A letter from the President

On behalf of United Way Fox Cities, I’d like to thank you for an incredible year celebrating the organization’s 75th anniversary!

This diamond anniversary arrived as the world continued to see challenges related to the pandemic. But together — UNITED — we are emerging brighter and ready to continue building a stronger, more caring community for everyone.

This year’s campaign raised over $8.5 million, allowing us to continue fighting for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in our community. Because of this generosity, more than 100 funded programs are improving the lives of 1 in 3 people in the Fox Cities.

In this year’s impact report, you’ll find profiles of extraordinary people. Some were action-takers. Others were brave and received much-needed resources. None of us are immune to adverse circumstances, which is why we choose to help and tirelessly support one another.

I am excited to move forward together. In 2023, I know we will find new ways to LIVE UNITED and uplift our friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers.

Sincerely,

Peter Gianopoulos, President and CEO

OUR MISSION

United Way Fox Cities improves lives by bringing diverse people together to build a stronger, more caring community for everyone.
Be Well Fox Valley, a community-clinical initiative to improve health and well-being, implements collaborative strategies to address social determinants of health and support community members living with food insecurity and type 2 diabetes. Eat Well for Life programming served 252 people by providing nutritious food and resources and 110 diabetes management classes. In addition, over 3,000 food boxes were distributed in partnership with nonprofit organizations to improve access to diabetes-friendly food. In May, our AmeriCorps program was awarded 1 of 4 Public Health AmeriCorps grants in Wisconsin. Last service year, 17 AmeriCorps members provided capacity-building services at 11 nonprofits serving over 11,400 hours in support of projects that improve physical, mental, and social health and well-being throughout the Fox Valley. Learn more: bewellfoxvalley.org

Diapers are essential to a baby’s healthy development, and having these supplies is critical for the physical, mental, and economic well-being of families. In 2022, the newly renovated Kimberly-Clark Diaper Bank distributed a total of 662,850 diapers to local families, helping keep more than 1,000 babies clean, healthy, and dry each month. This work is made possible only by generous donors to United Way Fox Cities and ongoing Huggies® diaper donations from Kimberly-Clark Corporation. The Kimberly-Clark Diaper Bank also relies on space from VPI, Inc., the hard-working volunteers who prepare diapers for distribution, and more than 20 dedicated programs that distribute diapers to struggling families. Read more about the Kimberly-Clark Diaper Bank and its supporting partners on page 7.

From hello to help, 211 is here to answer the call. In 2022, our local call center, operated by United Way Fox Cities, responded to 14,360 calls, texts, and chats from people seeking resources for healthcare, food, shelter, and much more. They assisted 422 individuals in their journey towards treatment and recovery. As of January 2023, all full and part-time 211 staff have at least one AIRS certification, which elevates their ability to support callers through complex issues.

In partnership with United Way Fox Cities, Valley Transit operates VT Connector, giving rides to those who need affordable transportation outside of normal bus routes or operating hours. In 2022, VT Connector helped provide 13,603 rides to work for local employees. Learn more: myvalleytransit.com/vt-connector
In December 2016, Jim and Nikki welcomed a beautiful baby boy named Angelo into their family. Tragically, he passed away a day later. The grief that came with that loss left Nikki, Jim, and Angelo’s siblings, Gia and Cal, heartbroken. The family endured another devastating loss five years later when Jim died following complications from COVID-19.

After Jim’s death, Nikki learned about the Center for Grieving Children, a program at the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Fox Valley. Ever since, the Center’s caring and compassionate staff and volunteers have nurtured and supported Nikki and her four children.

“My experience with the Center for Grieving Children has impacted my life in a wonderful way. It’s the biggest support that I’ve had thus far. The people that attend are wonderful and have become friends and family.”

The Center for Grieving Children is equipped to provide families with a safe space to talk about their grief and loss while continuing to find ways to honor and remember the lives of their loved ones. Programming is provided at no charge for children and the adults who care for them.

United Way-funded programs provide care for physical and mental health needs through critical times. Healthy communities need healthy people to thrive.

