



UNITED WAY
Greater Chattanooga

2025
ANNUAL REPORT



UNITED WAY
Greater Chattanooga

We envision a community where every child can thrive and working families can break the cycle of financial hardship.

THANK YOU FOR SERVING ALONGSIDE US!

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UNITED IS
THE WAY
WE

Break
Generational
Curse



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"Restore Lives"
😊



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UNITED IS
THE WAY

Dear neighbor,

United is the way—for families, neighbors, and our region. It's more than just our name. United is how we build a thriving Greater Chattanooga, together.

Every day, neighbors are working hard to overcome barriers and get ahead. Yet nearly 11,000 households with children in Hamilton County are still facing financial hardship, a 15% increase in just one year. These families are forced to make impossible choices between rent, food, childcare, and more.

This need is real, and it's growing. But so is our collective momentum.

Thanks to you, hope is also growing. Whether through a small act of kindness, a gift, or a shared conversation, you are part of something bigger. Your commitment adds up, multiplies, and moves us closer to a future where every child can dream big and every family can thrive, not just survive.

Together, we're creating opportunities for all children, building economic mobility for families, and fostering a more connected community that shows up for one another.

We can't do this without you. Let's keep showing up—for each other, for our future.

Thank you for your continued support.

United,
Lesley & Ken



A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Lesley".

Lesley Scarce,
President and CEO
United Way of Greater Chattanooga



A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Ken".

Ken Jones
United Way of Greater Chattanooga Board Chair
Senior Director of Business Services at EPB



UNITED IS THE WAY™

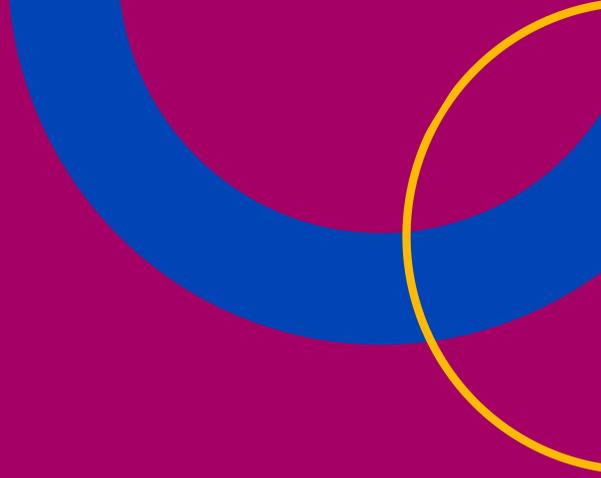
we lift each other up.

Nearly 11,000 households with children face financial hardship in Chattanooga, a 15% increase in one year.

We envision a united community where every child can thrive and working families can break the cycle of financial hardship.

That's why it's our mission to unite people and resources in building a stronger, healthier community.





UNITED IS THE WAY™

we build a thriving community.



We have a whole-family, whole-community approach to uplifting ALICE families, those that are Asset Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed:

211 Helpline and Emergency Assistance

Connecting neighbors in need to critical resources.

Community Investments

Investing in our local nonprofits to drive collective community impact.

Nonprofit Support and Innovation

Building nonprofit capacity and piloting new approaches.

Volunteerism

Offering year-round opportunities to serve our community.

United for Working Families

Empowering workplaces to offer family-friendly benefits.

Public Policy Advocacy

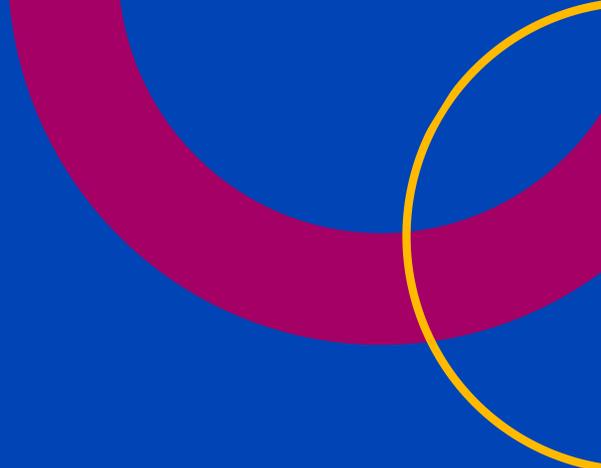
Advocating for children, families, and the nonprofits that serve them.

