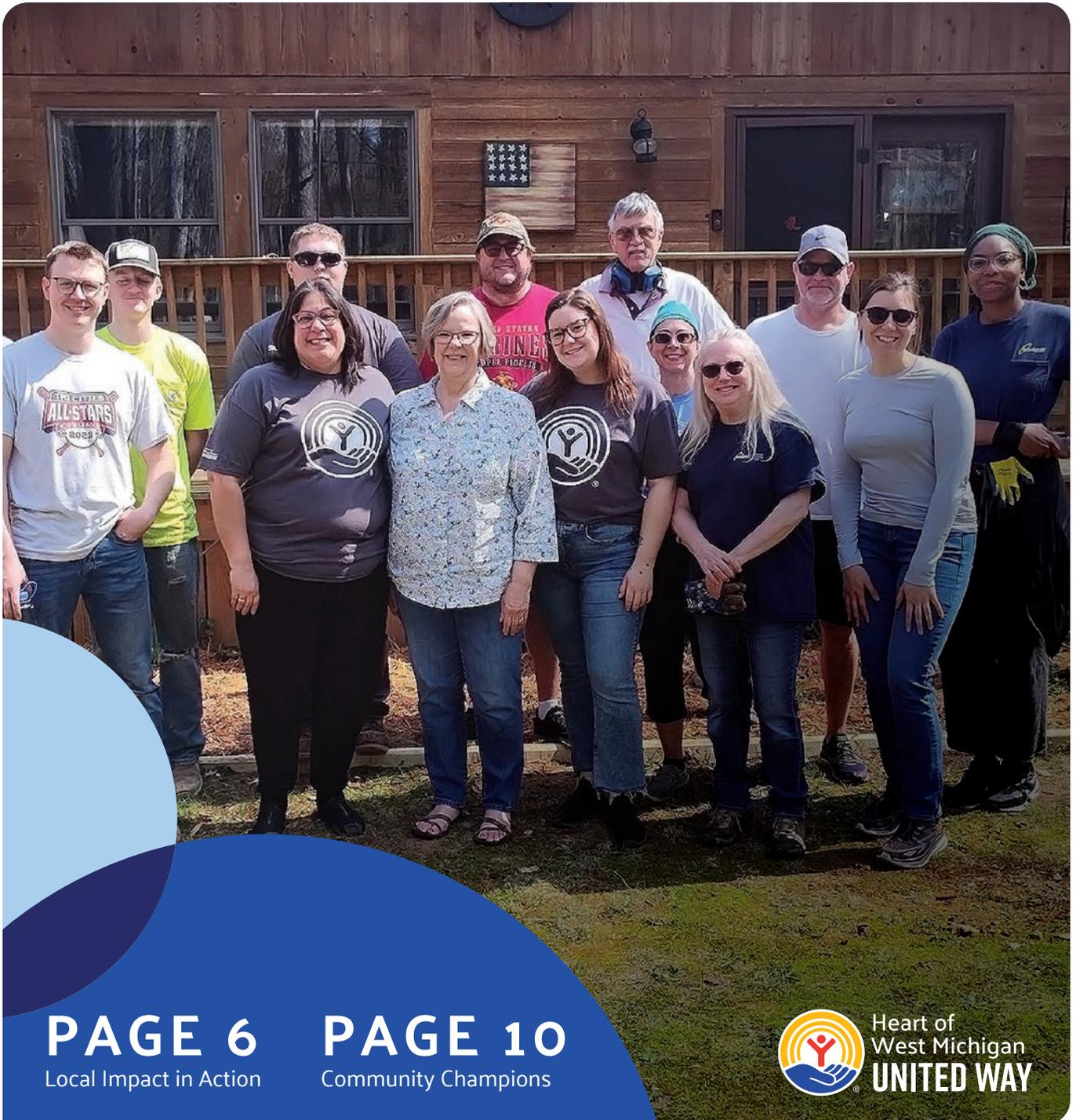


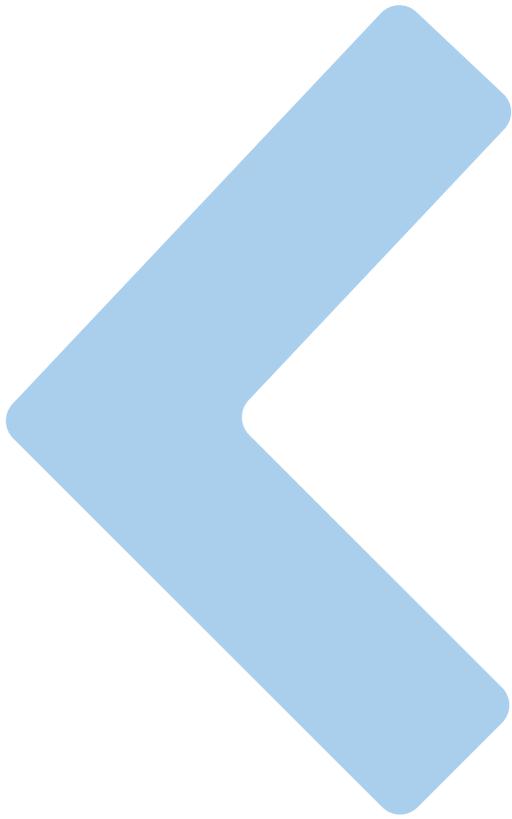
BUILDING STABILITY. EMPOWERING OPPORTUNITY.