“The biggest takeaway that I get from the CGC is definitely a voice and a sense of being heard,” said Gia, age 12. “The Center has helped me with my grief by having people I can relate to who make me feel really good. I’ve learned strategies to help me cope with my grief. I’ve learned that it’s okay to feel how I’m feeling.”
education

United Way supports programs that advance the goal of ensuring children and youth are on track to reach their full potential.

When a child doesn’t receive a strong start in life, CASA of the Fox Cities works to change the trajectory of their story. CASA, or Court Appointed Special Advocates, trains volunteers to monitor children who have experienced abuse or neglect. Many of these children are recovering from traumatic events, and they do not always have the words to express their feelings.

In 2022, an advocate arrived at a childcare center to meet a child who greeted them with a big smile on their face. They grabbed the advocate by the hand and led them to the class “feeling” chart.

The child lifted their hand and moved their name from the feeling mad category to the feeling loved category.

While it often takes years for children to reflect back on who supported them during their journey, advocates see a glimmer of their impact in moments like these.

Preventing child abuse and neglect results in better childhoods, which leads to stronger communities. With an approach to education that spans from cradle to career, United Way-funded programs support tomorrow’s leaders so they can build a better foundation today.
Everyone in the Fox Cities should be able to get where they need to go safely and reliably. Closing transportation gaps is critical for securing employment, accessing medical care, obtaining healthy food, and dealing with emergencies and crises.

Dial-A-Ride, supported by United Way Fox Cities, provides reduced-fare transportation for residents of the Cities of Neenah and Menasha aged 60 years and older.

For Judy, a 78-year-old Neenah resident, Dial-A-Ride became her means of getting to medical appointments when she didn’t feel safe driving herself due to a car accident several years ago.

While she relies on this program for transportation, she has also found a sense of community. Like many others who use Dial-A-Ride, Judy has experienced a safe ride and pleasant conversation, making a positive difference in her life. Increasing access, independence, and financial stability benefits more than one person — it benefits the entire community.

“The drivers are wonderful!”
— Judy
The original United Way Fox Cities Diaper Bank was established in 2011 after the groundbreaking Every Little Bottom Study, commissioned by Kimberly-Clark’s Huggies® Brand, revealed diaper need as a critical issue affecting one in three American families. While the original facility offered an opportunity to carry out important work, it didn’t offer an isolated packing area to ensure quality and safety.

In 2022, United Way Fox Cities Hub was born. This space was created to engage community volunteers in hands-on activities as a means of giving back. The Hub is now the home of the Kimberly-Clark Diaper Bank, a program of United Way Fox Cities.

The new and improved space, which is housed in a former VPI warehouse, features an isolated packing area with walls and floors that can be easily cleaned. It also includes a lobby, conference room, locker room area for bags and coats, and changing stations for volunteers to put on LIVE UNITED®-branded shirts.

Groups, including workplace teams, are welcome to use the conference room for meetings or participate in team-building volunteer activities, such as packing diapers and care kits. Other nonprofits can use the space for their own packing needs like backpacks, meals, and care kits.

Bringing this remodeled facility to life required community collaboration. United Way Fox Cities appreciates every donor and partner that made this dream a reality.
In 2022, United Way Fox Cities identified a need to serve as a fiscal agent for local organizations. By taking on this role, we enabled over $500,000 to be invested into the Fox Cities through 13 organizations that contribute to a stronger, more caring community.

Digital Transformation Efforts

United Way Fox Cities is now working with nonprofits by providing grants that support managed services for improved technology infrastructure. This includes organizational work around digital asset mapping, digital equity, digital transformation, and so much more.

United Way Fox Cities has received funding from Microsoft Philanthropies to launch a new program called Community Skills Initiative (CSI) Wisconsin. CSI helps job seekers and professionals gain new skills for in-demand roles. This suite of resources, accessed through the Community Skills Initiative Wisconsin website, offers access to free online training courses that boost professional skills. Participants can choose from courses that offer digital skills, soft skills, or essential role-based skills. All Community Skills Initiative courses are free to complete. Courses can be taken online via smartphone, tablet, desktop, or laptop. All CSI courses are available in English and Spanish.

United Way Fox Cities invites the community to take advantage of the free LinkedIn Learning courses through February 1, 2024.

