Multi-purpose cleaner.
- Trash bags.

Why It Matters:

A clean home isn't a luxury -- it's essential for health and dignity. When families can't afford cleaning supplies, they face health risks, property damage and the stress of living in unsafe conditions. Your donations help families maintain healthy homes while they work toward financial stability.

Winter Gear Collection Drive

Help keep our neighbors safe and warm this winter!

Help collect winter gear for children and adults in our community. Pennsylvania winters can be brutal, so help ensure that our neighbors stay safe this season by collecting new hats, gloves and other items.

What We Need:

- Scarves.
- Gloves.
- Mittens.
- Warm Socks.
- Hats.
- Hand warmers.

Why It Matters:

Winter weather poses serious health risks, especially for children getting to school and older adults. With housing insecurity on the rise, more people than ever, including children are facing homelessness. Having proper winter gear isn't just about comfort. It's about safety. Your donations ensure people of all ages can stay warm and healthy during Pennsylvania's harsh winter months.

Active Play Essentials Drive

Make sure all children have access to toys and equipment that encourage active play!

Start building a collection of versatile active play equipment like balls, jump ropes, cones and hula hoops to engage children across different age groups and skill levels. These affordable, durable items form the foundation for countless games and activities that will keep kids moving and engaged during out-of-school time.

What We Need:

- Kickballs.
- Jump ropes.
- Soccer balls.
- Cones.
- Hula Hoops.
- Basketballs.

Why It Matters:

Active play builds healthy habits and social skills. Many after-school programs lack basic equipment like balls and jump ropes, limiting children's opportunities for physical activity. Your donations give kids the tools they need to stay active, make friends and develop confidence through play.

DIY VOLUNTEER IDEAS

VOLUNTEERING DOESN'T HAVE TO BE COMPLICATED TO MAKE A BIG IMPACT.

You can volunteer in a way that's simple, easy, and quick while still making a big impact in your own community. Here are 20 of our favorite ideas to get you started making a difference today.

- 1. Grocery shop for a cause.** Pick up some non-perishable items on your next run to the store and donate them to your local food bank. Check their website for advice on what to get.
- 2. Shovel snow for an older adult.** In the summer and fall, offer to cut grass or rake leaves. Ask them first and then head over to their yard after you finish yours.
- 3. Help a younger student with their homework.** This is a great way to set a positive example and is appreciated by teachers and parents.
- 4. Make hygiene kits for the homeless.** Collect soaps, shampoos, toothpaste tubes, and other personal hygiene supplies and assemble them into kits. Once complete, donate them to a homeless shelter in your community. Some shelters even keep donation wish lists on their websites.
- 5. Ask your local library if they're in need of volunteers.** They're often looking for people to help with reshelving books, reading to kids, or other activities.
- 6. Instead of birthday gifts ask friends and family to donate to one of your favorite charities.** Use your birthday as an opportunity to benefit others and talk about issues you're passionate about.
- 7. Rock the vote!** Volunteer at your local polling station and help register people to vote. If you have kids take them with you and explain to them how elections work.
- 8. Visit a nursing home with your family or friends.** Better yet, organize a weekly or monthly board game night with residents in the facility.
- 9. Stuff new, warm socks with water bottles and granola bars** and leave them in public places (parks, benches, bus stops) or keep them with you to give them directly to people experiencing homelessness.
- 10. Organize a free library or a free food pantry for your street.** Neighbors can give and take food if they need to, and everyone can share books.
- 11. Think fresh!** In the summer, donate extra produce from your garden to your local food bank.
- 12. Spread caring words.** Write greeting or get-well cards (or Valentines!) for patients in hospitals or nursing homes.
- 13. Help neighbors in need paint or repair their homes.** No need to travel far to volunteer, often there is a lot to do in your own neighborhood.
- 14. Volunteer for your local park.** Parks organizations often need volunteers to spruce-up spaces in the spring and prep for the summer.
- 15. Host a bake sale or lemonade stand and donate the profits.** Add hot chocolate to your stand for a fall or winter treat.
- 16. Host a neighborhood clothing swap and donate the extra clothes.** Gain some new styles and give clothes to those in need at the same time.
- 17. Collect unused make-up, perfume, and other cosmetics for domestic violence shelters.** Often when leaving bad situations people can't take everything they need, so donating these items can be a big help. Check the shelter's website for donation ideas.
- 18. Don't be afraid to get your hands dirty!** Put on gloves and pick up litter at your local park. Boost community morale and keep kids and pets safe.
- 19. Do errands, cook for, or otherwise help someone dealing with an illness.** Sometimes people who are sick feel lonely, so keeping them company is a very kind thing to do.
- 20. Donate blood or volunteer at a blood drive.** Even just one donation can save a life. So, roll up your sleeves and ask your school or local community center about organizing a blood drive.

