

United
Way



United Way of the
Battle Creek
Kalamazoo Region

changethestory.org

2021 IMPACT REPORT

A strong
community deserves a

STRONG UNITED WAY

The Battle Creek and Kalamazoo
communities have grown
stronger and more resilient.
So has your local United Way.

Cover photo: Mae Risk,
shop manager at Heirloom Arts, a
Micro-Enterprise Grant recipient.

STRENGTH COMES FROM UNITY.



Since the outbreak of COVID-19, I've seen countless examples of compassion, resilience and strength from across the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo region. These examples share a common theme: unity. When we come together to face tough times, we do amazing things.

United Way has grown stronger, too, because of you. Between donor investments and additional resources secured from public and philanthropic sectors, we've been able to invest more dollars into our region in 2021 than ever before.

Together, we've invested more than \$5.5 million in programs and partner agencies to address the most pressing needs in education, financial stability, health, and basic needs.

Together we've disbursed \$3 million in disaster relief to partner agencies working to stabilize families and individuals in the midst of the pandemic.

Together we've supported strong leadership in Battle Creek's communities of color to challenge systemic and structural barriers that keep people from growing and prospering.

Together we've strengthened Kalamazoo's small businesses, disbursing \$2.3 million in grants and loans to more than 275 businesses—many of them women- and BIPOC-owned.

Together we've raised understanding of equity issues through our 21-Day Racial Equity and Disability Justice Challenges.

This impact report describes the many ways we're stronger together—as individuals and families, as communities, as partners, and as United Way. Alone, none of us will succeed. But when we collaborate on the toughest issues, we are stronger. **TOGETHER, WE ARE RESILIENT. TOGETHER, WE THRIVE.**

The power of togetherness motivated our United Way to announce its plan to merge with Capital Area United Way and United Way of Jackson County in 2022. We're excited to be able to deliver even greater impact—right here in our community, and beyond—by working together. You can learn more about the announced merger at www.unitedforscmi.org.

It is our hope that you read this impact report and find areas of interest to explore further through the QR codes you'll see throughout. Our work is ever evolving as we strive to center our ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) population, prioritize equity both internally and externally, and keep pace with changing conditions and needs.

On behalf of our stronger community, thank you. Thank you for your trust in us. Thank you for your partnership. Thank you for standing with United Way, today and tomorrow, to change the story for every person.

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'Chris Sargent'.

Chris Sargent

President & CEO, United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region

STRONGER FOR COMMUNITY

PATHWAY TO IMPACT

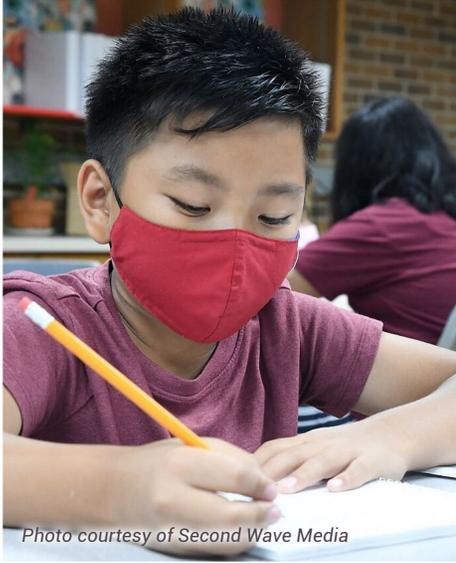


Photo courtesy of Second Wave Media



Photo courtesy of Second Wave Media



95 agencies in our region focused on Health, Education, Financial Stability or Basic Needs

90 local agencies funded for COVID-19 relief work throughout the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo area

275+ Kalamazoo business owners approved for loan or grant dollars



\$5.5 MILLION
COMMUNITY
IMPACT GRANTS



\$3 MILLION
DISASTER RELIEF
FUND



\$2.3 MILLION
SMALL BUSINESS
SUPPORT



funding sources

ANNUAL UNITED WAY
WORKPLACE CAMPAIGNS
AND DONOR
INVESTMENTS

funding sources

FOUNDATION AND
GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

STRONGER FOR ALICE

ASSET LIMITED, INCOME CONSTRAINED, EMPLOYED



Rossie Miller—Read her story on the following page.

WHO IS ALICE?

ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. They are the members of our community who work hard and still struggle financially. 39% of households across the region are living below the ALICE threshold – meaning that their earnings aren't enough to meet their basic expenses each month.

