

“Enlighten others.
Encourage others.
Empower others.

ELEVATE

others.”

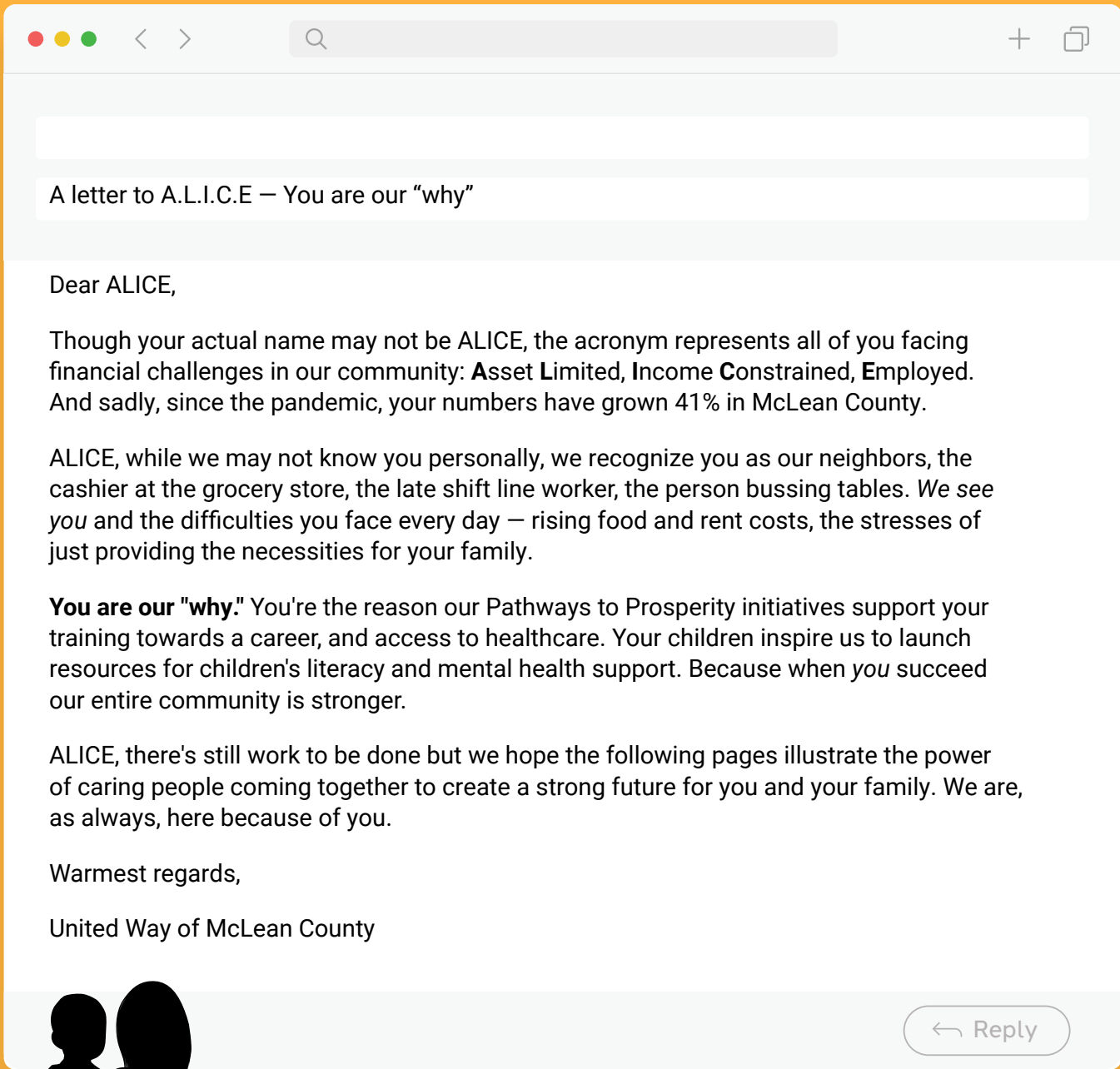
– Matshona Dhliwayo



2023 Impacts Report



United Way
of McLean County



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ELEVATING CHANGE WITH 180UNITED

Each day, individuals and families across McLean County are dealing with financial hardship, unstable housing, and mental and emotional distresses. Our community is not without resources; and yet, there are still so many barriers and service gaps that keep too many from realizing the 180-degree change they desperately want.

