



Fall Wrap Up 2025

the COMMUNITY CIRCLE

Quarterly newsletter brought to you by United Way of Washington County-East



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Carrying the season's good forward.

As we enjoy the first snowfall and look back on fall, we're reminded once again of how much our community can accomplish **together**. This season has been filled with abundance – **partnerships, generosity, and shared purpose** – and we're grateful to everyone who made it possible.

This fall was full of milestones: our largest-ever Lunch + Learn, our annual Leadership Breakfast, and celebrating one year in our new office. United Way Week brought more than 50 partners together, and we even took on the Sheriff's Team Challenge. November brought big transitions as we said goodbye to Mai Chee as she stepped into a new job, and we celebrated the arrival of Kelly's baby, Gunnar. And Give to the Max? Our biggest yet – fueling momentum as we enter year-end giving.

As the holidays draw near, our thoughts turn to home, gratitude, and the small comforts that bring us together. We also recognize that many local families are entering the season without the essentials most of us take for granted. A year-end gift is a meaningful way to share the abundance of the season and help ensure every household has the foundation it needs to thrive.

Be sure to follow us on our social channels to stay connected to all things United Way!



Free Lunch on Us!

Lunch + Learn Highlights

This fall's Lunch + Learn brought our **largest** attendance yet, filling the room with the kind of energy that reminds us why community matters. In true popcorn style, we invited attendees to share their stories and perspectives throughout the event – creating a lively, meaningful exchange between those who are new to Washington County and those who have called it home for years.

Those who shared their stories included Melena Nord, from FamilyMeans, who reminded us of just how deep community roots can go. They spoke about United Way of Washington County-East being part of their history since the very first day they opened their doors – **a remarkable 63 years of partnership grounded in trust, collaboration, and shared commitment to supporting local families.** Hearing this legacy reflected back to us was a powerful reminder of how long-term relationships help sustain a thriving community.

Lunch + Learn continues to be an easy way to come and learn about your LOCAL United Way, discover ways to support our mission, key impact areas, and incredible programs like our Community Investment Grant Funding that takes place yearly. Each conversation added another layer to the abundance of ideas, connections, and shared purpose that shape this community.

A heartfelt thank-you to Scheel's Catering for the wonderful meal and to the Stillwater Event Center for hosting us so warmly.

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I didn't realize how many nonprofits were in our area, maybe I was naive, maybe I just didn't understand. But through Community Investment I was able to understand and open my eyes on how impactful United Way is in supporting 100% local.

– Tim Safe
Community Investment Volunteer





LEADERSHIP BREAKFAST

CONNECTIONS FOR COMMUNITY

Leadership. Partnership. Impact.

One early morning, we came together to celebrate the leadership of our 20 board members, the partnership of sponsors who go far beyond financial support, and the impact of \$473,000 in grant funding supporting 17 local agencies and 32 programs serving children, families, and neighbors right here in our community.

The Leadership Breakfast is an annual gathering that honors local leadership and the power of community partnerships. Attendees hear inspiring stories, see the impact of United Way's funding, and connect with others working to build a vibrant, equitable community. This year, we were especially moved by Ellie, a Youth United member, who shared: "I want adults to know that they should keep giving us opportunities to get involved and give back. As young people, we want to learn about and support our community."

We were also inspired by our Leaders of Community Impact Panel – Jennifer Polzin, CEO of Tubman; Dr. Khu Thao, CEO of Canvas Health; and Sheriff Dan Starry of Washington County – facilitated by Lori Mueller, United Way Board Member. Their insight reminded us that leadership takes many forms, and impact comes from working together.

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The most valuable thing you can give is your attention.

– Kristin Kroll
UWWCE Executive Director



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Thank you to our 2025 sponsors!



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UNITED WAY WEEK!

October 6 - 12

United Way Week 2025 began a little early with a joyful kickoff at **Townie Tuesday**, and what a perfect way to start the celebration. We're grateful to everyone who came out to support – and especially to Lift Bridge Brewery for creating such a fun and meaningful way to uplift local nonprofits.

Thank you to **Tim Safe with Pathfinder Insurance Brokers, Kevin Johnson with Johnson Boog, LLC, and Eric Hoffman with Datastream Connexion for your incredible matches of \$500 each!** A heartfelt thank-you to Aimee P. for sharing her voice, and to our board members and volunteers who helped make the evening so welcoming and memorable. **It truly set the tone for a week rooted in community and giving back.**



This year's United Way Week was officially proclaimed by the Cities of Bayport, Stillwater, and Oak Park Heights, recognizing the power of coming together to support local needs. Because of **you**, so many incredible local businesses participated and **we raised \$14,229!** Our interactive map also saw **835 views**, helping connect even more neighbors with ways to give back.