ALICE AND THE PANDEMIC

A recent report – “The Pandemic Divide: An ALICE Analysis of COVID Surveys” – found that a much higher percentage of lower-income people are struggling to get by after losing jobs and income, and are more likely to wrestle with depression and anxiety. The report comes from United For ALICE, a United Way affiliated research and action effort around financial hardship.

“Even with the added protective measures of eviction moratoria and housing and food assistance programs, conditions worsened for households below the ALICE threshold from March 2020 to May 2021,” the report states.

ALICE families were more likely to:

- Fall behind financially;
- Lack savings and assets;
- Face job disruptions, from layoffs and furloughs to work barriers such as lack of child care;
- Suffer more physical and mental health issues;
- Struggle with other needs, from poor access to food to inadequate technology for kids who were schooling from home.

*View the latest
ALICE Report here:*



WHY WE SUPPORT ALICE

The needs of ALICE families are diverse and interconnected. When one budget item is impacted – for example an unexpected car repair – a ripple effect can follow that forces them to choose between making that repair, paying their rent, picking up their prescription, or making a trip to the grocery store. Those choices can have long-term consequences not only for ALICE, but for all of us.

ALICE workers are critical to our local economies and infrastructure of our communities. They educate our children, keep us healthy, and make a good quality of life possible for everyone – yet they often don't have the resources to care for their own families.

ROSSIE'S ALICE STORY

Rossie Miller is a long-time Battle Creek resident with a heart for helping others and a love for her community. She's currently studying for her master's degree, and is among the 47% of households in Battle Creek that are ALICE.

Miller fell in love with her husband, a Vietnam War veteran, and together they created a blended family with six children. She held solid jobs in health care and food relief, and by every measure, expected a financially stable life for her family.

“When I was working in home health care, that's when things started getting really rough for us because my husband started having a lot of medical issues,” Miller said.

Between medical costs plus a mortgage, utilities, insurance and other household expenses, their finances dwindled. Then a car accident took out their vehicle. By then, Miller was working just nine hours a week.

“When you've been used to helping people, it becomes hard to think that you have been working, that you thought you had your head just above water, and then you find yourself back in that place again,” she said.

Read her full story here:





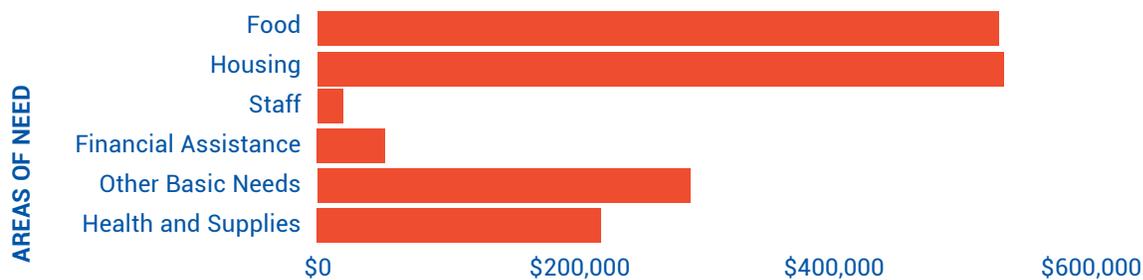
STRONGER FOR DISASTER RELIEF

1ST ACTIVATION March-July 2020	2ND ACTIVATION Nov 2020-Oct 2021
Funds distributed \$1.73 million	Funds distributed \$1.68 million
Agencies funded for relief work 52	Agencies funded for relief work 38

“Our community was struggling, and those we serve were in the middle of all the crisis with the least amount of resources. With your relief funding we were able to help our members maintain some sense of normal through it all.”
– Women’s Network Inc./ Women’s Co-Op

From the very start of the Covid-19 pandemic, United Way has been supporting relief and recovery efforts with critical support from individual donors, foundations, community organizations and corporate partners. In place since 2016 for response to community crises, the Disaster Relief Fund was activated in March 2020, and again in November 2020, as our community and nation continued to experience both the growing impact and devastation of Covid-19 and the effects of racial injustice. In coordination with community partners and funders in Kalamazoo and Battle Creek, United Way deployed more than \$3 million to agencies on the ground quickly and with flexibility to help thousands of families and individuals.