That's why our 180United approach is so crucial:

180United is a united way of approaching the issues facing our community. We convene and coordinate with partners from across the county to remove barriers and close service gaps. This mindset directs our efforts so that families and individuals struggling to make ends meet can “do a 180” and find a pathway to prosperity.

Your generous support has elevated the reach and impact of our shared mission to individuals and families across the county. This report details the holistic, innovative solutions that your gifts made possible this past year.

Thank you for caring and investing in a better future for all of us who call McLean County home.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Taylor". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a white background.

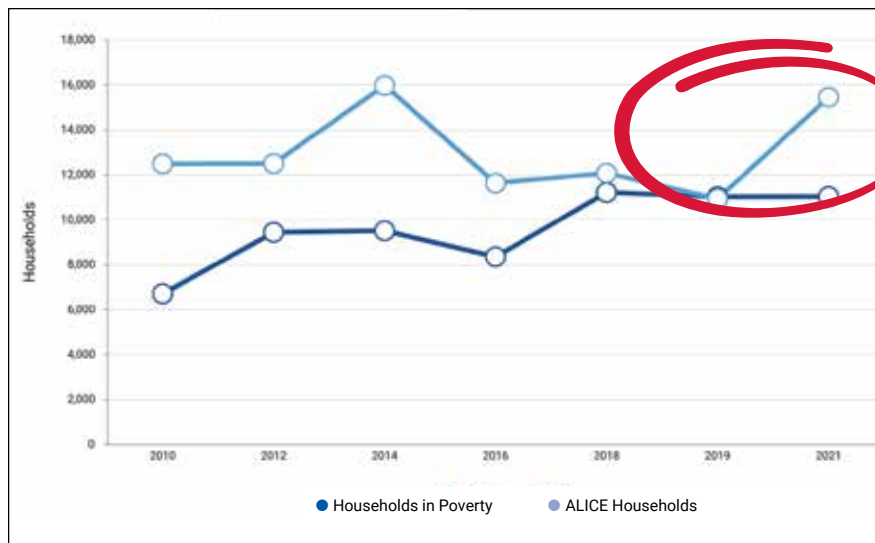
David Taylor, President & CEO

Post-Pandemic Poverty Report

ADDRESSING HOUSEHOLD POVERTY AS A COMMUNITY

In 2023, we received the latest household poverty report for McLean County. Post-pandemic, poverty has increased with over 26,000 households struggling financially. Of those households, around 11,000 meet the definition of poverty and over 15,000 are ALICE – **A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed. ALICE households struggle to get by, living paycheck-to-paycheck, often holding down multiple jobs. **Since the pandemic, there has been a 41% increase in ALICE households in McLean County.**

Financial Hardship Over Time in McLean County



ALICE Households: Our 'Why'

This increase in financially struggling households is a stark reminder there is work to be done. Lifting people from struggle to stability and then self-sufficiency is the why behind our mission. We improve lives in McLean County through innovative solutions that bring together all aspects of our community. When we work together, we forge a stronger future for us all! Learn more about ALICE here:



MOBILE CLINIC REACHES WHERE IT'S NEEDED

The Mobile Medical Unit launched in August 2023 and by the end of that year had already served over 280 patients in four locations in Bloomington-Normal. ***That's a substantial need, now being met.***

United Way of McLean County saw a way to reach residents who struggled to receive basic healthcare, so convened other community partners to help Carle BroMenn launch the Mobile Health Clinic – *and your donations to UWMC were a key part of making this a reality.* In 2024, this service will continue to expand out into rural areas of McLean County and increase the number of days per week in operation. Be on the lookout!

A CAMPER IS NOT A HOME...

Housing Coalition Improves Housing Stability

Area ALICE residents face a critical need for more affordable housing. According to a January report by WGLT, studies show our area needs up to 7,500 new units to solve the shortage. That's why over 70 housing stability stakeholders – shelters, social service agencies, schools, government, and faith-based organizations – convene monthly as the Housing Coalition.