Thank you to our 2025 Give Back Partners:

- 350 Degrees Bakery
- Art N' Soul
- Betty Junes
- Black Letter Books
- Budget Blinds Stillwater/Lake Elmo
- Candyland
- Capture Your Photos
- Cherry Street Bread
- Daily Grind
- Dairy Queen Mahtomedi
- Darn Knit Anyway
- Dugout Bar Mahtomedi
- Enchante
- Establish Salon
- First Resource Bank
- Fitness Focus Mahtomedi
- Frigaard's Bar
- Gold & Eight
- Goldwood Kennels
- Harvest Fest
- Heritage Embroidery
- Home to Sweet Home
- Krueger's Christmas Tree Farm
- La Vie est Belle

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- Locale Makers Market
- Mad Capper
- Nirvana Nail Studio
- Partylite
- River Bank Gifts
- Rivertown Animal Hospital Stillwater
- Scheel's Catering
- Stillwater Vet Clinic
- Stokes Jewelry
- The Bread Nest
- The Wild Bean Mahtomedi
- Toxy Free
- Valley Bookseller
- Westfall Technik, Willernie
- Wildwood Tavern
- Zignego Insurance Agency

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After years of talking about a sporting clays fundraiser, this year everything came together! We had a lot of fun, raised money for local agencies and connected with new partners. Excited for next year!

- Michael Wilhelmi
Xcel Energy

During United Way Week, we also took part in the first annual **Sheriff's Team Challenge Clay Shoot**, bringing together both sides of the river for a day of friendly competition and shared purpose.

Together, we truly hit the mark, **raising over \$20,000 alongside United Way St. Croix & Red Cedar Valleys** to support partners and programs across Washington County and neighboring counties. A big thank-you to presenting sponsor Xcel Energy, our generous event sponsors, and everyone who joined in the fun - **we couldn't have done it without you.**

Your generosity continues to fuel the vital work of our local partner agencies meeting our community's most urgent needs.

Together, we're making Washington County stronger - one act of kindness at a time.

And **yes**, mark your calendars for **United Way Week 2026: October 5 - 11.** We can't wait to do it all again.



Around the Office

Goodbyes, Hellos, and Year-End Care

This season brought meaningful change to the United Way office – filled with both **heartfelt goodbyes** and **joyful new beginnings**. We shared warm wishes with Mai Chee as she stepped into her next professional chapter. Her laughter, hard work, bright energy, and steady presence are deeply missed, and we're so grateful for all she poured into our mission and this office.

At the very same time, our United Way family grew with **the arrival of baby Gunnar**, who made his debut on November 3, joining Kelly, Christian, and big sister E. From welcoming a new life to celebrating new beginnings, this season truly reflected the beautiful full-circle moments that community brings. **Congratulations to them** – we couldn't be happier for your growing family.

As the year comes to a close, our office will be **closed** for year-end from **December 24 through January 2**, with limited hours on Monday, December 29, Tuesday, December 30, and Wednesday, December 31.

While our office may be quiet during this time, support is always close at hand.

- 211 – For housing, mental health, utilities, and more
- 988 – For suicide or crisis support

And our phones are always available at 651-439-3838, ext. 4.

We look forward to returning in the new year refreshed and ready to continue the work – together.



The Circle Fund

A Full-Circle Way to support our community, Year-Round

The Circle Fund is a simple yet **powerful** way to make a lasting impact in Washington County – **every single month**.



Your recurring gift – even \$10 a month, helps our friends, family, and neighbors through the most pressing and urgent moments of their lives. From crisis to stability, your generosity creates a true full-circle of care. **Staying 100% local.**

Your monthly gift provides steady, reliable support that allows your LOCAL United Way to respond when needs arise – whether it's housing assistance, local access to food pantries, mental health support, legal services, emergency assistance, and so much more. Small monthly gifts come together to create big, life-changing impact for the people who call our community home.

Join the Circle

Give: Commit to \$10/month and help ensure help is always here when it's needed.

Share: Invite friends and family to join you in keeping compassion local & strong.

Together, we can surround our community with support – **one month at a time, one person at a time.**

Join the circle today!

WE ARE YOUR LOCAL UNITED WAY

MISSION

Through trusted relationships, generated resources, and effectively distributed funds we will unite and strengthen our community.

VISION

Create new ways to develop an empathetic and engaged community and generate abundant resources to meet or exceed our local community needs.

DEI STATEMENT

We are dedicated to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in all we do. We strive for a vibrant and equitable community.



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