

United
Way



United Way of
Southwest Michigan

JULY 1

JUNE 30

2022 - 2023

IMPACT REPORT

FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO


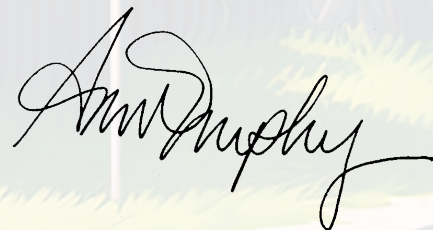
Neighbor is not a geographic term. It is a moral concept. It means our collective responsibility for the preservation of man's dignity and integrity.

These words were shared by Rabbi Joachim Prinz at the March on Washington in August 1963. I believe that his message is just as urgent for society today as it was 60 years ago. I also believe that people in southwest Michigan are fulfilling his call. I believe this because I see it every day. I see it through Mike, who volunteers to be an advocate for children in foster care. I see it through Nick, who mentors teenagers who need strong, positive role models. And I see it through Maria, who helps convene our Spanish-speaking community so that their voices can be heard.

They are neighbors, all of them. And there are more just like them—dozens more, hundreds more, tens of thousands more—all throughout southwest Michigan. Because no matter your ZIP code, we are a community of neighbors—neighbors who take their collective responsibility for each other to heart.

The work of United Way of Southwest Michigan is built on this idea of collective responsibility. We are a vital source of financial support to almost 50 nonprofit organizations, and we provide advocacy and volunteer support to dozens of others. Through our work and that of our incredible Impact Partners, two out of every five people in southwest Michigan are directly impacted by United Way investments, meaning that the average donor is improving life for 26 neighbors.


But make no mistake—we can't claim credit for this on our own. No, this kind of impact on this kind of scale only comes from existing within a community that recognizes our deep need to have connections with each other, that understands that none of us do this life alone, and that acknowledges that our greatest calling is to reach out a hand to lift up those who need our support. None of us have all of the answers all by ourselves. But collectively, we just might.



143,554
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS
IMPACTED



74 PROGRAMS & PROJECTS
FUNDED AT 49 ORGANIZATIONS



\$2,047,011
LEVERAGED DOLLARS

COMMUNITY CAPACITY

2-1-1

Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren County residents made 17,280 calls to 2-1-1.

The highest needs were (in no particular order):

- Food
- Housing
- Utilities
- Benton Harbor water situation

Advocacy

- 168 total advocates as of 6/30/23
- 58 new advocates
- 29 advocates who took action
- 181 total legislator connections
- 3 advocacy campaigns (EITC, MI Reconnect, CTE)
- 1 Action Center (Voter Engagement)

Volunteer United

of volunteers who volunteered for a United Way event:

- 1,533 volunteers
- 8,022 volunteer hours
- \$255,087 worth of value to community

of volunteers who have volunteered for any need in the Volunteer United online portal:

- 1,738 unique volunteers had 2,256 responses to 224 different needs.

of volunteers in the Volunteer United online portal:

- 6,998 volunteers

of corporate engagement projects:

- 21

of corporate partners working with Volunteer United:

- 24

of agencies listed in the Volunteer United online portal:

- 96

Turning Outward

Turning Outward is a fundamental orientation and practice of making the community the reference point for growing civic faith and creating change, where one keeps people and the community always in their line of sight. It's not new work, it's how we do our current work.

Between August 2022 and February 2023, United Way of Southwest Michigan spoke to 135 community members in community conversations and surveyed 169 additional community members to find the common aspirations and challenges of our neighbors in Southwest Michigan.

In addition, 110 individuals attended United Way of Southwest Michigan's Hope & Healing event and 17 leaders have been trained in Turning Outward through the Harwood Institute Labs.

BASIC NEEDS:

These two issues for **BASIC NEEDS** are community conditions that United Way of Southwest Michigan has chosen to address, based on expert and public knowledge.

