

OUR IMPACT

United Way of the Battle Creek
and Kalamazoo Region
changethestory.org



If you don't know where you're going, the road you take doesn't matter.

That's an appealing formula to those with wanderlust; it's not wise counsel for transforming a community.

Two years ago, after careful study and community-wide dialogue, United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region chose a clear road toward the future. Instead of scattering gifts and volunteer hours across many different issues, we asked a fundamental question: Where can we invest resources, people and expertise to actually solve our region's biggest challenges?

The result was a new vision, a collective mission and a set of clear-cut, 10-15-year strategic goals focused on the roots.

Our work goes beyond treating symptoms. We're creating cures. We're funding programs that deliver lasting results. We're gathering every resource and voice to solve problems. We're coming alongside our partners to strengthen their skills so they can do their work better.

That's how supporting your community through United Way adds immense value. You can count on us to do more—helping people today and equipping them to succeed for the future.

Showing progress is the reason for this report, the first comprehensive study of how our partnerships and investments are delivering results. The data covers 132 funded programs studied during 2017—an analysis we'll continue on an ongoing basis.

We now have the capability to measure and report the cumulative impact of all United Way investments and engagement strategies. Now we—and everyone who supports United Way—will see progress and know where changes or new strategies can accelerate our shared success.

The following pages spotlight some of the data and stories we've collected. With this in hand, I invite you to be part of our strategic work—work that is transforming lives in lasting ways.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Sargent'.

Chris Sargent

*President & CEO, United Way of the Battle Creek
and Kalamazoo Region*

Partnership & engagement 2017

3
regional
engagement
events



United Way Diaper Drive:

55,134
donated diapers
47
agency partners
24
company sponsors



United Way Children's Book Drive:

12,000
books
26
schools & agency partners
24
company sponsors



United Against Hunger:

50,000
prepared meals distributed
to local food pantries

5,192
volunteers

3

Impact Tours

5

Pop Up Giving
events

2

Pop Up Volunteering
events

132
funded
programs

72

partner agencies

\$7,269,673
invested

300+ hours

of partner training,
technical assistance & support

84
Day of Caring
service projects,
1,600 volunteers

Our focus for change:

EDUCATION GOAL

IMPROVE THE REGIONAL GRADUATION RATE TO 83% BY 2030 AND REDUCE RACIAL AND ECONOMIC DISPARITIES IN GRADUATION RATES.

FOCUS Early childhood success and Kindergarten readiness | Early grade reading achievement | Social and emotional wellness

ISSUE Research shows early grade reading mastery, especially third-grade reading proficiency, is one of the best predictors of a child's future school success—academic achievement, high school graduation, post-high learning, job retention and financial independence. Without it, students will struggle to learn other subjects and are four times more likely to drop out.

ACTION United Way's Early Grade Reading Achievement Project targets students in preschool through third grade with in-class coaching for teachers, classroom libraries, books to prevent summer learning loss, family events, and volunteer adult reading mentors to encourage kids to read. Also, United Way and local companies organized a region-wide book drive, collecting more than 12,000 books.

HEALTH GOAL

IMPROVE INFANT MORTALITY RATES IN FAMILIES OF COLOR AND LOW-INCOME FAMILIES TO 6.0 BY 2025.

FOCUS Physical, mental and behavioral health for families and infants | Awareness, education and engagement

ISSUE Regionally, infant mortality rates for families of color and low-income families are high and continue to climb. Infant mortality rates (the number of infant deaths per every 1,000 live births) measure how well a community takes care of its youngest members and all residents.

ACTION United Way supports programs that bring care into the homes of vulnerable families. We work with Cradle Kalamazoo and the Regional Health Alliance. We helped form the Southwest Michigan Perinatal Quality Improvement Collaborative. We also held a community-wide diaper drive to raise awareness of infant mortality, and we invested in substance abuse and mental health treatment to improve the safety and stability of infants' homes.

INCOME GOAL

TRANSITION 8,500 HOUSEHOLDS TO ECONOMIC STABILITY BY 2025.

FOCUS Stable and affordable housing | Programs that help low-income and working families earn more income

ISSUE Employment is up since the Great Recession, but mostly in the low-salary sector. The result is a large population of ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed)—people who work but don't earn enough to afford basic necessities or manage a major crisis. Local unemployment for African Americans and multi-racial residents is disturbingly high: 15.65 percent, compared to 6.75 percent for whites.

ACTION United Way partnerships and programs help working individuals earn credentials (skill building, advanced education, etc.) and compete for jobs and wage growth. This strengthens workforces and increases the number of workers. We also help remove barriers to employment, educate business owners and policymakers on better processes, and equip vulnerable residents to gain financial stability.