From Shelter to Self-Sufficiency

Mark is a father of five, ages three to 15. He faced overwhelming challenges as the full-time caregiver for his 11-year-old daughter, while also supporting his 13-year-old through ongoing mental health treatment. With full custody and limited income, Mark struggled to make ends meet. He fell behind on bills and couldn't get help anywhere, **until he called United Way's 211 Helpline**. We were able to help cover his utility bill when he needed it most.

Your support helps families like Mark's during their toughest times.





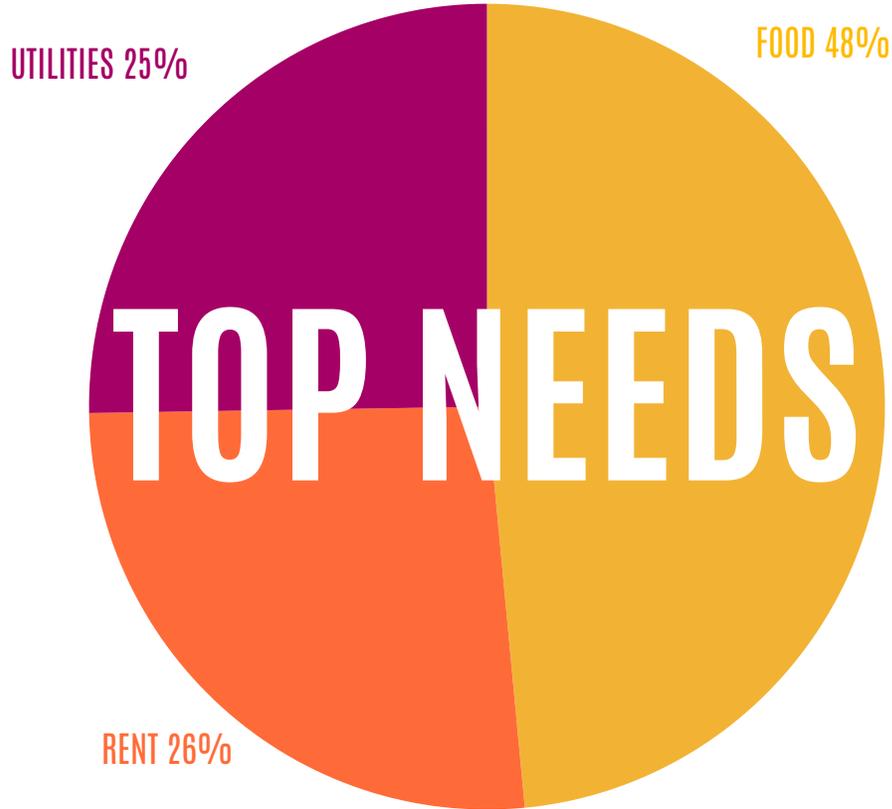
"United Way helped me when no one else would answer. Now I can focus on supporting my kids."

Mark, 211 Caller

When neighbors face crisis, **211 answers**. Whether it's food, rent, or utility help, our helpline connects people to life-changing resources – fast.

Last year, we responded to **more than 57,000** 211 requests through phone calls, texts, and emails.

Our online resource directory is also available 24/7 to easily find local and up-to-date resources.





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MOVE THE NEEDLE

DIRECT EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

Our direct emergency assistance fund is a lifeline for those who have exhausted all other resources, supporting individuals in Greater Chattanooga facing eviction, families unable to pay utility bills, and more. With your support, we can help our neighbors get back on their feet.

A total of **\$827,077** in direct emergency assistance was distributed reaching **3,887 individuals** facing urgent needs.