ISSUE: FOOD SECURITY #IMPACTED 58,655

THE NEED:

- 13.3% of individuals are food insecure
- 16.9% of children under the age of 18 are food insecure

CHANGE LIVES - OUTPUTS:

- 1,037,291 meals were provided

ORGANIZATIONS/PROGRAMS:

FEEDING AMERICA WEST MICHIGAN FOOD BANK – MOBILE PANTRY PROGRAM
SENIOR NUTRITION SERVICES, REGION IV – MEALS ON WHEELS
SENIOR NUTRITION SERVICES, REGION IV – PRODUCE TO YOUR DOOR
UNITED WAY OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN – OPERATION THANKSGIVING

ISSUE: SAFE ENVIRONMENT #IMPACTED 36,356

THE NEED:

- More than 1,400 children experience homelessness OR don't know where they're going to sleep at night

CHANGE LIVES - OUTPUTS:

- 1,893 bills were paid for emergency financial assistance, valued at \$608,321
- 6,299 people were provided emergency financial assistance
- 912 people were provided shelter
- 7,470 people were provided with case management

ORGANIZATIONS/PROGRAMS:

AMERICAN RED CROSS – DISASTER SERVICE
DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL ABUSE SERVICES – HILLMANN HOUSE SHELTER
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COALITION – VICTIM ADVOCACY PROGRAM
EMERGENCY SHELTER SERVICES – EMERGENCY SHELTER PROGRAM
LEGAL AID OF WESTERN MICHIGAN – LEGAL AID FOR A SAFE ENVIRONMENT
NEIGHBOR BY NEIGHBOR – STOP THE SLIDE
SENIOR SERVICES OF VAN BUREN COUNTY – CARE COORDINATION FOR SENIORS
SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY – EMERGENCY UTILITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
THE AVENUE FAMILY NETWORK – CORA LAMPING CENTER FOR SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE
THE SALVATION ARMY, BENTON HARBOR – EMERGENCY SOCIAL SERVICES
THE SALVATION ARMY, BENTON HARBOR – MEN'S HOMELESS SHELTER
THE SALVATION ARMY, NILES – EMERGENCY SOCIAL SERVICES
UNITED CHRISTIAN SERVICES – DIRECT CLIENT EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE
UNITED WAY OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN – HOLIDAY ASSISTANCE
WE CARE COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER – ADVOCACY/CASE WORK FOR SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

BASIC NEEDS

EDUCATION

These two issues for **EDUCATION** are community conditions that United Way of Southwest Michigan has chosen to address, based on expert and public knowledge.

ISSUE: EARLY EDUCATION & LITERACY #IMPACTED 13,640

THE NEED:

- 59.7% of 3rd graders are not meeting reading proficiency

CHANGE LIVES - OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES:

- 212 children participated in home visiting programs
- 1,851 children participated in out-of-school/in-school programming and/or supports
- 61 children participated in quality childcare and/or preschool programs
- 11,082 children had access to books
- 480 parents and/or caregivers received parenting education
- 73.4% of children served increased their reading level
- 93.1% of children served showed progress toward or achieved developmental milestones
- 94.3% of parents and/or caregivers served increased their knowledge of their children's development

ORGANIZATIONS/PROGRAMS:

BERRIEN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT – NURSE FAMILY PARTNERSHIP
BERRIEN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT – TRIPLE P (POSITIVE PARENTING PROGRAM)
BERRIEN RESA – PARENTS AS TEACHERS
BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF GREATER SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN – A TUTORING CORPS FOR GREAT FUTURES
CAMP FIRE RIVER BEND – CAMP FIRE AFTER SCHOOL
GREAT START COLLABORATIVE OF BERRIEN COUNTY – SUMMER LITERACY PROGRAM
HERITAGE SOUTHWEST INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT – PARENTS AS TEACHERS
LOGAN COMMUNITY RESOURCES – FAMILY SUPPORT FOR AUTISM THERAPY
REGION IV AREA AGENCY ON AGING – FOSTER GRANDPARENT PROGRAM
THE SALVATION ARMY, NILES – FEEDING HIS SHEEP
UNITED WAY OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN – DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY
UNITED WAY OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN – SCHOOL SUPPLY SPECTACULAR
YMCA OF GREATER MICHIANA – SUMMER MY WAY

