



2024 COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT



Oshkosh Area
UNITED WAY

LEADING WITH PURPOSE

Aligning Efforts for a Stronger Community

Dear Friends,

Thanks to you, the past year has been one of meaningful progress and powerful partnership. Your generosity, time, and trust in Oshkosh Area United Way have helped us do more than meet needs—**you've helped us drive change.**

Together, we've advanced literacy, expanded access to mental health, and strengthened community resiliency. But even more, your support has empowered us to focus on what truly sets United Way apart: the ability to bring people together, align resources, and lead lasting change.

This report highlights how Oshkosh Area United Way shows up—not only as a funder, but as an advocate, collaborator, and a community problem-solver. While grantmaking remains a key tool, it is guided by strategy and focused on amplifying impact and serving as a multiplier for lasting change.

Our core mission is to identify gaps, connect efforts, and make sure individuals and families across the greater Oshkosh area have the support they need to reach their potential. Whether it's:

- igniting early literacy through *Growing Readers*,
- improving financial stability with free tax assistance through *VITA*,
- helping people access the workforce through *GO Transit's Access to Jobs*,
- strengthening mental health through *Peer Support Training* with the Oshkosh Fire Department,
- building resilience through fiscal partnerships like the *Winnebago County Emergency Assistance Collaborative* and the *Back 2 School Fair*—
- collecting and distributing essential goods through our *Community Vault*,
- or mobilizing volunteers through *VolunteerOshkosh.org* to meet critical needs.

We're focused on solving root problems—not just treating the symptoms.

You are a vital part of this work. Your belief in our mission allows us to think bigger, act bolder, and keep moving forward—with purpose and with you by our side.

We're grateful to be on this journey with you. **Together, we are building a stronger, healthier Oshkosh area**—for today and for generations to come.

With gratitude,



Beth Oswald
President and CEO



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THANK YOU

Thank you to the volunteers, donors, businesses, community partners, and neighbors who continue to support our mission. Your generosity fuels the work we do so individuals and families in Oshkosh and the surrounding area can reach their full potential. Each person, family, organization, and foundation has their own reason for giving—and together, those reasons add up to something powerful. Because of you, children are learning, families are stabilizing, and lives are changing. **United is the Way** forward—for a stronger, healthier community, today and for generations to come.

HOW WE TURN VISION INTO IMPACT

The Strategy Behind Every Story

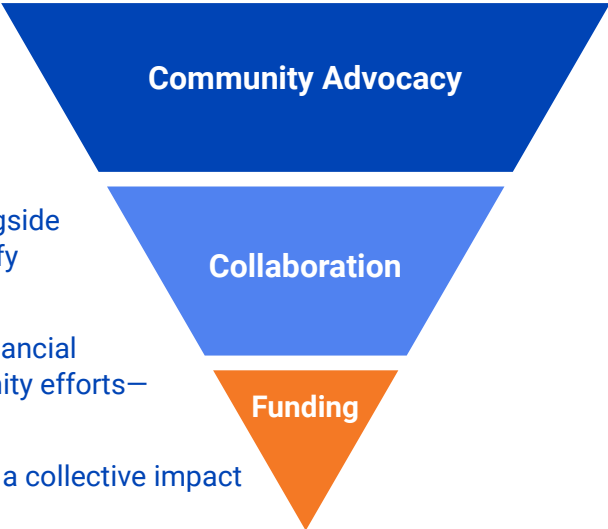
Every story of impact you'll read in this report began with intentional strategy—guided by collaboration, data, and a clear understanding of our community's evolving needs.

In 2024, your generosity helped drive more than **\$1.65 million** into community-focused work across the greater Oshkosh area. At Oshkosh Area United Way (OAUW), we go beyond grantmaking—we advocate for local needs, build collaborative partnerships, and align funding to strengthen systems and create long-term impact.

Acting as an advocate, connector, and problem-solver, we work alongside local organizations to identify gaps, coordinate resources, and amplify solutions that help our community thrive.

From early literacy and workforce transportation to mental health, financial stability, and volunteer mobilization, your support multiplies community efforts—extending the reach of every hour, dollar, and idea.

Because of you, thousands of local lives are being improved through a collective impact that's more than financial—it's **UNITED**.



IGNITING A LOVE OF READING

Growing Readers

Every child deserves the chance to succeed—starting with the ability to read at grade level. That's why OAUW continues to invest in **Growing Readers**, an after-school tutoring program for 3rd–5th graders who need extra support building strong literacy skills.