A new community resource developed this year – **the Housing Stability Navigator** – connects residents with available, accessible housing that meets their needs and their budget. The Navigator completed many cases in need of first month's rent, most for working mothers with children, who were living with family members, in hotels, or in their vehicles. Thanks to your gifts this year, families are finding the support they need to navigate the system for a secure place to call home.

Of those re-housed by the housing stability navigator:

- 70%** employed full-time
- 30%** on fixed income (Social Security or Disability)
- 100%** working or have consistent income



Maia is a single-mother of three

who moved to Bloomington-Normal for new employment opportunities. But housing options were limited because many landlords require proof of steady income from new renters. Despite finding a full-time job with a local manufacturer, Maia would have to wait several months to qualify; so her only housing option was a camper. After three months, Maia applied for housing at the local public housing authority and was approved! The Navigator processed Maia's case and provided her first month's rent and deposit assistance. **Today, Maia has a stable job as well as safe and affordable housing for her family.**

Pathways to Prosperity via Workforce180

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT LIFTS STUDENTS TOWARD STABILITY & SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Young people across our county want to pursue job training, education, and certified skills. But hardships and challenges put those dreams out of reach – and keep them stuck in long-term financial struggle.

That's where your support makes a difference. Workforce180, one of our signature solutions, is a direct response to generational poverty and common barriers that can prevent at-risk youth from stable careers and self-sufficiency.

Student cohorts are formed at the start of the fall semester. Our team then gathers the necessary resources – such as tuition assistance, tutoring services, emergency assistance – to help participants solve those problems. Participants meet regularly for the duration of the program to support one another, as well as receive support from professional trainers, mentors, and even potential employers.



Over 75 Heartland students kicked off their educational journey with the support of Workforce180 in August 2023.

THE WORKFORCE180 LOCAL IMPACTS ARE **BIG!**

Since the initiative's full launch in 2020, the benefits of Workforce180 to our local economy and local emerging workforce are tangible and powerful:

75+

Current
participants in
Workforce180

79%

Workforce180 graduates
employed in their
field of training

535%

Return on the
investment (ROI)
made by our Donors

UPDATES

Workforce180 Graduates



AJACIA LOVES HER JOB.

After completing Workforce180, Ajacia is now a full-time CNA at Roanoke Apostolic Christian Home. She plans to go back to school to become a Registered Nurse.



JACOB ENJOYS NEW CHALLENGES.

Jacob is a full-time paramedic at Bloomington Township Fire Department and provides on-the-job-training for new hires. He enjoys the challenge of paramedic work and wants to keep challenging himself at an even larger local department.



KOLLIN HAS SENIORITY AND BENEFITS.

For almost two years now, Kollin has worked full time at CAT's Pontiac facility. He enjoys full benefits and on-the-job training that led to advancement and a switch from third shift to first.



SIERRA PLANS TO ADVANCE.

Sierra works as a full-time medical assistant at Chestnut Health Systems where she has great benefits. Looking ahead, she would eventually like to pursue her Licensed Practical Nursing degree.



AJ LOVES HER WORK – AND HER HOME.

Since completing Workforce180, AJ has worked full time as a paramedic at Eureka-Goodfield Fire Protection. She recently purchased her own home and is raising her young daughter.



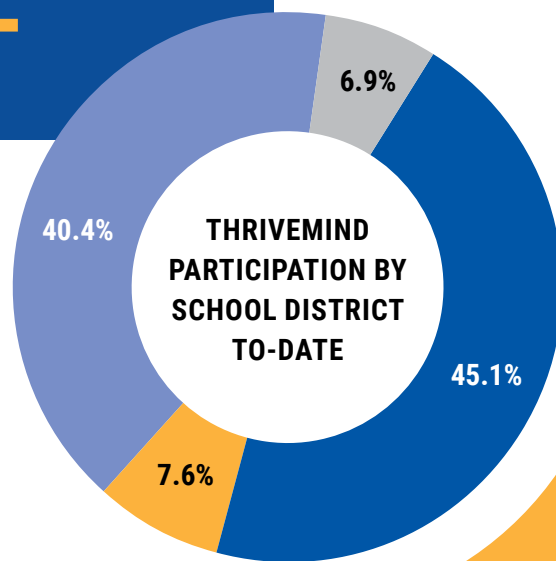
Pathways to Prosperity via ThriveMind

TEENS THRIVE WITH A NETWORK OF MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Academic success in high school and beyond help connect young people to stable careers and a self-sufficient future. But many area teens are dealing with mental and emotional struggles that put their future at risk.