ISSUE: POST-SECONDARY SUCCESS #IMPACTED 1,217

THE NEED:

- The high school graduation rate is 80.6%
- 25.4% of the population has an associate degree or higher

CHANGE LIVES - OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES:

- 139 students participated in career & technical education
- 204 students participated in mentoring/tutoring programs
- 530 students served overcame obstacles
- 75.3% of students served were working toward post-secondary education or credentials
- 93.7% of students served developed soft skills
- 18.9% of students served gained post-secondary education or credentials
- 100% of students served graduated high school on time

ORGANIZATIONS/PROGRAMS:

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS SOUTHERN LAKE MICHIGAN REGION – THE LOWER WEST MICHIGAN YOUTH MENTORING PROGRAM
KINEXUS GROUP – YOUTHBUILD
LAKE MICHIGAN COLLEGE – START TO FINISH
SOUTHWESTERN MICHIGAN COLLEGE – MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING FOR SUCCESS
UNITED WAY OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN – SCHOOL SUPPLY SPECTACULAR
YOUTH SOLUTIONS – JOBS FOR MICHIGAN'S GRADUATES & YOUTH SOLUTIONS DIGITAL

Benton Harbor High School football defensive back Davionte "DT" Tasker just graduated and is on his way in the fall to Ferris State University in Big Rapids. DT has been awarded numerous scholarships for his community service and involvement, and will be playing on the Ferris State football team, which won the NCAA Division II National Championship the last two years in a row.



DAVIONTE TASKER, 18, OF BENTON HARBOR



NICK BLUE, DT'S MENTOR

BECAUSE OF YOU...

Going to a new school in a new town can be a difficult transition, and DT has done it before—but this time, with the help of **United Way impact partner 400 B.L.A.C.K Mentoring Program**, he has the skills to successfully step up to the challenge. When DT moved to Benton Harbor from Three Rivers during middle school, he struggled finding himself socially and academically. DT was failing most of his classes his freshman year and had a hard time surrounding himself with positive peers. Since joining the 400 B.L.A.C.K Mentoring Program, his mentor, Nick Blue—founder of the program and athletic administrator at Benton Harbor High School—helped DT with tutoring, post-graduation planning, and healthy decision-making. Nick helped DT navigate the recruiting process for football, as well as scholarships, applications, and applying for financial aid.



CONGRATULATIONS, DT!

Benton Harbor Community Development Corporation's 400 B.L.A.C.K. ("Building Leaders and Cultivating Kinship") Mentoring Program works with Black youth ages 10-17. Nick Blue started the 400 B.L.A.C.K Mentoring Program with two others in 2020, after hosting a community meeting with the men of Benton Harbor to respond to violence in the city. The program focuses on mental health, education, and community support. Nick graduated from Benton Harbor High School in 2007. After college, he worked with youth in residential treatment facilities and juvenile detention in Arkansas and Northern Michigan and returned to Benton Harbor in 2017 to serve his hometown community.

How will you help your neighbor?



United Way of Southwest Michigan



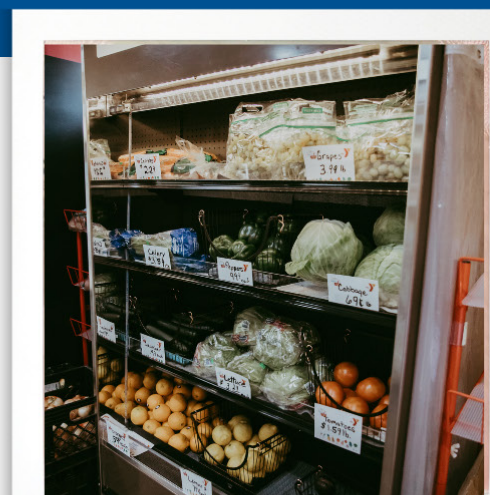
MELISSA, 43, Watervliet

BECAUSE OF YOU...

B&B Grocery Outlet—a **Healthy Corner Store partner of United Way through Be Healthy Berrien** and YMCA of Greater Michiana—began selling fresh produce in 2019. This Healthy Corner Store is a staple for access-burdened community members, such as Melissa. The owners, Beth and Ben, see their patrons as people, not just customers. They are always willing to help when able, and they see the value of providing fresh produce year-round.