Support was provided to **2,923 households** across three core areas:

- Housing – **7%**
- Utilities – **19%**
- Wastewater fees for the elderly – **74%**





"Last night I slept peacefully, and that was made possible by the United Way of Greater Chattanooga. For decades I, as well as my parents, contributed to various Employer United Way Campaigns. Never did I imagine needing to reach out for assistance, but that time came. Not only was my need for emergency assistance met quickly, but it was also done so in a manner allowing me to maintain dignity and self-respect. My daughter and I are going to share this weekend without a cloud of anxiety covering us, and that is a testament to the work you are doing. When I was sure all resources were exhausted, I was led to United Way of Greater Chattanooga and shown how wrong I was!"

Michelle, 211 Caller

COMMUNITY INVESTMENTS

As nonprofit partners face tighter budgets and growing community needs, our goal is to be flexible, responsive, and strategic. Through our Community Investments model, we channel donor dollars through three types of grants that meet both immediate needs and support long-term change.

Looking ahead to the 2025–2026 grant cycle, we're excited to launch our first-ever three-year Impact Cohort, an opportunity to make deeper, more sustained investments that help local families not just get by, but truly thrive.

See full list of nonprofit funded partners at unitedwaycha.org/fundedpartners.



**In the 2024–2025
grant cycle,
we invested over
\$4 million in
73 organizations,
including 10 new
partners.**



"I love being a volunteer grant reviewer. I get to see the creativity of our community's nonprofits on display, and I enjoy getting a behind-the-scenes look at the work of United Way."

**Pinky Young, Executive Assistant to First Horizon
Market President & Foundation Coordinator**

FUNDING IN ACTION

We're not just showing up in times of crisis, we're also providing pathways to long-term stability, helping to break the cycle of financial hardship.

2024-2025 Impact:

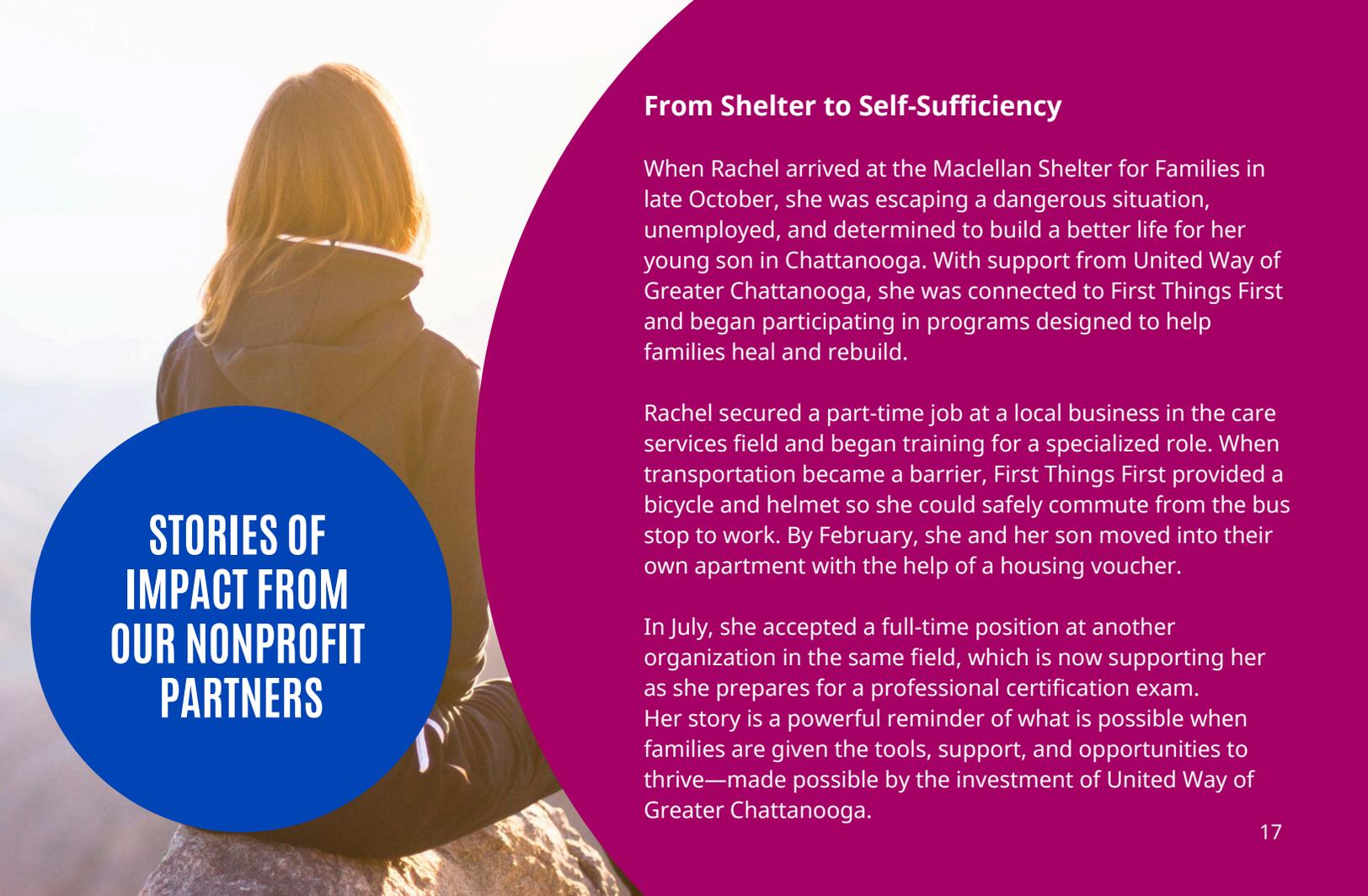
Out-of-School Programming: **13,000+ children** gained academic and social skills through United Way-funded programs.