That's where your support makes a difference. ThriveMind, one of our signature solutions, is a collaboration with Carle BroMenn Behavioral Health Counseling and the Lexington, Olympia, Ridgeview, and Le Roy school districts. Students needing mental health support are matched with Carle BroMenn therapists.

Teens receive full therapy services that are 100% covered through the ThriveMind initiative because friends like you partner with United Way of McLean County.



- Lexington
- Ridgeview
- Olympia
- Le Roy

Olympia Student Finds Trusted Support

MEET RORY

Rory* first began regular counseling sessions with a therapist at Carle BroMenn after making a threat in the classroom. Educators take these kinds of instances seriously, even if the situation feels like an anomaly to a student's previous behavior.

Such was the case for Rory, who has not had any more behavioral offenses since their ThriveMind referral. Olympia High School's counselors are confident that ThriveMind makes a difference for students like Rory.

"As school counselors, the ability to refer students for ThriveMind counseling has allowed us to focus on preventative services without having the pressure of being the sole providers for students that really need more extensive support. *We have been able to move away from being in a constant triage state thanks to ThriveMind and United Way.*"

— Olympia School District counselors

After meeting regularly with a trusted adult, Rory has done better academically and gotten good grades in a majority of their courses. Behaviorally, they are once again considered an approachable and friendly student, to both peers and adults. Now successfully discharged from the program, Rory continues on a path of success, thanks to the network of mental health support from ThriveMind.

**Name changed used to protect student privacy*

386

free therapy sessions

60

student referrals

14

students finished therapy

TEENS IN CRISIS

Schools are reporting a significant decline in teen mental health since COVID. For teens with emotional and mental distress, free mental health support like ThriveMind keeps students in school and up-to-date academically — which can make the difference between graduating high school or dropping out.

76%

of schools reported an increase in staff voicing concerns about students exhibiting symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and trauma.¹

Chronic absenteeism in high school students (even if only during a single year between eighth and twelfth grade) was associated with a

7x

increase in the likelihood of dropping out.²

¹ National Center for Education Statistics, May 31, 2022

² Health City by Boston Medical Center

Pathways to Prosperity via Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

CHILDHOOD LITERACY BOOSTS SCHOOL READINESS

Early childhood literacy is a powerful marker for future academic success — and the future prosperity of the whole community.

“United Way of McLean County is proactive when it comes to our community’s success, and Pat Grosso, our now retired Resource Development Director, brought forward the idea of launching a Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) in late 2019,” United Way CEO, David Taylor explained. “The pandemic disrupted our plans to launch, but in November 2022, we announced our plans to move forward.”

In February 2023, United Way of McLean County launched our Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to send a book per month to any McLean County child under age 5 who completes our free registration. These books provide children access to a larger, more diverse vocabulary and a greater variety of sentence structure and grammar. Our literacy initiative better prepares kids to start kindergarten and enhances their chances of future academic success.

Your support makes a difference! With help from our Women United volunteers and Pat’s perseverance, we’re opening up a world of literacy for the children of McLean County.



IMPACTS ON CHILDREN'S LITERACY IN McLEAN COUNTY:

2.5K+

children enrolled

800

households registered

7K+

books distributed

ELEVATING A LOVE FOR READING



Illinois Governor JB Pritzker at the Bloomington Public Library announces state support for **Dolly Parton's Imagination Library** initiative in McLean County.

Your gifts will help even more kids get free books each month. With nearly 3,000 children already registered, we have plenty of room to grow this child literacy initiative in the year ahead.

Great things happen when kids have access to books! Together, we can ensure kids across the county develop a love for reading and are school-ready.

In addition to hundreds of individuals in the community who made donations, several key partners also made major contributions to make DPIL possible:

- **Corn Belt Energy**
- **CoBank**
- **Tinervin Family Foundation**
- **Morris Packaging**
- **Josh Rohrscheib & Onward Injury Law**
- **Little Jewels Learning Center**
- **Julie Dobski**
- **Drake Zimmerman and Jan Elfline**

Thank you!