Melissa's journey became more challenging when she lost her husband in 2019 and became a single parent. Now, she and her son are without transportation, and they depend on monthly benefits to help make ends meet. Often, there are times when she is unable to afford healthy food items and fresh produce. During the most unstable points in her life, the store owners of B&B Grocery Outlet have provided a sense of security for Melissa's family.



The Be Healthy Berrien Healthy Corner Store initiative improves food access and helps build healthier communities. Be Healthy Berrien is a collective impact effort of United Way of Southwest Michigan that works in cooperation with communities and corner store owners to deliver a comprehensive approach that combines small-business support, nutrition education, wraparound services, and greater availability of affordable, nutritious foods.

How will you help your neighbor?



United Way of Southwest Michigan



GREG KOMULA, 36, OF BRIDGMAN

Greg has had many health challenges in his 36 years of life and lives with his mother, Dorothy. Greg has cerebral palsy and had a bone marrow transplant for acute leukemia four years ago, which made him cough frequently and feel very weak. Because of his many health issues, including graft versus host disease from the transplant, Greg is prone to infections, his wounds heal slowly, and he requires frequent medical care.



DOROTHY KOMULA, GREG'S MOTHER

provide support for Greg and his mother. Connie has also been able to provide items from the Berrien County Cancer Service resource closet such as dressings, bed pads, and essential nutritional supplements. With frequent trips to Grand Rapids because of complications, Berrien County Cancer Service has provided gas cards to help with the costs.

BECAUSE OF YOU...

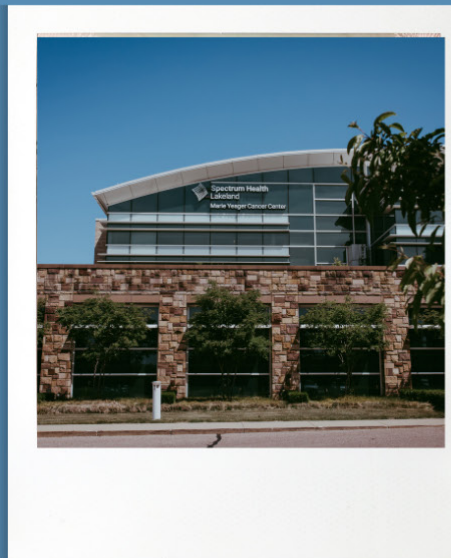
Connie, a nurse with **Berrien County Cancer Service, a United Way impact partner**, became acquainted with Greg shortly after his transplant. Greg recovered after being hospitalized and Connie has provided home visits since. The physician managing Greg's care is in Grand Rapids, so having Connie help him in the home is much appreciated by all. One of Greg's primary skilled nursing needs is having his blood drawn through a highly specialized central line. Connie was able to be trained in management and care of this line, making Greg's trips to Grand Rapids less frequent. Connie is there to keep a close eye on his many needs and

Berrien County Cancer Service has been caring for Southwest Michigan's cancer patients being treated by any oncologist since 1948. It is a unique skilled oncology nursing service that provides compassionate care for cancer patients and those with related illnesses in the comfort of their own home. It is able to do this at no cost because of the generosity of our community. In addition to nursing care services, it has an extensive loan closet of medical equipment and supplies offered at no cost including nutritional supplements, wound management supplies, and incontinence products. It hosts an art program for children and families impacted by cancer to provide emotional support.



How will you help your neighbor?

United Way of Southwest Michigan



SAMANTHA CAIN, 23, OF DOWAGIAC

BECAUSE OF YOU...

During a home visit from Melody Long, an educator with the "Parents as Teachers" program, offered by the Cass County Heritage Southwest Intermediate School District, Melody suspected Samantha's daughter might have torticollis, a condition in which the neck muscles contract, causing the head to twist and tilt to one side.

Melody encouraged Samantha to fill out a referral to the Cass County "Early On" program, which offers early-intervention services to qualified young children with special needs and their families. After an evaluation with "Early On," the baby began weekly physical therapy visits to help with the torticollis.