College & Career Readiness: **4,500+ high school grads** were prepared for college or the workforce, setting them up for success.

Parent Engagement: **1,200+ parents** became more involved in their children's school activities thanks to United Way support.

Economic Mobility: **664 adults** advanced their careers through vocational training, certifications, or promotions.





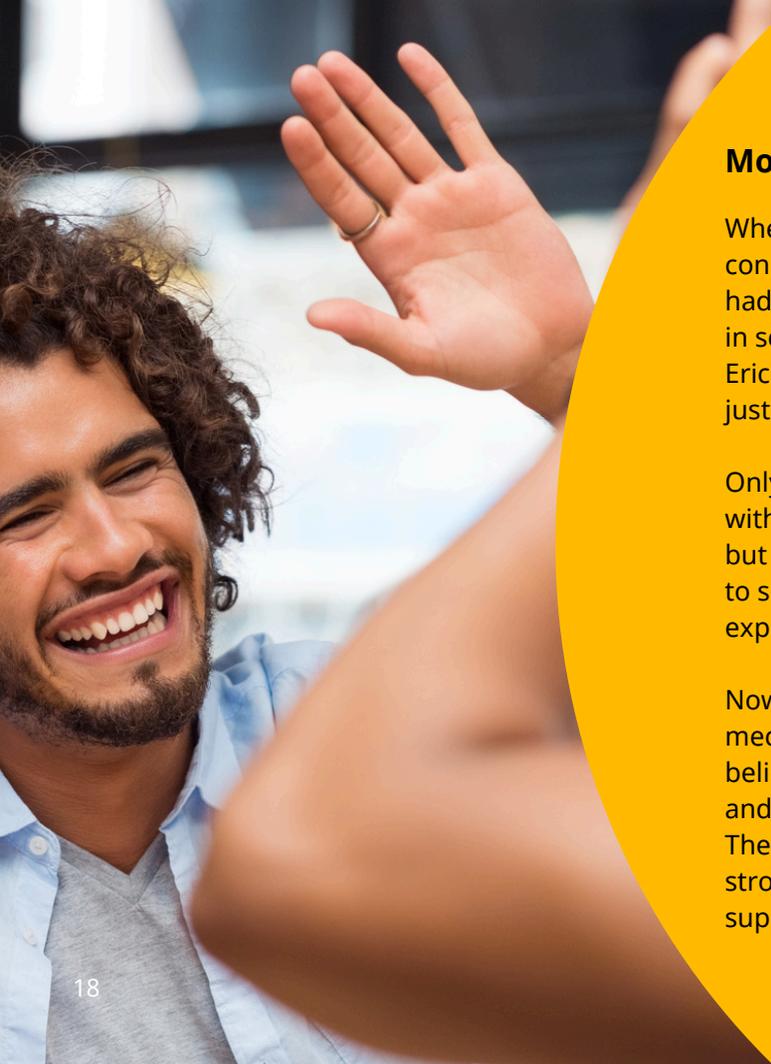
**STORIES OF
IMPACT FROM
OUR NONPROFIT
PARTNERS**

