

United Way Fox Cities: Thank you for supporting the Fox Cities Diaper Bank

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(Photo: Joe Sienkiewicz, USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin)

Are we changing lives? That is a question we ask at United Way about each program we fund and every initiative we manage.

When we started the Fox Cities Diaper Bank in 2010, we did so because we knew one-in-three families struggles to provide diapers for their babies.

Fast forward from 2010 to 2018, and the Fox Cities Diaper Bank is providing diapers for more than 800 babies every month. We distribute 300,000 to 400,000 diapers annually. We now have 16 organizations that distribute diapers, including the Salvation Army Fox Cities and St. Joseph Food Program.

RELATED: [Donations for Diapers campaign helps local children in need](#)

As our diaper bank has grown, so have diaper banks throughout the country. The need continues for many families. There are 5.2 million children in the U.S. age three or younger living in poor or low-income families.

Why is that? The ALICE report released last month by the United Ways of Wisconsin found that the cost of household basics (housing, child care, food, transportation and health care) have increased 24 percent for a single adult and 18 percent for a family of four from 2010-16. The rate of inflation was 9 percent during that time, and there was a 12 percent wage decrease in Wisconsin.

A healthy change of diapers costs \$100 per month or more. An infant goes through 12 diapers a day, a toddler up to eight per day. It is heartbreaking to hear that in some households a baby may be in a single diaper all day, increasing the risk of health problems from skin disease to hepatitis. The thought of a child being wet and uncomfortable for that length of time is hard to imagine.

There is no state or federal child safety-net program that allocates dollars specifically for the purchase of diapers. Many people assume diapers can be purchased with food stamps, but that is not true. According to the Center for Economic and Policy Research, the poorest 20 percent of Americans who buy diapers spend nearly 14 percent of their post-tax income on diapers.

Of families in diaper need, 57 percent miss work or school due to a lack of sufficient diapers required by childcare, day care or early education programs to care for a child. As a result, parents experiencing diaper need [missed an average of four days of work](#) or school in the past month.

Last week, a truck delivered 50,000 diapers to the Fox Cities Diaper Bank. These diapers were a donation from Kimberly-Clark Corp. As a founding partner and collaborator of the Fox Cities Diaper Bank, Kimberly-Clark Corp. provides ongoing support through product donations, financial resources, volunteer support and expertise on the product and industry.

Nationally Kimberly-Clark/Huggies is the founding sponsor of the National Diaper Bank Network and has provided ongoing support for the organization, donating more than 200 million diapers and baby wipes nationally, including critical donations during times of crisis.

Volunteers and staff from United Way Fox Cities repacked the donated diapers all week, preparing them for distribution to local agencies who will get them to the families in need.

This community has responded to the call for diaper donations and hands-on volunteering at the diaper bank from its very beginning. During our eight-year history, more than a thousand people have volunteered to repack diapers; organizations from both the for-profit and nonprofit sector have contributed in-kind services; and foundations have supported the diaper bank with matching funds. All of this has been done with the mission of making sure our babies are dry and healthy. Thank you for helping change the lives of our babies and their families.

Nanci Micke is the vice president of marketing and communications at United Way Fox Cities.