*"Parents as Teachers" is an internationally recognized program that seeks to empower the families of young children prenatal to age three in their home environment and in community playgroups. This program is one of the free early childhood services offered to families in the community by the Cass County Heritage Southwest Intermediate School District. **The district's "Parents as Teachers" program is an impact partner of United Way of Southwest Michigan.***



SCARLETT, BORN IN DECEMBER 2022

As part of the program, specially trained educators travel to family homes to support parents in their role in their children's development. An individualized program is designed for different parenting styles with screenings, resources, and referral networks as part of the plan. Everyday activities in the home are used that help children learn and grow. When parents aren't certain of the next step as a parent, the program helps parents sort out the best way to keep families and children strong.

Families who participate in "Parents as Teachers" have children who are healthier and are more ready for learning later on, leading to more positive outcomes in life.



How will you help your neighbor?

United Way of Southwest Michigan

HEALTH: These two issues for **HEALTH** are community conditions that United Way Southwest of Michigan has chosen to address, based on expert and public knowledge.

ISSUE: HEALTHY BODIES #IMPACTED 18,251

THE NEED:

- 15% of individuals struggle with poor health
- 70.5% of adults are overweight or obese

CHANGE LIVES - OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES:

- 13,397 people participated in health education programs
- 2,891 people participated in physical activity programs
- 11,033 people had access to health services
- 84.4% of people served adopted healthy behaviors
- 86.8% of people served increased their knowledge of healthy behaviors

BUILD STRONGER COMMUNITIES - INDICATORS:

- 167 organizations
- 147 people trained
- 188 policies or practices were created, changed, or promoted
- There were 58 different ways that additional capacity was created
- 2 pieces of equipment were purchased

ORGANIZATIONS/PROGRAMS:

BE HEALTHY BERRIEN – IMPROVE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HEALTHY FOODS
BERRIEN COUNTY CANCER SERVICES, INC. – IN-HOME SKILLED NURSING AND SUPPORTIVE RESOURCES
BERRIEN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT – RAISING UP HEALTHY BABIES TASKFORCE
BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF GREATER SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN – TRIPLE PLAY PROGRAM
CARES OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN – PREVENTION AND CARE PROGRAM
CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN – PREVENTION EDUCATION & OUTREACH
DISABILITY NETWORK OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN – SPIRIT CLUB
GIRLS ON THE RUN SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN
OUTCENTER OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN – LGBTQ+ COMPETENT HEALTHCARE AND PATIENT SAFETY
REGION IV AREA AGENCY ON AGING – ENHANCED CARE
UNITED WAY OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN – RAKE A DIFFERENCE
VAN BUREN/CASS DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT – EAT WELL, BE WELL
YMCA OF GREATER MICHIANA – HEALTHY U

ISSUE: HEALTHY MINDS #IMPACTED 11,336

THE NEED:

- 16.4% of individuals struggle with poor mental health

CHANGE LIVES - OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES:

- 10,416 people participated in counseling and support
- 1,362 people participated in rehabilitation and recovery programs
- 9,197 people served built their resilience
- 207 people received respite and/or companionship
- 74.3% of people served avoided or reduced risky behaviors
- 91.1% of people served increased their mental and/or emotional health

ORGANIZATIONS/PROGRAMS:

BENTON HARBOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION – 400 B.L.A.C.K. MENTORING PROGRAM
CENTERED ON WELLNESS – MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN
COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN
LAKE MICHIGAN COLLEGE – COUNSELING SERVICES
MICHIANA FAMILY CENTER – FOSTER PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS
REGION IV AREA AGENCY ON AGING – SENIOR COMPANION PROGRAM
SAFE HARBOR CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER – CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER FOR
VAN BUREN COUNTY
THE AVENUE FAMILY NETWORK – ADULT DAY SERVICES
VAN BUREN COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH – HOPE CENTER CLUBHOUSE
WELL OF GRACE MINISTRIES – CLUB H2O
WOODLANDS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NETWORK – ADDICTION RECOVERY PROGRAM

FINANCIAL STABILITY:

These two issues for **FINANCIAL STABILITY** are community conditions that United Way Southwest of Michigan has chosen to address, based on expert and public knowledge.