From Shelter to Self-Sufficiency

When Rachel arrived at the Maclellan Shelter for Families in late October, she was escaping a dangerous situation, unemployed, and determined to build a better life for her young son in Chattanooga. With support from United Way of Greater Chattanooga, she was connected to First Things First and began participating in programs designed to help families heal and rebuild.

Rachel secured a part-time job at a local business in the care services field and began training for a specialized role. When transportation became a barrier, First Things First provided a bicycle and helmet so she could safely commute from the bus stop to work. By February, she and her son moved into their own apartment with the help of a housing voucher.

In July, she accepted a full-time position at another organization in the same field, which is now supporting her as she prepares for a professional certification exam. Her story is a powerful reminder of what is possible when families are given the tools, support, and opportunities to thrive—made possible by the investment of United Way of Greater Chattanooga.



More Than a Match: Terrence and Erich's Story

When Terrence met his Big Brother Erich in August 2020, the connection was instant. Raised by his devoted mom, Terrence had hoped for a mentor who could guide him, encourage him in school, and help him stay focused on a bright future. Erich stepped in, not knowing Terrence would impact his life just as deeply.

Only four months into their match, Erich was deployed overseas with the Army National Guard. Many matches might have faded, but theirs grew stronger through calls and texts. Erich continued to support Terrence academically, introduced him to new experiences, and helped him build confidence.

Now, after graduating high school, Terrence is enrolling in a diesel mechanic program—a path he chose largely because of Erich's belief in him. Through a pandemic, a deployment, and life's ups and downs, Terrence, Erich, and Consuela have become family. Their story is a powerful reminder of the lifelong impact of a strong Big Brothers Big Sisters match made possible through the support of United Way of Greater Chattanooga.

Stability Starts with Support

Thanks to a United Way of Greater Chattanooga grant, Chambliss Center for Children provided critical support to a family at its Red Bank location. After experiencing eviction, the family worked hard to secure housing and maintain employment, but financial strain persisted.

The Site Director identified a loss of income and reduced their child care fees to ease the burden. With additional grant support, Chambliss also paid their overdue electric bill, helping restore stability. The family expressed deep gratitude for the relief and care they received.

This story is a powerful reminder of how grant funding directly helps families rebuild, creating safe, supportive environments where children can thrive.





Real Stories, Real Impact: Partner Voices on United Way Funding

“The funds gave us the flexibility to meet increased demand. Overall, we saw a 15% increase in services from the previous year. With United Way’s funding, we were able to focus on increased collaboration. This year, we added bicycle giveaways for people needing to make critical appointments—such as job interviews and housing appointments.” - **Chatt Foundation**

*“United Way of Greater Chattanooga’s Bridge Funding enabled Cempa Community Care to launch our Food Market and Transportation services for primary care patients in need of food assistance and transportation to their medical appointments.” - **Cempa Community Care***

*“The United Way of Greater Chattanooga has played a vital role in helping CAC expand our Prevention Education program during the grant period.” - **Children’s Advocacy Center of Hamilton Co.***

NONPROFIT SUPPORT & INNOVATION

We believe a more connected community changes everything. That's why we create spaces for local nonprofits to learn from each other, share resources, and spark new ideas. From collaborative trainings to peer networking events and innovation workshops, we're building a more connected nonprofit community—one that's equipped to adapt, grow, and serve more neighbors, together.

