



Winter Wrap Up 2025/2026

the COMMUNITY CIRCLE

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



These quiet, yet powerful moments.

As winter settled across Washington County, we're reminded that even in the quieter months, something powerful is always happening beneath the surface. December, January, and February may not be filled with large events, but they are some of the most meaningful months of our year. It's during this season that our community shows up in extraordinary ways – through year-end generosity, renewed commitments, and steady belief in what we can accomplish together.

Because of you, the close of 2025 was filled with impact. Your support continues to fuel critical programs, strengthens local nonprofits, and ensures neighbors can access help they need. Winter is when we reflect, regroup, and refocus – and when we lay the groundwork for the year ahead.

Inside this winter wrap-up, you'll find moments of gratitude and celebration, including honoring a dedicated board member and staff milestones, welcome new team members, a spotlight on 211, details about our grant funding, our newly launched website, and some important save the dates! Thank you for being part of this work - and for helping our community bloom in every season.

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



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Board Recognition & New Leadership

For ten incredible years, Annette Sallman helped guide the heart and direction of United Way of Washington County-East. In December, we paused to celebrate and thank her for a decade of extraordinary service on our Board of Directors. She generously shared her time, wisdom, and unwavering commitment to this community – serving as Board President, Past President, and Secretary. Her steady leadership, deep knowledge of our region, and joyful presence strengthened not only our board, but our work across the entire St. Croix Valley. Annette truly shows up – whether at Stuff the Bus, Igniter gatherings, or our annual gala – leading with both purpose and heart.

While she is missed on our board, we are grateful she continues to serve our community as Executive Director of Community Education and Community Relations for Stillwater Area Public Schools. Annette, thank you for a decade of leadership, joy, and dedication. Your impact will be felt for years to come.



As we close this meaningful chapter, we're proud to welcome Aaron Siegle as our new Board President. Since joining the board in 2020, Aaron has brought a steady, forward-thinking approach to leadership – grounded in collaboration, strategy, and a deep commitment to community impact. Recently announced as CEO of First Resource Bank, his passion for service and belief in strong local communities position him well to lead United Way into this next chapter.

We're excited to see how Aaron's vision and leadership will continue to strengthen our mission and expand our impact across Washington County. Join us in welcoming him! You can view our full Board of Directors at www.uwwce.org/our-leaders.

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The ease in which Annette made the district resources available for Stuff the Bus was not only efficient, but kind and so generous. The program transitioned and thrived based on the assistance she provided and numerous families were able to benefit because of it.

– Erin McQuay, Stuff the Bus Lead

Staff Milestones

Behind every campaign, connection, and community moment is a small - **but incredibly mighty** - team making it all happen. This year, we're proud to celebrate some meaningful staff milestones and the heart each person brings to United Way of Washington County-East.

Kelly

Development & Community Engagement Manager

For 8 years, Kelly has been building relationships that strengthen our entire community. Her dedication to sponsorships, authentic connection, and meeting businesses where they're at has helped expand our impact year after year. She has a remarkable way of showing up - listening first, finding ways to help, and creating partnerships rooted in trust. Thank you so much Kelly for your energy, dedication, and heart!



Erin

Individual Giving Manager

In her two years, Erin has built meaningful relationships with our donors and strengthened the foundation of our individual giving efforts. She has served as the 'Bus Driver' for Stuff the Bus, grown our pillar community, and can-do attitude to every project. Her commitment to this work reflects her belief that community care matters deeply. Thank you for your compassion, dedication, and thoughtful touches to all that you do.



Sarah

Marketing & Communications Manager

Over the past two years, Sarah has helped elevate the United Way brand through meaningful storytelling and engaging visuals across print and digital platforms. From social media growth to community messaging, she has focused on creating content that truly connects - sharing the stories of donors, partner agencies, and neighbors to show the real impact. Her passion for communicating the "why" behind our work has strengthened our community presence and for that we are so grateful!



Welcome New Staff | New Energy. Same Mission.

As we look ahead to a full and impactful year, we're excited to introduce a few new faces who are already bringing fresh energy to our work – all while embracing the same mission of strengthening our community right here in the St. Croix Valley.



Moraima

Gala Intern

A senior at St. Catherine University majoring in Communication. She has a passion for storytelling and growth as she explores future plans - including graduate school. She will support planning for A Night in Full Bloom, assisting with event logistics, auction item coordination, and on-site event execution. We're grateful for her creativity, thoughtfulness and steady support during this busy season for us!

Lauren

Office & Event Support

If there's a to-do list, an errand to run, or event details to finalize, Lauren is our go-to. She has stepped in to support the team with office coordination and event execution, helping ensure the details are covered and nothing falls through the cracks. We are so thankful for her flexibility, reliability, and willingness to jump right in!

Emily

Administrative & Development Coordinator

Emily Krawczewski (Kroff-CHESS-Key) joined our team just a couple weeks ago as our Full-time Administrative & Development Coordinator. A proud native of Granville, Ohio, she earned her B.A. in Mass Communications from Miami University and a Master of Library & Information Science from University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee.

Emily brings a wonderfully diverse background – from working as a radio DJ in Ohio to serving as a tour guide in Nashville. Most recently, she spent five years with the Washington County Historical Society in Stillwater, where she developed museum exhibits, planned programs and events, and connected community members with local history. She was also part of the 2023-24 Leadership in the Valley cohort.