ISSUE: FINANCIAL SECURITY #IMPACTED 3,730

THE NEED:

- 40.4% of households struggle to meet their basic needs
- The average annual household survival budget for a family of four is \$58,080

CHANGE LIVES - OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES:

- 1,892 people participated in financial coaching
- 2,176 people participated in financial education
- 76.9% of people served increased their financial health
- 93.6% of people served increased their financial knowledge

ORGANIZATIONS/PROGRAMS:

BENTON HARBOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION – FIRST TIME HOME BUYER PROGRAM
DISABILITY NETWORK SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN – INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES
JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT OF NORTHERN INDIANA – FINANCIAL LITERACY FOR FINANCIAL STABILITY
REGION IV AREA AGENCY ON AGING – SENIOR MEDICARE/MEDICAID OPTIONS COUNSELING SERVICE
UNITED WAY OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN – VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE

ISSUE: EMPLOYMENT #IMPACTED 369

THE NEED:

- 5.7% of the population is unemployed

CHANGE LIVES - OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES:

- 110 people participated in job skills training
- 250 people served overcame obstacles
- 88.3% of people served gained, maintained, or improved their employment status
- 72.6% of people served increased their skills

BUILD STRONGER COMMUNITIES - INDICATORS:

- 6 organizations impacted

ORGANIZATIONS/PROGRAMS:

KINEXUS GROUP – THE LINK BUSINESS RESOURCE NETWORK
LEGAL AID OF WESTERN MICHIGAN – LEGAL AID FOR EXPUNGEMENT
MOSAIC CCDA – JOBS FOR LIFE
NEW HEIGHTS CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION, INC. – NEW HEIGHTS AUTO SERVICES
REGION IV AREA AGENCY ON AING – SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM
THE CENTER FOR GROWTH AND INDEPENDENCE – SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM
YMCA OF GREATER MICHIANA – CHILDCARE NETWORK

VOLUNTEER

2,247 VOLUNTEERS
SERVED 10,557 HOURS

\$335,688 VALUE OF
VOLUNTEER SERVICE HOURS

SUMMER STOCK UP

This annual event—now a statewide United Way initiative in Michigan—consists of a local food collection drive to help stock local food pantries during the summer months when pantries are especially low on food. This event is important to helping address food insecurity in our community. THE IMPACT: 37 local food pantries restocked in 2022.

SCHOOL SUPPLY SPECTACULAR

This annual event takes place in Cass County in mid-August. It helps kids in low-income households in Cass County prepare for the school year by providing them with a new backpack filled with grade-appropriate school supplies. THE IMPACT: 850 children from pre-K to 12th grade were served in 2022.

RAKE A DIFFERENCE

During this annual event in November, volunteers go to the homes of senior citizens living in Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties to rake leaves, clean gutters, and deliver personal care kits. The seniors served by this project are either physically or financially unable to do these tasks for themselves. THE IMPACT: More than 1,200 volunteers go to the homes of about 320 seniors in Southwest Michigan.

OPERATION THANKSGIVING

For five years in a row, United Way of Southwest Michigan and Meijer stores have joined forces to provide Thanksgiving food baskets to those in need of holiday food assistance in Berrien County. THE IMPACT: 150 families received the items they needed to have a special holiday meal.



ADVOCACY

2023 ADVOCACY AGENDA

Our 2023 Advocacy Agenda focuses on advancing policy and system changes that create positive impact for issue areas defined in UWSM's current Agenda for Change, including Early Education & Literacy, Post-Secondary Success, Financial Stability, and Safe Environments.

UWSM's Agenda for Change was built on a foundation of equity for all, leaning into the reality that all people have different needs and different lived experiences. The 2023 Advocacy Agenda builds upon that foundation by focusing on issues that have disproportionate impacts on underrepresented groups including the BIPOC community, LGBTQ+ community, and people with disabilities. Through our conversations with community members, we continue to hear that safety is a key aspiration for our neighbors. Everyone deserves to feel safe in their home and community. Creating safe and supportive environments for all—in neighborhoods, schools, and homes—is a key factor within each issue in this Agenda.