TOTAL DISBURSED FROM DISASTER RELIEF FUND DURING 2ND ACTIVATION: \$1,681,400



STRONGER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SMALL BUSINESS INVESTMENTS

United Way BCKR's Small Business Support programs began in 2020 as a response to Covid-19, in partnership with the City of Kalamazoo and Foundation For Excellence. Recognizing a need for support that's not tied solely to the impact of the pandemic, we have broadened the work. Our Health Protection Grants have helped businesses recoup costs associated with Covid-19 safety measures, while the Kalamazoo Small Business Loan Fund and Micro-Enterprise Grant Fund now provide more general funding support with a focus on remedying historical disparities that exist in funding sources for underrepresented small business owners.

HEALTH PROTECTION GRANTS

70 grants 16 neighborhoods represented

\$133,431
dollars invested

KALAMAZOO MICRO-ENTERPRISE GRANTS

190 grants 17 neighborhoods represented

\$950,000
dollars invested

123
awardees who are female and/or BIPOC
(Black, Indigenous, People of Color)

KALAMAZOO SMALL BUSINESS LOAN FUND

99 loans approved 19 neighborhoods represented

\$1,733,500
dollars invested

63
borrowers who are female and/or BIPOC



KALAMAZOO BOXING

Jermont Reece, owner

"I was always inspired to run a gym." Jermont opened his boxing gym in the summer of 2020, and has plans to expand

the space. "I think boxing is a good outlet for people, and I enjoy teaching that because I know it worked for me." He said the ease in applying for a Micro-Enterprise Grant has given him the confidence to seek out additional opportunities. "There's support out there, you've just gotta look for it."



HEIRLOOM ARTS

Mae Risk, shop manager

"The pandemic was hard just because of the shut down, and people have a hard time affording tattoos. Tattoos

are kind of a luxury item technically even though they are really important for a lot of folks, but they are expensive sometimes." Despite the challenges, the shop has continued to grow, and recently moved into a new space with the help of KMEG funding. "I love the community that we have built here. We are very excited about being a queer-owned, woman-owned shop."



FIT BELLA VEI

Carmen James, owner

"What I love most about my work is seeing the transformation. Seeing people happier and healthier and making healthy choices

is ultimately the most rewarding gift in what I do." James, a personal trainer, used KMEG funds to begin renovating her garage to create a more ideal space for clients. "I've had a wonderful experience with United Way. I thought that was really dope, to see that someone was that invested in making sure that I was given the opportunity and support to follow through on the entire process."

STRONGER FOR PARTNERS

COMMUNITY IMPACT GRANTS

JULY 2019-JUNE 2020

\$6,247,821 INVESTED IN 112 PROGRAMS AT 84 AGENCIES

Grantmaking process improvements underway

Giving out money isn't simple; to do it well is incredibly complex.

"When we looked at our grantmaking history, gathered data and listened closely to our community, we realized we could do far better at funding partners and programs equitably and effectively," said Alyssa Stewart, Vice President, Impact & Engagement.

The process was too complicated and rigid. "We were back-seat drivers, telling our partners what to do without acknowledging that they are best positioned to see the road ahead," Stewart said.

What's more, United Way assessed historical giving and realized our trends mirrored national philanthropy trends, wherein philanthropy provides more resources to larger, white-led organizations than to grassroots agencies and/or those run by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) leaders.

Now the Community Impact team is redesigning the process, opening the door for new partners and more equitable grantmaking. The new process, still being refined, will kick off later in 2022, with resources to be deployed as of July 1, 2023.

Information on Pages 8, 9 & 10 reflects our community impact investments from July 2019-June 2020.

NEW IN 2021

SEEDING GRANTS

Seeding Grants represents a crucial step toward more equitable funding of partners and programs. The one-year, unrestricted investments of \$60,000 each went to six organizations led by Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC).

Irene Muthui, Associate Director of Impact & Equitable Systems, said the grants sprung from United Way BCKR's learnings through the Catalyzing Community Giving work in Battle Creek. CCG is a partnership with BIPOC-led organizations and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation equipping communities of color to tackle immediate need and the root causes of systemic inequities.

Many grantmaking organizations tend to favor large, white-led social services agencies, she explained. "We saw an opportunity shift that balance," said Muthui. "BIPOC organizations are experts in their communities. We're taking those conversations seriously and changing how we show up as an organization—more than a funder, also an advocate."



AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN GRANTS

The collaboration between United Way BCKR and the City of Kalamazoo to invest federal dollars through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) is a powerful example of communities tackling issues together. The city gave \$1.1 million in ARP funds to United Way to help local nonprofits with challenges they're still enduring due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The grants prioritize organizations and projects located in or serving individuals in a Qualified Census Tract within the city, support populations below 60% average median income in Kalamazoo County, or where at least 25% of those served live below the Federal Poverty Line.



"These geographic and economic priorities ensure that these dollars support those most negatively impacted by COVID-19."
— Alyssa Stewart, Vice President of Impact and Engagement

DEMOGRAPHICS

EDUCATION

RACE	% Served
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.3%
Asian	2.3%
Black or African American	39.2%
Multiple Races	11.9%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.1%
Other	0.6%
Unknown	9.1%
White	36.5%

FINANCIAL STABILITY

RACE	% Served
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1.9%
Asian	1.9%
Black or African American	36.1%
Multiple Races	1.4%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.1%
Other	2%
Unknown	24.7%
White	31.9%

HEALTH

RACE	% Served
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.6%
Asian	2.9%
Black or African American	29.9%
Multiple Races	6.4%
Other	1.5%
Unknown	20.3%
White	38.4%

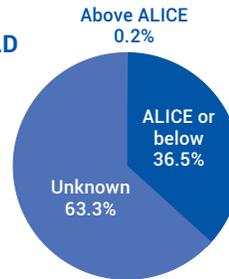
BASIC NEEDS

RACE	% Served
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.7%
Asian	3.1%
Black or African American	37.9%
Multiple Races	2.9%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.1%
Other	3.6%
Unknown	7.6%
White	44.1%

Demographic data provided based on disaggregate client level data reported from partners in each impact category.

COUNTY OF RESIDENCE	% Served
Calhoun County	17.3%
Homeless	0.2%
Kalamazoo County	79.7%
Unknown	2.8%

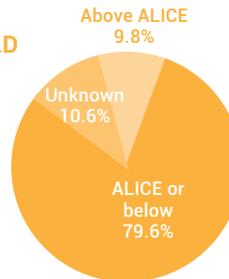
HOUSEHOLD INCOME



HOUSEHOLDS SERVED
8,865

COUNTY OF RESIDENCE	% Served
Calhoun County	46.2%
Homeless	1%
Kalamazoo County	52.7%
Unknown	0.1%

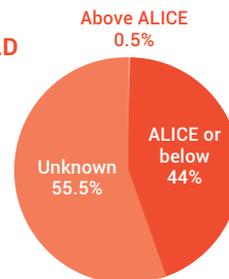
HOUSEHOLD INCOME



HOUSEHOLDS SERVED
5,536

COUNTY OF RESIDENCE	% Served
Calhoun County	29.5%
Homeless	1.3%
Kalamazoo County	63.2%
Unknown	6%

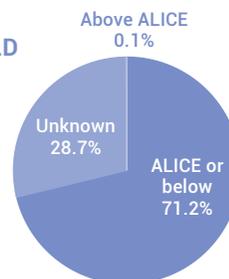
HOUSEHOLD INCOME



HOUSEHOLDS SERVED
2,596

COUNTY OF RESIDENCE	% Served
Calhoun County	59.5%
Homeless	7.3%
Kalamazoo County	26.1%
Unknown	7.1%

HOUSEHOLD INCOME



HOUSEHOLDS SERVED
30,673

STRONGER FOR PARTNERS

DATA POINT HIGHLIGHTS

EDUCATION

Of 322 students served, **156** improved academic performance. 40% were BIPOC students.

Of 1556 students served, **1,119** showed increased ability to regulate and communicate emotions effectively. 64% were BIPOC students.