Local mother Jayashree Shanmugasundaram spoke at the press conference, sharing how DPIL has benefitted her family with two young boys:

"I want to give my boys knowledge, an education — reading books really helps kids to gain that. We read to our son, and now my elder one reads to my younger... we are having family time and it's creating a brother bond. We have our own library now, and it's growing!"



**SEE HOW
WOMEN UNITED
HELPED MAKE THIS
INITIATIVE HAPPEN!**



2023 IMPACT

RAISING THE BAR FOR UN

What do you get when you bring together action-oriented women in our community who know the power of working together? You get Women United! You also get the incredible impacts these women can create, rippling throughout McLean County in ways large and lasting.

WU in the Community

Our Women United members provide vital community support by volunteering their expertise and talents to back core initiatives of United Way such as Workforce180 and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.

Opening Paths to Financial Self-sufficiency

"A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself." – Oprah Winfrey

Many of our Women United members have inspired hope in dozens of our Workforce180 students by serving as volunteer mentors. Participants who have successfully completed the Workforce180 pathway say this 'team' approach made a huge difference to them – they knew their mentors were beside them, making sure they had what they needed to succeed.



"Knowing there are other people who care about you succeeding, that encouraged me a lot. **They promised they would be there every step of the way... and they were!**"

– Kelli, Nursing student
Workforce180

Promoting Childhood Literacy

In 2023, Women United marked a significant milestone by partnering with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, funding a school readiness initiative that provides free books to children every month from birth to age five. In the first month alone, our Women United volunteers helped register over 800 children.



UNITED WAY



WU in Philanthropy

Our Women United network is a giving circle that embodies the philanthropic priorities of United Way: Keep it personal, local, and accessible. And did they ever, hosting two signature events: Power of the Purse and Power of the Pub.

Women United hosted two signature fundraising events: **Power of the Purse** and **Power of the Pub**. More than 300 people attended these two events, raising over

\$43,000
in support of children's literacy!

WU Gives Recognition

Our Women United network is committed to building a stronger community, and therefore we recognize and thank some of the tireless volunteers doing so much to enrich our community.

Four deserving volunteers and their organizations were honored for outstanding service to our community at our annual Phil Covey



Memorial Volunteer of the Year banquet. This year's winner of the Phil Covey Memorial Award of Excellence went to **Robert Bosquez, of West Bloomington Revitalization Project's Bed Blitz.**



THANKS, PAT, FOR LEADING WU!

At the end of 2023, Pat Grosso stepped out of her Women United leadership role and into retirement! We are thrilled for her and grateful for the integral part she's played these past eight years as Resource Development Director and then as Women United Engagement Coordinator.

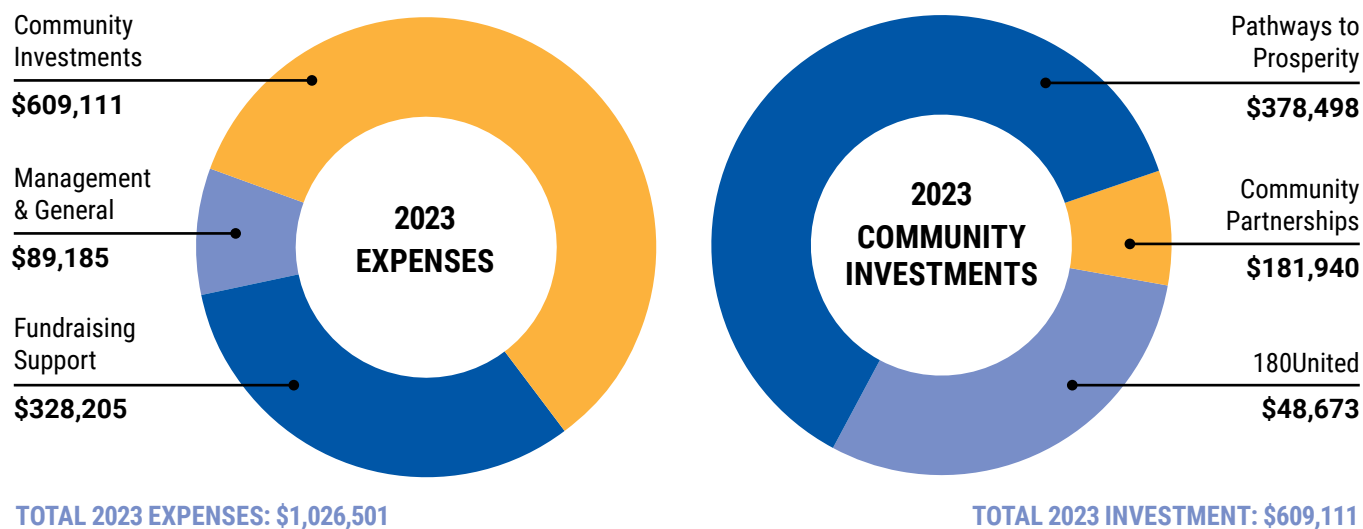
Pat launched the iconic Power of the Purse event, created our own Women United group, and started our Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program. Our community is a better place thanks to Pat's contributions through UWMC.

