



**UNITED WAY**  
Northwest Illinois

# UNITED FOR IMPACT

## 2026 ANNUAL REPORT

### Stronger Together. Greater Impact.

Because of local donors and partners, we are building a stronger, more resilient Northwest Illinois where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.



#### YOUTH OPPORTUNITY

Helping children  
and youth succeed



#### FINANCIAL SECURITY

Helping families  
achieve stability



#### COMMUNITY RESILIENCY

Helping neighbors  
in times of need



#### HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Helping people  
live healthier lives



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(815) 232-5184



**LIVE UNITED.**

# ONE GIFT. MANY LOCAL LIFELINES.

When you give to United Way Northwest Illinois, you help keep the local safety net working.

Your support is invested in trusted local partners who are on the front lines across Stephenson, Jo Daviess, and Carroll Counties—providing essential services, connecting people to resources, and helping neighbors move toward stability and opportunity.

## BY THE NUMBERS



**3,280+**

**NEIGHBORS SERVED**

Individuals and families received support through our partner programs.



**250,693**

**SERVICES PROVIDED**

Essential services that meet immediate needs and build toward stability.



**203,838**

**MEALS SERVED**

Nutritious meals provided to individuals and families facing food insecurity.



**26,298**

**SHELTER NIGHTS**

Safe nights of shelter for individuals and families in need.



**6,584**

**COUNSELING HOURS**

Mental health and wellness support for individuals and families.



**965**

**REFERRALS MADE**

Connections to additional resources to help meet a variety of needs.



**1,372**

**PEOPLE WAITLISTED OR UNABLE TO BE FULLY SERVED**

High demand continues to outpace available services and resources.



Partners reported demand increases ranging from

**10% to 76%**

over the past 3–5 years.

*Totals reflect funded partner reports received to date.*



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# YOUTH OPPORTUNITY

*Helping children and families build strong starts.*



Thanks to the generosity of our donors, United Way Northwest Illinois helps ensure children have the support they need to thrive—early in life and for years to come.

Your support helps children enter school better prepared and gives families access to early learning, advocacy, and youth development resources close to home.



**1,000+**

**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**

received early learning, advocacy, and developmental support.



**20**

**COMMUNITIES**

reached across Northwest Illinois.



**80%**

**SCHOOL READINESS**

benchmark achievement rate.



**90%**

**OF FAMILIES SERVED**

live at or below poverty level.



**50%**

**INCREASE**

in parent and family engagement.



*Because of the support we received, my child is more confident, and I feel more connected to the resources that help our whole family.*

– PARENT, STEPHENSON COUNTY



**Featured partner programs include**

Family YMCA of Northwest Illinois, Amity Society, and Boys & Girls Club.



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# FINANCIAL SECURITY

Helping families move  
toward stability.



**75%**

of youth established  
clear career or  
post-secondary  
education plans.



**122**

individuals provided  
job and workforce  
skills.



**13,956**

meals served to  
families in crisis.



**100%**

free services:  
zero financial  
barriers to  
emergency care.

Thanks to you, local residents accessed shelter, job-skill training, meal support, and emergency services that helped reduce immediate hardship and build long-term stability. **Together, we create a community where every individual and family has the opportunity to thrive.**



**665**

families served  
were under the  
ALICE threshold.\*

ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) households earn above the poverty level but less than the basic cost of living.





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# COMMUNITY RESILIENCY

**Support when crisis hits hardest.**

When life takes an unexpected turn, United Way-funded partners are there. Together, we help neighbors facing homelessness, trauma, and crisis connect to shelter, mental health support, recovery resources, and the next-step services they need to move forward.



**9,272**

**EMERGENCY SHELTER  
NIGHTS PROVIDED**

Safe nights. A place to rest.  
A first step toward stability.



**608**

**DIRECT REFERRALS  
CONNECTING RESIDENTS  
TO SUPPORT**

Linking neighbors to the  
resources and services  
they need most.



**228**

**HOUSEHOLDS  
SUPPORTED THROUGH  
EMERGENCY CRISIS RECOVERY**

Compassionate support to  
stabilize today and build a  
stronger tomorrow.



**NEED STILL  
EXCEEDS CAPACITY.**

Several programs reported  
significant waitlists and  
unmet need for shelter,  
mental health services,  
and recovery support.



Your support helps us  
close the gap and offer  
hope when it matters  
most.



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# HEALTHY COMMUNITY

## Helping neighbors live safer, healthier lives.

When people have their basic needs met and access to care and support, they can thrive. United Way invests in programs that create safety, promote healing, and support healthy aging—strengthening the well-being of individuals and our entire community.



**17,026**

### SAFE SHELTER NIGHTS

provided to survivors fleeing domestic violence, dating violence, or sexual assault.



**6,380**

### COUNSELING HOURS

delivered to help survivors recover from trauma and crisis.



**1,836**

### SENIORS SERVED

across Stephenson, Jo Daviess, and Carroll Counties.



Thanks to the generosity of United Way donors, survivors in our community had a safe place to turn and the support they needed to heal. At the same time, older adults received meals, support, and meaningful connection—helping them remain healthy, engaged, and independent.

**Stronger together. Healthier together.**



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# LOCAL GIVING WITH DEEP ROOTS



In rural Northwest Illinois, neighbors help neighbors quietly.

A gift to United Way stays close to home and supports meals for older adults, safety during crisis, opportunities for children, and stability for working families.

For our farming community, local giving is stewardship—investing in the people who keep our towns strong.



**A gift to United Way  
stays rooted here.**

“

*“Because of United Way donors, our program was able to continue providing nutritious meals and essential support to older adults in our community.”*

— **NICAA Golden Meals**

“

*“Because of United Way donors, we prioritize individuals in our community that are often overlooked or dismissed.”*

— **VOICES of Stephenson County**

“

*“Because of United Way donors, local donors lessen the trauma of a child who has experienced sexual or physical abuse.”*

— **Tyler’s Justice Center for Children**



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# BOARD & STAFF

Guided by community leaders. Driven by purpose.



## BOARD OFFICERS

### PRESIDENT

**Liz Gerber**

Highland Community College

### VICE PRESIDENT

**Jody Schumacher**

Stateline Insurance

### TREASURER

**Amy Powers**

Citizens State Bank



## STAFF

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**Connie Kraft**

### OFFICE ASSISTANT

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Freitag Associates CPA's

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**Merisa Ritschard**

GreenState Credit Union

**Katelyn Alvarado**

Mercy Health FHN

**Kaitlyn McNutt**

M45 Marketing

**Rachel Meier**

SSM Health

**Drey Abbott**

State Bank, a Division  
of Foresight Bank



**Be the reason  
*the safety net*  
stays strong.**

Thank you to our board, staff, donors,  
partners, and volunteers.

Together, we create opportunity,  
strengthen families, and build a  
healthier Northwest Illinois.



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