BASIC NEEDS GOAL

ENSURE A SAFETY NET OF BASIC SERVICES FOR PEOPLE IN CRISIS.

FOCUS Food and shelter and other basic necessities

ISSUE Many immediate needs keep our most vulnerable residents—people with few or no financial resources—from rebuilding their lives. In 2017, 2-1-1 received 4,758 calls for food, 4,337 calls for utility assistance, and 576 calls for emergency shelter. More than 6,000 people are homeless in a given year. Thousands lack transportation, child care, treatment for mental health problems, and state ID to obtain basic services or get a job.

ACTION United Way connects the support organizations and initiatives that address basic needs. We've helped lead efforts to get vital records for the homeless. We've partnered with food banks to feed thousands of people. We've formed volunteer efforts to address chronic hunger. We've strived to make sure there is a safety net in place for those in need.



HEALTH

85%

of African American mothers gave birth to an infant of healthy weight.

576

mothers received home visiting care for their children.

260

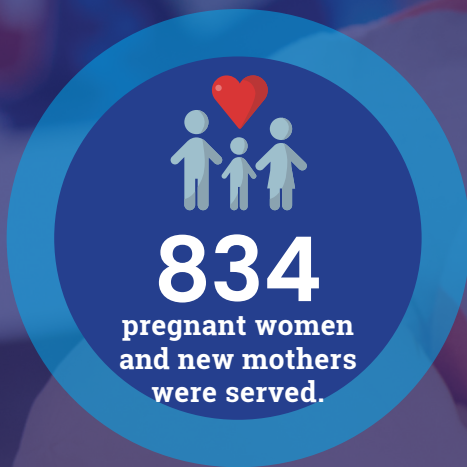
professionals and community members received health equity training to impact infant mortality.

45%

of children served showed improvement after receiving mental health supports.

178

caretakers received mental, social and emotional support.



CURRENT STATUS
INFANT MORTALITY RATE

6.75 per 1,000 live births in our region.

BY RACE

	BLACKS	WHITES
Kalamazoo County	11	3.2
Battle Creek Area	10.2	4.6



EDUCATION

80%

of instructors who received in-class literacy coaching had higher reading proficiency among their students.

89%

of students in three elementary schools who were paired with volunteer reading mentors were proficient readers.

CHALLENGE

Just 30% of third-graders in all districts in the region can read proficiently. A stronger focus is needed to strengthen early grade reading skills.



CURRENT STATUS
GRADUATION RATES

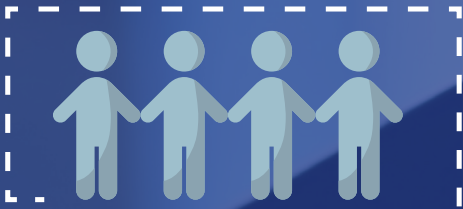
80.4% of students in our region graduated high school.

BY COMMUNITY

Battle Creek Area	86.8%
Kalamazoo County	78.3%



INCOME



381

individuals participated in United Way funded workforce development-skill training programs.

300

of those individuals completed programs that helped them earn a workforce credential.

101

of those individuals used their earned credentials to compete for higher-paying jobs.

61%

of multi-racial working individuals who earned credentials gained higher wages and earned income.



CURRENT STATUS

A.L.I.C.E. (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed)

38% of households earn less than the basic cost of living.



BASIC NEEDS

9,933

people received transportation assistance (bus tokens, para-transit vouchers, gas cards).

434

people received ID documents for services and employment.

16,228

hours of crisis mental health support.

703,449

meals served to 70,136 people.

2,439

households received emergency utility assistance.

115

families received high-quality drop-in child care services.



2,947,519

pounds of food distributed through food pantries.

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These numbers show examples of progress directly related to United Way investments in 132 regional programs in 2017. For more on these programs, visit changethestory.org.

CHANGE THE STORY

Changing lives in lasting, meaningful ways.



COMING TOGETHER TO FIGHT HUNGER

Thousands of food-insecure families can count on a nutritious meal because hundreds of volunteers, corporate partners and sponsors came together to fight hunger.

Volunteers packaged a total of 50,000 meal kits in under four hours during two United Against Hunger events in Battle Creek and Kalamazoo. United Way BCKR organized the effort in partnership with the Outreach Program and the Food Bank of South Central Michigan. The kits, which included six servings of a nutritious tomato basil pasta, were distributed by the Food Bank to community agencies throughout the region.

More than 57,000 people in Calhoun and Kalamazoo counties alone have inconsistent access to safe, nutritional food. That includes more than 14,000 children.

“To have everybody come together like this with United Way, for them to be focusing on hunger and thinking about that basic need — we can’t forget the importance of that itself.”