OUR FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

At United Way of McLean County, we take our fiduciary responsibility seriously. In 2019, we made two key changes to our operating model to support this:

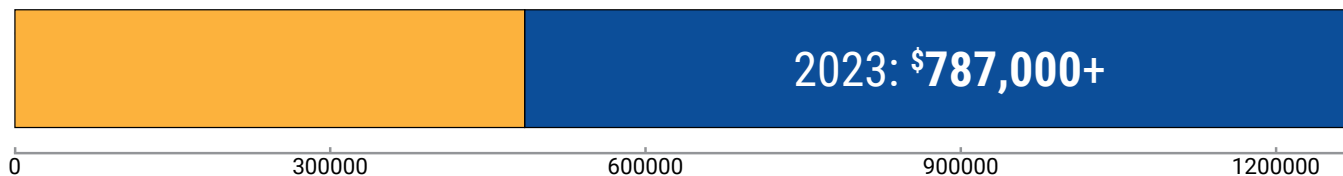
- Changed our fiscal year to match the calendar year
- Used the cash balance on January 1 to set our operating budget for the year

On 1/1/2023, this translated to just over a \$1,000,000 budget to invest in our Pathways to Prosperity initiatives (like Workforce180 and ThriveMind), strengthen Community Partnerships, and spread our 180United philosophy.



What kind of an impact did these investments make?

In 2023, over 20 Workforce180 graduates maintain employment locally, creating over \$787,000 in economic impact! Since 2021, Workforce180 has created over \$1.28 million in economic impact for McLean County.



- In 2020, our community stepped up with more than \$1.7 million in support of our pandemic response. Funding has declined each year since to about \$850,000 in 2022 and just over \$700,000 in 2023. In 2024, this provides roughly \$1,000,000 to create the impact we've demonstrated in this Annual Report.
- With your partnership, we hope to increase that to \$1.2 million in 2025 to invest in our Pathways to Prosperity initiatives. **Together, let's grow our exponential impact in 2025.**

For Fiscal Year 2023, outside independent auditors from MCK CPA's & Advisors affirmed a clean, unmodified audit opinion for United Way of Mclean County. We've received this highest audit rating for eight straight years. You can find our 990s and Audited Financial Statements on our website: UWmclean.org



PASSING THE BATON & RUNNING THE RACE

I loved playing sports in high school. Track wasn't my first choice but more my football coach's encouragement for off-season conditioning. I joined a relay team, an invaluable experience to encourage each other and build trust while working toward a common goal.

I recently felt this same camaraderie as Cat Woods passed the Board Chair baton to me. I couldn't ask for a better teammate in this relay race. She has carried the baton with excellence. In fact, our entire board and outstanding staff make implementation and partnership within the community seamless. Our focus on reducing poverty and improving mental health in McLean County requires expanded and intentional work – especially in two key areas:

Through **Workforce180**, students find support to finish training and education to enter the local workforce. Their success proves the strength of the solution, which is why we're recruiting additional students, along with mentors and business partner sponsors. It's a sure path out of generational poverty into financial self-sufficiency via transition into local, in-demand careers.