Outside of work, Emily serves on Chi Omega Fraternity's National Archives Committee and plays in the Pan-handlers Steel Drum Band. She enjoys discovering cozy coffee shops, exploring Walt Disney history, and visiting northern Michigan. Emily and her husband, Taylor, live in Forest Lake with their two pet rabbits.



Left to Right; Erin, Sarah, Kristin, Lauren, Emily



UNITED WAY
Washington
County-East



Get Connected. Get Help.™

Help Starts Here

When a neighbor doesn't know where to turn, we'd encourage 211 be their first call – and sometimes the most important one they could make. In January 2026 alone, 467 contacts (calls and texts) were made to 211, resulting in 755 referrals for support.

The top requests?

- Housing
- Utility Assistance
- Clothing & Household Essentials
- Food/Meals

Digging deeper, 191 referrals were for rent payment assistance, 115 for homelessness prevention, and 68 for electric service payment help. Behind every number is a family working hard but falling short – a reminder that the need in our community is urgent and real.

A few of our trusted partner agencies are included in the list of places that 211 connects residents to for trusted local help including; St. Andrew's Community Resource Center, Valley Outreach, Solid Ground, Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, and The Connect Center. **Yet, the data shows there is more work to do.**

In zip codes like 55025 (Forest Lake), where 35% of households fall below the ALICE threshold, and 55003 (Bayport), where that number rises to 37%, call volume doesn't always reflect the level of need. In Bayport, for example, we only saw one 211 call in January – a clear signal that we must continue raising awareness that 211 is available to anyone, anywhere, anytime.

ALICE households – families who are Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed – are working, contributing members of our community who still struggle to afford the basics. In Oakdale/Landfall (39%), Bayport (37%), and Forest Lake (35%), more than one-third of families are living below the ALICE threshold. These are our neighbors, coworkers, and friends.

Help starts with connection – but it continues with support. If you believe everyone deserves access to safe housing, heat, and food, we invite you to make a gift to our Emergency Fund today. Your donation helps ensure that when someone calls 211, there is local help ready on the other end.

Because every day – especially in these moments – help starts here.

Click to learn more
about **211**.

Donate to help all
our neighbors.

Explore **ALICE** data
in Minnesota.

Grant Funding Applications NOW OPEN!

Each year, United Way of Washington County-East partners with dedicated community members to invest in local nonprofits and the vital programs strengthening our community. From within our four impact areas; Youth Opportunity, Healthy Community, Basic Needs, and Self-Sufficiency, our grant funding supports the work that helps every neighbor thrive.

We're excited to share that applications for our 2026/2027 Grant Cycle are NOW OPEN! If your organization is working to address the most pressing and urgent needs in Washington County, we invite you to apply. **The deadline to submit is Tuesday, March 24, 2026 at 1:00pm CST.**

Have questions about the process or eligibility? Please reach out to Sarah at sarah.mulford@uwwce.org - we're here to help.

**Take me to the
Grant Application**

The Process

We believe in the power of community to solve community challenges. That's why our Community Investment Process is 100% community driven. Local volunteers review applications, participate in site visits, and help determine funding allocations. This hands-on approach allows everyone to see and hear firsthand the impact nonprofits are making - and ensures investments reflect the real needs of our region.

Want to be part of the action? Sign up to be a Community Investment Volunteer today!

**Sign up to become a
volunteer today!**



New Website Launched!

After a year of thoughtful planning and behind-the-scenes work, we're excited to share that our newly rebranded website has officially launched! Over the past year, Sarah participated in a four-month Rebranding Cohort as part of United Way Worldwide's rebrand and then worked diligently to bring our new look to life online. From refreshed messaging to updated design elements, every detail was approached with care and intention.

You'll notice vibrant new colors, updated fonts, and clean, modern templates that better reflect the energy and heart of our work. We're especially excited about a few new sections: Latest News & Updates, where you'll find press releases, data insights, and upcoming events; an expanded Staff & Board of Directors page to easily meet the faces behind United Way of Washington County-East; and streamlined donate buttons and volunteer sign-ups to make getting involved simpler than ever.

We invite you to take some time to explore, click around, and see what's new. And if you happen to stumble across a glitch or something that needs attention, please let Sarah know - by the end of this rebrand, she's read every page at least ten times or more and would truly appreciate the extra set of eyes

Click the image below to start exploring the website!



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YOUR LOCAL UNITED WAY

Serving Washington County - working together to ensure every child, family, and neighbor can thrive.

[LEARN MORE](#)



MAKING AN IMPACT

Together, we're making Washington County a place where all people can thrive—through equity, inclusion, and community partnership.



Youth Opportunity

Ensuring that all youth can thrive in our community.



Healthy Community

Improving mental and physical well-being for all.



Basic Needs

Providing basic needs to all our neighbors.



Self-Sufficiency

Addressing needs today to advance life tomorrow.

2026 Events - Save the Dates!

Mark your calendars – 2026 is filled with meaningful moments to gather, give back, and grow together as a community. We can't wait to see you throughout the year!

Friday, April 10

UW Gala - A Night in Full Bloom

Saturday, May 30

5th Annual Fish United

July/August

Stuff the Bus

Wednesday, August 12

You R You Retreat

Wednesday, August 26

Lunch + Learn

Wednesday, September 23

Leadership Breakfast

October 5 - 11

United Way Week



Click to view **all** events and details!

P.S. don't forget!

You have **until March 31** to use your **Best Wings in the Valley** card at participating locations around town! Voting ends April 15, and United Way is honored to be one of the benefiting nonprofits this year. Every wing and every vote makes a difference. Learn more at www.bestwingsinthevalley.com

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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