Offered in partnership with the Oshkosh Area School District and UW-Oshkosh, this program helps fill critical learning gaps with free, high-quality instruction delivered by trained tutors—including federal work-study students. Hosted at multiple elementary schools, students strengthen foundational reading skills and often improve by at least one grade level.

Your support helps fund additional tutors (not covered by work-study), curriculum, and materials—expanding access and opportunity for local students.

Because **United is the Way** to turn today's readers into tomorrow's leaders.



52

OASD students participated in tutoring program



20

UWO students provided 1-on-1 tutoring



1,500

hours of reading



81%

program participants improved reading proficiency



141

active participants
at the end of 2024

40%

qualified because of donors
like you

EXPANDING ACCESS. OPPORTUNITY IN REACH.

Access to Jobs

When reliable transportation isn't an option, keeping a steady job becomes nearly impossible. That's why Oshkosh Area United Way partners with GO Transit to support **Access to Jobs (ATJ)**—a program that connects income-eligible workers with affordable, on-demand cab rides to and from work.

Whether bus routes don't run during their shift or there's no reasonable stop nearby, ATJ ensures transportation challenges don't stand in the way of employment. In 2024, every ride helped someone get to work—and stay on the path to financial stability.

Because of your support, we closed a critical gap. Your donations allowed the program to serve individuals earning up to 275% of the federal poverty level. Without OAUW's funding, eligibility would have stopped at 225%, leaving many without access to the rides they depend on.

This program doesn't just move people from one place to another—it moves them toward a more secure future.

United is the Way to expand access and keep opportunity within reach.

REMOVING BARRIERS. RETURNING DOLLARS.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)

For many in our community, filing taxes isn't just paperwork—it's a **barrier to stability**. Families earning less than \$64,000, those with disabilities, or individuals with limited English often struggle to afford tax prep or navigate complex tax laws on their own.

That's why we support the **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)** program in partnership with UW-Oshkosh. In 2024, despite not receiving IRS funding, UWO volunteers helped **105 households** file accurate, confidential returns—thanks in part to OAUW's **\$3,000 investment**.

That investment saved families an estimated **\$30,000** in tax prep fees and helped them claim critical refunds and credits. **The EITC alone returned an estimated \$13,715** to local families—dollars they may have missed without free, expert help.

Your support removes barriers, returns dollars, and strengthens financial footing for local families. **That's the power of United.**

How VITA Helped Put Money Back in Local Pockets



105 tax returns filed



24 generated the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)



1 in 5 eligible individuals typically don't claim it



That's about 5 families who might have missed out



\$2,743 average EITC in 2023



Used for rent, food, and essential needs

STRENGTHENING MENTAL HEALTH OF THOSE WHO PROTECT US

Oshkosh Fire Department Peer Support Training

Firefighters face intense pressure every day—from life-threatening emergencies to long hours and emotional strain. The Oshkosh Fire Department's **Peer Support Program** is helping shift the culture, ensuring firefighters have someone to turn to—a trained peer who understands the job and can connect them to the right resources.

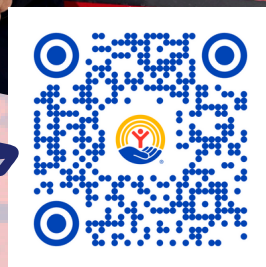
Funding from Oshkosh Area United Way makes sure these Peer Support Team members are trained to recognize warning signs, offer immediate peer-level support, and encourage professional care when needed. Team members also receive specialized training in crisis response, including “defusings,” a proven intervention tool used after particularly difficult calls.

This program fosters a culture where mental health is prioritized and stigma is reduced, making it easier for firefighters to speak up and seek help.

For just \$60 per firefighter, **United is the Way** to build a more resilient department—one that's equipped to care for its own and better serve our entire community.



Scan to
hear more
about OFD
Peer Support



WHEN SUPPORT STARTS BEHIND THE SCENES

Oshkosh Area United Way Helps Local Programs Grow and Deliver Impact

Serving as a fiscal sponsor means managing funds responsibly on behalf of programs or collaborations that don't have a formal nonprofit status or administrative capacity to do so. For OAUW, this behind-the-scenes role strengthens accountability, expands access to funding, and helps grassroots initiatives focus on serving people.

We've proudly served as the fiscal sponsor for the **Winnebago County Emergency Assistance Collaboration**, a pilot project that helped more than 100 families avoid eviction through fast, coordinated financial support and wraparound services. We've also recently resumed our fiscal sponsor role for the **Back 2 School Fair**, an annual effort co-led by nearly 20 nonprofits—including OAUW—

that provides essential supplies to children in the Oshkosh Area School District. In addition to helping plan the event, OAUW funds more than 500 shoe vouchers each year to help students start the school year with confidence.