Through our trainings, workshops, and events, we served 467 individuals working to strengthen local nonprofits.



Our Celebrate Awards honor the best of the best in the nonprofit community every year!

2025 Winners:

Nonprofit Organization of the Year

First Things First

Nonprofit Lead of the Year

Dave Buck with the Chattanooga Autism Center

Roper's Live United, Not Divided Award

Be The Change Youth Initiative

Rising Star Award

Chattanooga Free Store

Volunteer of the Year Award:

Margy Oehmig, volunteer for Metropolitan Ministries

“Nonprofits are very good at celebrating our communities, our volunteers, and the accomplishments happening around us, but we rarely take the time to celebrate ourselves. The Celebrate Awards give us that opportunity to recognize our team and pat ourselves on the back a little. It’s such a wonderful, needed moment.”

Kelly Flemings, Co-Founder,
Kelcort Foundation



VOLUNTEERISM

Inspiring our community to show up and support each other is a core part of our work.

ihelp Chattanooga

An online volunteer portal where agencies can manage their volunteer projects and community members can sign up to help. Last year, we filled **2,177 volunteer spots** through the platform.

Emerging Leaders

This mission-driven group connects **young professionals** who are passionate about making a difference. Emerging Leaders take collaborative action through volunteerism, leadership development, and community engagement.

Onsite Volunteerism

Last year, we partnered with eight local organizations to bring volunteering directly to our corporate partners. Together, we built **more than 1,000 snack packs, hygiene kits, and backpacks** that were donated to local nonprofits.



“United Way acts on their values. I’m energized and inspired by their staff. They make it so simple. Community is felt and created to include our neighbors. Who wouldn’t want to be involved? It has truly been such a rewarding experience.”

Danny Grzesik,
Emerging Leaders Co-Chair,
Executive Director of the Epilepsy Foundation
of Southeast Tennessee



Youth United

We're proud to celebrate the successful first year of Youth United, a leadership and volunteer program designed for local high school students. **30 students** from Brainerd High School, Hixson High School, and Chattanooga School for the Liberal Arts (CSLA) were part of the inaugural cohort. With generous support from the **Tennessee Valley Authority, Volunteer Tennessee**, and local donors, the year-long program focused on hands-on service, leadership development, and building cross-school connections.



Day of Caring 2024

Day of Caring, sponsored by **Elder's Ace Hardware**, is our largest volunteering event of the year, bringing together corporate partners and community members to give back for one inspiring day of service. In 2024, we hosted **over 500 volunteers** who completed **more than 40 projects** across the community in just one day.



"I loved getting to know students from other schools and doing something meaningful together. It helped me feel more connected to the community."

Hannah,
Youth United Participant



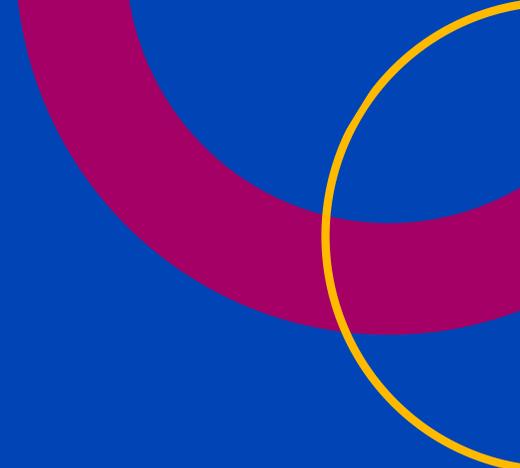
**Last year, we saved
local nonprofits
\$219,922 across all
volunteer programs.**

UNITED FOR WORKING FAMILIES

Together, with more than 150 organizations, we're shaping the future of family-friendly workplaces. Through year-long engagement opportunities and an annual summit welcoming **more than 300 community leaders**, we're addressing the needs of working families through flexible scheduling, better parental leave, childcare support, and more. The program connects mission-driven leaders with the tools and relationships they need to drive meaningful change in their organizations.

Learn more at
unitedwaycha.org/workingfamilies.