The mental health crisis is especially prevalent among our youth. Our **ThriveMind** initiative rises to this challenge, offering therapy services to students through partnerships with school districts and mental health providers. Regular counseling sessions create a positive impact on each participant's ability to achieve their full academic potential.

But those are just two aspects of the work that Cat now hands to us. There is much more to do. Now, we're asking you to consider how you can carry the baton.

We're grateful for your past partnership and support. And with your renewed giving today – or perhaps your first gift ever – even more area residents will find pathways to prosperity through United Way of McLean County. Your investment carries the baton and ensures McLean County runs a solid race so every one of us can thrive.

Sincerely,

Dale W. Avery
2024 Board Chair

OUR STAFF

- David Taylor
President & CEO
- Kathleen Lorenz
Community Investment Director
- Gloria Spinks
Administration & Data Manager
- Marian Doherty
Finance Manager
- Tom Frazier
Workforce180 Director

OUR 2023 BOARD

- Dale Avery
Chair Elect, Community Investment Chair
- Marty Behrens
- Mary Bynum
Fundraising Chair
- Keith Cornille
- Sean Fagan
- Deanna Frautschi
- Cory Heim
Treasurer, Finance & Administration Chair
- Austin Maxwell
- Laura O'Connor
Chair, Women United
- Sonja Reece
United Way of Illinois Board
- Tim Ryan
Secretary
- David Taylor
President & CEO, ex-officio
- Gary Tipsord
- Cat Woods
Chair

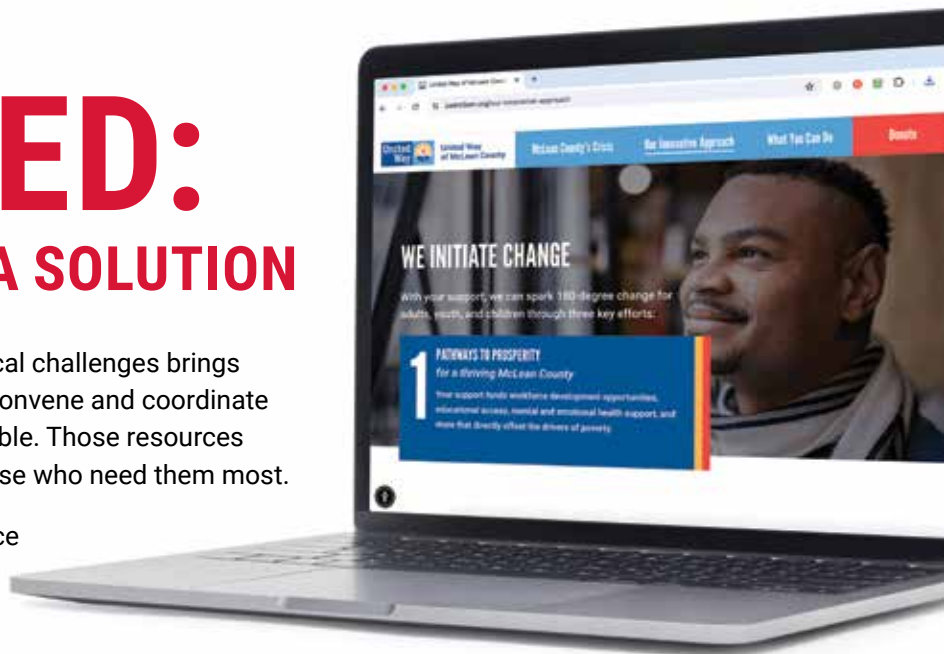
Boosting Partner Connections

180UNITED: A PHILOSOPHY AND A SOLUTION

Our innovative, holistic approach to solving local challenges brings a united front to address service gaps as we convene and coordinate the many community resources already available. Those resources become more accessible and effective for those who need them most.

When we partner together – individuals, service groups and organizations, government entities – it sparks a united, solutions-based approach that makes a lasting difference for community members and shapes a vibrant future for McLean County.

Because partnership is foundational to 180United, this past year we launched a brand-new website. The new design and regular updates will give everyone easier access to programming, updates, reports, and events.



Your support changes everything.

Give again today to continue this life-changing work
through United Way of McLean County.



CHECK OUT OUR
NEW WEBSITE



United Way
of McLean County

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