All of the issues within this Agenda are linked together. Success in one area will create positive impact and success in other areas as well. When our neighbors can keep more of their hard-earned paycheck, they can better afford basic necessities like safe, stable housing and childcare. When families have safe, stable housing, they experience less stress and uncertainty, leading to better mental and physical health, which leads to more success in work, school, and more. When families have access to and children are enrolled in affordable quality childcare, they increase their readiness for success in early education. Success in early education leads to a higher likelihood of success in post-secondary education. Success in post-secondary education leads to higher likelihood of financial stability throughout life. Ensuring that our communities are safe for all builds the kind of community our neighbors aspire to live and thrive in. Each step along the journey is a step closer to achieving UWSM's vision of a community where:

- Your zip code no longer determines your opportunity in life.
- The academic achievement gap is eliminated.
- Everyone in our community has a home.
- Life expectancy is the same across all populations and communities.
- Poverty is not generational. If it exists, it is intermittent and brief.
- Everyone is able to thrive and meet their needs, including housing, childcare, food, transportation, health care, technology, and taxes.

2023 ADVOCACY AGENDA ITEMS

IMPROVE ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

How can we accomplish this?

Increase support for Great Start Collaboratives and Parent Coalitions

INCREASE ACCESS TO QUALITY, AFFORDABLE HOUSING

How can we accomplish this?

Increase support and awareness for the Local Planning Bodies (in partnership and alignment with the Michigan Balance of State Continuum of Care) within Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties.

INCREASE ACCESS TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, SKILLS TRAINING, AND CREDENTIALING THROUGH MI RECONNECT

How can we accomplish this?

Expand funding and eligibility for the Michigan Reconnect Program and necessary wraparound services.

IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY OF CHILDCARE IN SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN

How can we accomplish this?

- Increase income eligibility level for childcare subsidies to reflect ALICE data and increase reimbursement rates for providers so that providers are also able to live above the ALICE Survivability Threshold.
- Support regional planning efforts to assess the current state of childcare resources in Southwest Michigan.

Become a UW ADVOCATE! We're excited to bring you more ways to get involved. Use our online signup form to receive our **Advocacy Action Alerts** and get notified when there are new opportunities to use your voice to raise awareness about causes that impact our community. uwsn.org/advocate

COLLECTIVE IMPACT

COLLECTIVE IMPACT happens when a group of organizations commits to addressing a community-wide social issue that cannot be solved alone. It means adopting a new way of working by bringing nonprofits, governments, businesses, and the public together around a common agenda. Collective Impact can produce large-scale social change in ways that other forms of collaboration and individual efforts have not. United Way of Southwest Michigan engages in six collective impact efforts. Working alongside other key community partners, we leverage our assets to galvanize our community around a common cause, a common vision, and a common path forward.

One important element of a collective impact effort is having a strong backbone organization. United Way of Southwest Michigan serves as that backbone for:



Be Healthy Berrien is a collaboration of organizations working to reduce and prevent obesity with policy, systems, and environmental changes. Its Healthy Corner Store initiative improves food access and helps build healthier communities. Be Healthy Berrien works in cooperation with communities and corner store owners to deliver a comprehensive approach that combines small-business support, nutrition education, wraparound services, and greater availability of affordable, nutritious foods.



The mission of Berrien CAN is to achieve a goal of 60% of Berrien County residents earning degrees, certificates, or other high-quality post-secondary credentials by the year 2030. Berrien CAN aims to foster a “college-going” culture, lower barriers that prevent students from pursuing post-secondary credentials, deliver comprehensive and coordinated college access services, ensure alignment of current college access resources, and encourage replication of successful strategies.



The Great Start Collaboratives of Berrien and Cass counties is a partnership of community leaders, business owners, charitable and faith-based organizations, health and human service agencies, educators, and parents. Together, these groups work to provide a network of resources that help families obtain services that will allow their children to succeed in every facet of their lives.

Great Start Collaborative, Berrien
Great Start Collaborative, Cass



**United
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Southwest Michigan**