Ride United

Ride United was established to support United Ways and 211s in reducing transportation barriers and helping people in need across the United States. Callers can dial 211 to receive a Lyft ride to access services that address health, employment, food access, education, legal aid, shelter, or economic stability.

In 2022, 211 distributed 287 Ride United codes for a total of 574 one-way rides all across the Fox Cities.
“The Building for Kids’ after-school Explorer Camps are drop-off programs designed to provide learning opportunities through play and exploration of STEM and art through hands-on activities. Thanks to a Community Impact grant from United Way Fox Cities, the Building for Kids now offers free Explorer Camp registration to students attending the following AASD Schools: Badger, Columbus, Dunlap, Edison, Foster, Horizons, and Jefferson. Through this partnership, 96% of students attending Explorer Camps at the Building for Kids are accessing the program at no cost.”

— Beth Vanderloop, Director of Programs & Community Engagement, Building for Kids Children’s Museum

“United Way’s funding has given us confidence that people and organizations in our community believe in creating spaces where minoritized communities can freely be themselves. Without these culturally focused spaces, we haven’t had opportunities to heal, support growth and positive development, and organize around the concerns that deeply impact Black and Blended families in the Fox Valley area.”

— Kristen Gondek, Executive Director, People of Progression

“United Way Fox Cities is a key partner in improving the mental health of kids and adolescents in our community. The partnership with United Way has allowed Catalpa to continue to provide treatment in a way that makes sense and is convenient to families—whether through telehealth, in our clinic locations, or in a PATH-supported school. During this time of the highest demand for pediatric mental health services this community has ever seen, we are able to better connect families with additional community resources through our United Way-funded Care Management program to help families beyond mental health treatment.”

— Scott Radtke, Chief Clinical Officer, Catalpa Health
Sources of Strength is a school-based club that focuses on stories, ideas, and feelings of strength to help reduce suicide. In the wheel of strengths, one of them is generosity. My team and I agreed that generosity was our common strength, and we could pursue it better together. This was when Generosity Day was born. Generosity Day involves a day of two-hour mini-service projects throughout the Fox Cities. Our activities included tie blankets for Harbor House, mental health bracelets for NAMI, hospital care bags for young chemo patients at St. Vincent's Hospital, sensory bags for SOAR Fox Cities, meals for Pillars, and paper flower centerpieces for two assisted living homes. The grant I applied for in the fall provided all of our materials. Overall, we had 50 participants, and all experienced an increase in their mood by the end of the event. We hope to continue this again next year and have already set up meetings about writing grants.”

— Logan Maass, United Way Fox Cities Youth Board Co-Leader

United Way Fox Cities’ Youth Board is an organized voice for the youth of our community, helping young people make a positive impact by promoting the objectives of United Way Fox Cities and creating a spirit of community service. Youth Board members gather together twice annually in the Fall and Spring to review grant proposals. These grants are youth-led, youth-designated, and youth-reviewed.

Most recently, these grants have funded hygiene kits, mental health kits, books, activities, and a day of generosity. Even during the pandemic, the Youth Board pivoted without missing a single grant cycle to bring kindness, generosity, and compassion to the people who needed it the most.

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Great things happen when you give where you live.

community impact data

We welcomed 8 nonprofits into our family of partners that had not previously received funding from United Way Fox Cities.

662,850 diapers were provided through the Kimberly-Clark Diaper Bank, keeping more babies in the Fox Cities healthy and dry.

211 specialists handled 14,360 calls, texts, and chats providing easy access to health and human services.

17,885 rides were provided through 5 transportation programs spanning a 3-county service area.

Be Well Fox Valley AmeriCorps members provided 11,400 hours of capacity-building services at 14 nonprofit organizations.

90 partner programs were supported by United Way Fox Cities.

4,639 counseling sessions were provided to 274 students through PATH.

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Have you donated to United Way Fox Cities?

Our 2022 Recognition Book is now digital to allow for easier access and greater accuracy. You can find this booklet of contributing organizations, individuals, volunteers, and more at unitedwayfoxcities.org.

SIGN UP for the Thursday 3 weekly newsletter.