“We’re proud to partner with United Way on the United for Working Families initiative. At Partnership, we’ve put this into practice by expanding benefits like paid parental leave and employer-funded short-term disability—supporting our team while strengthening retention and work-life balance.”

Kevin Hyde, CEO of Partnership for Families, Children and Adults

ALICE at Work

ALICE at Work is a three-day comprehensive cohort program that equips people leaders with the tools and data they need to better support their ALICE employees. Last year, we partnered with **51 individuals from 15 organizations** that employ nearly **13,000 individuals** to craft custom family-friendly workplace plans.

“Attending the ALICE at Work training has deepened my appreciation for how Southern Champion Tray’s values can be lived out through ALICE-friendly benefits. By fostering a culture of communication and relationships, we can create a workplace where everyone feels supported. This training has inspired me to advocate for solutions that meet the unique needs of our team and align with our mission to value people in meaningful ways.”

Kerri Gailey, Senior Talent Development Specialist
at Southern Champion Tray



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2025 Best Place for Working Parents® Designation

United Way of Greater Chattanooga was recognized by Best Places for Working Parents for its commitment to family-friendly policies that support working parents.



CORPORATE PARTNERSHIP

We're proud to have partnered with over **250 organizations** last year to create custom plans for giving back. These partnerships represent businesses that care deeply about the communities their people live and work in, demonstrating that doing good is not just good business, it's the right thing to do.

Top 10 Workplace Campaign Partners by Annual Fundraising Total

- McKee Foods
- BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee
- Shaw Industries, Inc.
- Publix
- EPB
- Volkswagen
- Chambliss, Bahner, & Stophel, P.C
- CBL Properties
- Unum
- Henderson Hutcherson & McCullough, PLLC





Hear from our 2025 Campaign Chairs

“Chattanooga thrives when we lift each other up. This campaign is about harnessing our shared generosity to create lasting change. I’m honored to be part of this work and look forward to what we can accomplish together.” - **Marie Webb, Founder of ETHOS Coaching & Consulting**

“Chattanooga is a giving community. We know that when we work together, we can provide critical resources that make a difference for thousands of people throughout our region. United Way connects all of us to something bigger and when that happens, our collective futures are always brighter.” - **Jay Dale, First Horizon Bank's Chattanooga Market President**

DONOR APPRECIATION

Our donors are the heart of everything we do. Your generosity fuels support for neighbors in need and helps build a more connected, resilient community. Thank you for making this work possible!

6,310 donors trusted United Way of Greater Chattanooga last year to invest in a thriving community.

Tocqueville Society

Our most generous, community-minded investors who donate **at least \$10,000 annually**, with some members giving more than \$100,000 each year.

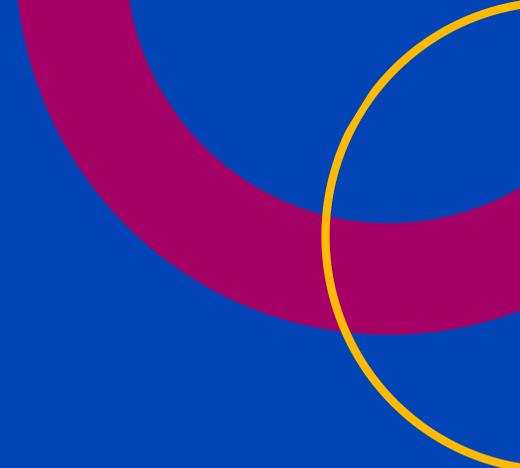
Leadership Club

A group of donors who exhibit extraordinary dedication to improving the quality of life for all neighbors by contributing **\$1,000 to \$9,999 annually**.



“Our United Way is the single best way I know to contribute to vetted organizations doing essential work to improve the lives of everyone in our community. United Way fills a gap that no other organization can fill. It’s a win-win investment.”

Judy Powell,
Leadership Club Donor



“After serving on the 2023 Tocqueville Campaign Cabinet, my ‘why’ evolved. I heard stories from people whose lives were changed by contacting United Way’s 211 Helpline. I saw donations turn into grants that empowered local nonprofits. I joined efforts to advocate for policies supporting working families.