GAINING MORE THAN JOB TRAINING

Alejandro is well-spoken and talkative, but at times he simply doesn’t have the words to describe how much his life has changed. Five years ago, he was in a jail cell, serving time for a drug offense. Today, he’s flourishing with a new job, positive influences in his life, and the capacity to care for his three-year-old daughter and support his younger brother.

He had a profound spiritual experience while in prison. When he was released, he heard about Momentum, a program funded in part by United Way. The six-week course blends life skills and employment skills to help graduates find jobs.

Alejandro gained much more than job skills through Momentum. He received character development, leadership, and hard and soft skills training. He also found family.

With the skills he learned in Momentum and the subsequent warehouse academy, Alejandro secured a job at Getman Corporation. Within two months, he earned a bump in pay and formed relationships with his new co-workers. “Everything I learned in Momentum, I’ve put into action,” he said.

CHANGE THE STORY

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PARTNERSHIPS HELP NEW MOMS

Tawana never expected to be a mother. Told they could never have children, she and her husband were stunned to discover that she was two months pregnant.

"I cried the whole seven months," she said, laughing as nine-month-old Tatiana squirmed on her lap. "But I wouldn't trade her for anything in the world. She's my joy."

Tawana and Tatiana were among dozens of families that attended an annual celebration for the Nurse Family Partnership, a United Way funded program that walks first-time mothers through pregnancy and the first two years of a baby's life.

Program participants receive visits from their assigned nurse anywhere from once a week to twice a month, depending on the stage of pregnancy or age of the child.

"The time a woman spends in the NFP program gives the mom the skills and confidence that she needs to provide a stable life for her family," NFP manager Michelle Datema said.

For Tawana, whose extended family lives in Texas and whose husband is often on the road for work, her nurse, Kelly, has been a lifeline.

"She knew the answers to the questions I didn't know," Tawana said. "Becoming a first-time mom was something new and different – very different, and very challenging. Especially when you don't have family.

"I love it, and I thank them a lot," Tawana said. "If it wasn't for them, I probably wouldn't have made it this far with this baby girl."



CONNECTING WITH EARLY READERS

After finishing as a guest reader at New Genesis Learning Center in Kalamazoo, Amie Meints was nearly bowled over by a crowd of hug-seeking preschoolers. It was all the confirmation needed to show the impact that she and co-worker Jason McFadden made that day.

The two were among 10 Humphrey Products employees who read and delivered books to pre-K classrooms at 30 child-care centers in two days.

The kids were excited to have guest readers. "It opens our kids up, gives them more diversity in the classroom with people from different walks of life coming in to share," said Tamie Moran of New Genesis.

All of the centers work with KC Ready 4s, a nonprofit organization that partnered with Humphrey and the Kalamazoo Public Library to organize the effort. KPL donated the books and also provided training on how to read to children.

KC Ready 4s works to ensure early childhood success, a critical factor in a child's ability to learn, graduate and thrive. Kindergarten readiness is one of three priorities set by United Way in its education strategy.



lots of ways to get involved

VOLUNTEERISM Day of Caring projects are available for groups large and small. Learn about the organizations working with people in need and make a difference by volunteering.

IMPACT EVENTS Quarterly, region-wide events that engage people in our impact areas of Education, Income, Health, and Basic Needs.

POP UP GIVING Local agencies pitch their programs to an audience that decides who gets funding from a pot of money donated by attendees and corporate sponsors.

POP UP VOLUNTEERING United Way comes to your location to facilitate small groups doing a volunteer project right in your workplace.

ASPIRING LEADERS UNITED A network of young professionals, who gather to learn about community needs, volunteer their time and discover their unique passion for changing lives.

IMPACT TOURS Free, brief, multi-site visits to United Way partners to learn about our impact work and the progress happening in our region. Private tours are also available.

DONATE Financial gifts are the fuel that drives the engine of change. Give a little or a lot—every dollar makes an impact and changes the story in meaningful, measurable ways.

PLANNED GIVING Leave a legacy that transforms lives in powerful ways for years to come. Talk to us about how you can include United Way in your will or living trust.

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS Show how your business is investing in improving lives across our regional community. Sponsor an event, a strategic program or even an entire goal area.

ENGAGE IN SOCIAL MEDIA Like us on Facebook, subscribe to our YouTube channel, follow on Twitter and Instagram and connect with us on LinkedIn. All are great ways to advocate.

GET INFORMED Learn about our impact work from our website. Read our blogs and the stories of real people whose lives are being changed. Subscribe to our monthly e-newsletter.

THESE SPONSORS MADE THIS REPORT POSSIBLE. THANK YOU!

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Contact us at getinvolved@uwbckr.org

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