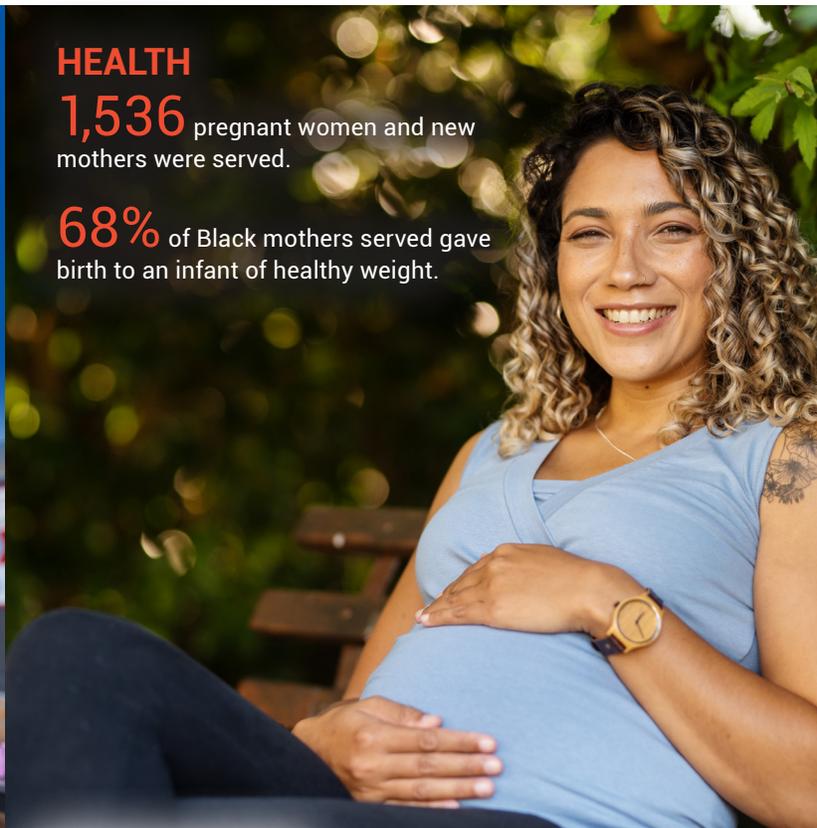
Of 5661 students served, **1,840** achieved the goal of reading proficiently at the end of third grade as measured by a state standardized test. 41% were BIPOC students.



HEALTH

1,536 pregnant women and new mothers were served.

68% of Black mothers served gave birth to an infant of healthy weight.



FINANCIAL STABILITY

76% of ALICE households who received financial literacy supports successfully increased their household income, net asset value, or both.

253 households received eviction diversion services.

76% of individuals who attained credentials were able to attain or advance employment. 55% were BIPOC.



BASIC NEEDS

Transportation: **1,210** people served

Meals served: **518,711**

Overnight shelter: **1,650** people served

Childcare assistance: **208** households served

Utility assistance: **2,421** households served





STRONGER FOR EQUITY

United Way BCKR firmly believes that the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion are critical to our impact work and to our regional community. We continue to push forward on our own journey toward becoming a fully anti-racist organization. Out of a desire to share what we're learning, United Way has led three 21-Day Equity Challenges—two focused on racial equity, and one exploring disability equity. The challenges provide an opportunity for participants to embark on a deeper, self-guided journey exploring the history and effects of racism and discrimination, and how these things impact people's lives. The goal is to raise awareness, prompt personal reflection, and provide ways for people to get involved in creating change.



WHAT OUR PARTICIPANTS SAID:

"The most powerful component for me was making space daily to participate and to reflect on MY role in sustaining white supremacy."

"I'm the mom of a kiddo with Down syndrome, so I think a lot about Down syndrome, but not how it fits into the disability community as a whole. You also gave our family resources and ideas we can use to help our son plan his future."

"I feel like I'm a well-educated person, especially in terms of bias and racial justice, but much of this material was new for me."

21-DAY CHALLENGES



21-DAY EQUITY CHALLENGES



TOPICS



PARTICIPANTS



140+

EMPLOYERS REPRESENTED



100s

OF COMMITMENTS MADE

OUR MISSION

We drive impact by leading shared efforts that engage diverse people, ideas, and resources.

OUR VISION

A vibrant community where all people realize their full potential.

OUR FOCUS

We use a data-based approach to provide direct assistance, program support, and public advocacy to change conditions for households struggling financially and to address structural and systemic racial inequities.

YOU CAN #CHANGETHESTORY

Volunteer your time. Make a financial gift. Become a corporate partner.
Learn more about our impact. **We need you!**

Visit our website: changethestory.org

Or email us: getinvolved@uwbckr.org



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*Now part of United Way of
South Central Michigan.
Learn more at
www.unitedforscmi.org.*



**United Way of
South Central Michigan**

Calhoun | Clinton | Eaton
Ingham | Jackson | Kalamazoo