Now, I see the role of Tocqueville Society members as crucial for ensuring every child can thrive and families can break the cycle of financial hardship. We are Chattanooga’s greatest investors. Our contributions inspire hope, create opportunities, and have a profound impact for generations to come.”

Beverly Edge, Partner at HHM CPAs, Tocqueville Society Committee Chair

FINANCIALS AT-A-GLANCE

Funding Sources:

Campaign, Undesignated **\$5,153,957**

Funds raised and used for community investments, impact programs, and fundraising efforts.

Campaign, Designated **\$4,536,662**

Funds raised and directed to a specific purpose or nonprofit.

Endowment and Investment Draws **\$1,079,117**

Annual draw of dollars from endowment and other investment earnings to support administrative overhead, fundraising, and 211.

Earned and Other Income **\$1,131,136**

Revenue earned from special programs, services performed, and other non-donation revenue.



Programs & Expenses:

Impact Programs **\$4,559,070**

211, Nonprofit Support, Volunteerism, United for Working Families, and others.

Community Investments **\$4,765,434**

Grants for the 2025 – 2026 cycle, direct assistance, and designated donations.

Corporate Engagement and Fundraising **\$1,503,495**

Relationship building with corporate partners and donors to secure financial support through networking, marketing, and events.

Operational Support **\$1,072,873**

Infrastructure, staffing, and essential services that keep our mission moving forward.



We're proud to be recognized for excellence in transparency, accountability, and impact, with a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator and a Platinum Seal from Candid.



MEET THE TEAM

We're community changemakers just like you!



"I love working for an organization that directly improves Chattanooga. Solving complex problems through technology and seeing the positive impact on the community energizes me. This role perfectly blends my analytical skills with my passion for process improvement and innovation."

Percy Garcia,
Sr. Director of Finance and Data Analytics

"I love connecting people with vital services, making a difference in their lives. Every call is an opportunity to provide hope and support, turning challenges into solutions. It's rewarding to be a lifeline for my community."

Alexis Matthews,
211 Navigator



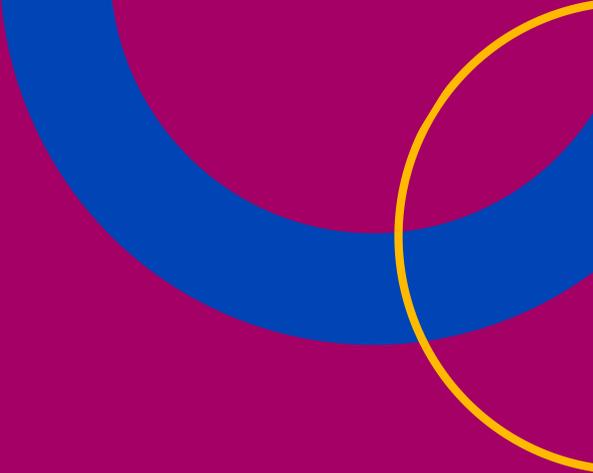
"I love getting to create individualized volunteer opportunities for corporate partners, elevate nonprofit needs, and find creative, strategic ways to engage the community. I'm also passionate about helping young professionals and students discover innovative ways to support their local communities. All of the above comes together with the support of a great team and collaboration!"

Natalie Patric,
Director of Community Engagement



"I love being in a role where I can connect needs in our community to meaningful resources, partnerships, and long-term solutions. It's rewarding to work alongside partners to break down barriers and turn collective ideas into real impact for ALICE families. I also appreciate the flexibility of our work culture and the trust that allows us to lead boldly."

Meghan Creecy,
Director of Strategic Partnerships



UNITED IS THE WAY™

we uplift our neighbors.

GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.

A thriving community isn't just an idea—it is something we build together. Now, more than ever, it's our moment to stand in the gaps. Every gift, every hour, every action matters. Thank you for being part of this work.



Donate Today





THANK YOU
FOR SERVING ALONGSIDE US

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