By managing financial and administrative responsibilities, OAUW helps programs operate more efficiently, remain compliant, and become eligible for grant funding they might not otherwise be able to access. This behind-the-scenes support allows partners to focus on what matters most—serving our community.

United is the Way we can continue helping area nonprofits and programs build capacity and expand their reach.



Winnebago County Emergency Collaboration



Back 2 School Fair

MEETING URGENT NEEDS. UNLOCKING LONG-TERM CHANGE.

How the Community Vault Helps Local Programs Do More

A bottle of shampoo. A pack of diapers. A roll of toilet paper. These everyday items can help someone regain stability, maintain dignity, and take the next step forward.

The **OAUW Community Vault** provides a centralized space where local nonprofits, schools, and service agencies can access community donated supplies—like hygiene items, baby products, and cleaning essentials—at no cost. By filling urgent needs, the Vault allows organizations to put more of their budgets toward long-term solutions.

As a partner, we coordinate the collection and distribution of resources—getting them to where they're needed most. There are no limits on what groups can request, and no barriers for those they serve.

But the true power of the Vault goes beyond the items themselves.

When basic needs are met, individuals are better positioned to engage with programs and services that address the root causes of their challenges—leading to stronger outcomes and greater opportunity.

United is the Way to turn generosity into lasting change.



"In a tight economy, resources like the Vault allow those in need to reallocate limited dollars. One quick email to United Way and the response was, 'Come on over.' Those supplies helped a community member finally settle into housing after months of homelessness."

~ Sara Brown
Program Supervisor HELP
Winnebago County Human Services

INFORMATION & REFERRAL SOURCE

United Way's 211 Resource Helpline

Your support provides access to the **free resource and referral hotline** that connects callers from southern Winnebago County to local health and human service resources—whether financial, family, health, or disaster-related.



2,485

Calls, Texts, or Chats



5,514

Referrals

TOP 5 REQUESTS

- 1) Housing & Shelter
- 2) Mental Health & Addictions
- 3) Utilities
- 4) Healthcare & COVID-19
- 5) Transportation Assistance

Scan to hear how
United Way 211
helps.



CONNECTING PEOPLE TO PURPOSE

Lifting Up Nonprofits and Community Through Service

Oshkosh Area United Way launched **VolunteerOshkosh.org** to help nonprofits find the volunteers they need—and help community members find meaningful ways to give back.

In 2024 alone, the site generated:



31,500 opportunity views



20,537 nonprofit page views



628 volunteer responses to over **200** local opportunities

We provide year-round training, resources, and peer learning opportunities for local volunteer leaders—helping them build capacity, strengthen programs, and grow their impact—all at no cost.

We also coordinate **Day of Caring**, now 27 years strong. In 2024, the event brought together 198 volunteers from 28 companies who gave 594 hours of service—valued at nearly \$19,000—to support local nonprofits, schools, and community spaces.

When people volunteer, they do more than lend their time. They meet neighbors, discover local resources, and work side-by-side to improve the place they call home. Volunteering helps people feel like they're part of their community—not just living in it.

Watch a
story of
purpose



United is the Way we do it—together.

TOMORROW'S IMPACT

Mapping a New Chapter Together

At Oshkosh Area United Way, we don't believe in doing things the same way just because "that's how it's always been done." As we move forward, we're building a strategic plan driven by data and rooted in what our community has told us it needs: greater affordability for working families—housing, health care, education, food, child care, and more—along with simplified services and a variety of options to meet diverse needs.

This isn't about doing more of the same—it's about doing what matters most, with greater agility and responsiveness to meet our community's changing needs.

In the year ahead, we're focused on:

- **Turning insight into action.** Our new strategic plan will bring sharper focus to the areas where we can drive the most meaningful change—through partnerships, systems work, and targeted investments.
- **Lifting up ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) families.*** No one should have to choose between food, child care, and health care—we're addressing root causes to ensure basic needs are met.
- **Making it easier to get involved.** Our upgraded oshkoshunitedway.org will help you take action, learn about our impact, and find the resources you need—faster.
- **Being more than a funder.** We act as a connector, a trusted partner who brings people together and sparks collaborative solutions. Our support is hands-on, community-driven, and grounded in shared purpose.

Continue to be part of the impact—your gift helps drive change.
Donate today at oshkoshunitedway.org/donate.

SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR

23RD ANNUAL
RACE FOR THE LIGHT

SATURDAY,
DECEMBER 6, 2025

oshkoshunitedway.org/race

*Source: 2024 UnitedForAlice.org/Wisconsin.

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