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Community Champions





**HELPING NEIGHBORS
MOVE FROM CRISIS
TO STABILITY, AND
FROM STABILITY TO
OPPORTUNITY.**



As we close the books on our fiscal year and move through the midpoint of 2025, I find myself reflecting not just on the progress we've made, but on how we made it.

Across Allegan, Kent, and Ottawa counties, we showed up – not just as an organization, but as a community – ready to meet the moment. **And it mattered.** It mattered to the single parent facing eviction. To the teen discovering their potential. To the senior finding connection. To the local nonprofit navigating rising demand with limited resources and growing uncertainty.

At Heart of West Michigan United Way, we know that poverty doesn't look the same for everyone. That's why our approach isn't one-size-fits-all. **We connect the dots between people and resources, invest in solutions that work, build where gaps exist, and lead efforts to strengthen the systems our community depends on.**

This past fiscal year, we deepened our reach regionally and sharpened our collective vision. We unified our efforts across Allegan, Kent, and Ottawa counties and strengthened partnerships with local nonprofits, responding to long-standing challenges while remaining nimble to emerging needs. We prioritized both immediate relief and long-term, systemic solutions, helping neighbors move from crisis to stability, and from stability to opportunity.

Your support makes this possible. Because of you, more than one in ten neighbors across Allegan, Kent, and Ottawa counties found a path forward.

As we look ahead to the remainder of 2025 and beyond, one thing remains clear: our community still needs us. Whether it's empowering local businesses to act, coordinating rapid response in times of crisis, or standing alongside partners and effective programs to meet our neighbors how and when they need us, we are ready.

Thank you for believing in this work. Thank you for continuing to walk with us. The future we're building – one where everyone has a fair shot at success – only happens when we do it together.

With deep gratitude,



Michelle Van Dyke
President & CEO



Redefining What's Possible: **A THRIVING COMMUNITY FOR ALL**

At Heart of West Michigan United Way, we envision a future where every person has a fair shot at stability and opportunity, regardless of their background or zip code. But we know this vision doesn't become reality on its own. It takes a model built for both urgency and long-term progress. It takes a commitment to adaptability, collective action, and building community resilience.

We're proud to serve Allegan, Kent, and Ottawa counties with a deepened regional approach, one that responds to local needs while advancing a unified vision. **Together, we are building a thriving community for all.**



From neighborhood to neighborhood, our model ensures every dollar goes further and every effort is connected to something greater.

We Invest in high-impact partners and transformative solutions.
We Build innovative and responsive programs where gaps exist.
We Mobilize our community to align solutions and drive lasting change.

We don't just fund programs – we create pathways.

Discover more at hwmuw.org/vision



Our work is grounded in four core areas. Each area is essential to helping individuals and families move from crisis to stability, and from stability to opportunity.



Financial Security

Keeping people housed, employed, and on track toward long-term financial health. Whether through housing support, job training, or free tax prep, we meet people where they are and help them take the next right step.



Youth Opportunity

Empowering the next generation by focusing on the moments that shape a young person's path and shaping solutions that build skills, confidence, and belonging. Because thriving kids don't just strengthen families, they strengthen entire communities.



Healthy Community

Improving health and wellbeing for all through access to nutritious food, mental health support, and family stability services that reduce stress and build resilience.



Community Resiliency

Making sure West Michigan is ready when crisis hits by coordinating emergency response, operating our 211 helpline, and strengthening the nonprofit ecosystem that holds our community together.

COMING
SOON:

THE 2026-28
COMMUNITY
INVESTMENT
CYCLE

As we look ahead, we're preparing to launch our next cycle of community investments. Our process is designed to deepen alignment with our impact areas and increase flexibility for nonprofit partners through **transformative solutions**.

THIS NEW APPROACH WILL PRIORITIZE SOLUTIONS THAT:

- Address immediate needs and their root causes
- Leverage community voice and data to shape solutions
- Improve how systems interconnect to serve people
- Reduce barriers to access

We'll continue to invest in what works and remain bold enough to continue building what's needed.

Together, we're redefining what's possible.

Learn more at hwmuw.org/investment-process

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

LOCAL IMPACT IN ACTION

Every data-point we report and every story we tell starts with one thing: real people. Across Allegan, Kent, and Ottawa counties, we've seen neighbors step up, solutions emerge, and progress take root – often in ways that go unseen.

The highlights below offer a glimpse into what local impact really looks like when we meet people where they are and walk alongside them into what's next.



Expanding Access and Impact: United Way's VITA

Our Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program expanded significantly this year, bringing free, high-quality tax prep services to all three counties we serve: Allegan, Kent, and Ottawa.

Working in collaboration with multiple local partners offering VITA, we helped return \$9.2 million to West Michigan families. These refunds meant rent paid, debt reduced, tuition covered, and savings started. For many, it was the first step toward long-term financial stability.

Key to this expansion were our Community Tax Days, hosted throughout the region to bring VITA directly to neighborhoods. **By meeting people where they are – at community centers, libraries, and trusted local sites – we removed barriers like transportation, internet access, and tax prep costs.**



hwmuw.org/vita



Listening to Lead: Ottawa County Community Assessment

We can't solve what we don't understand. That's why every three years, we partner with dozens of community stakeholders to conduct a robust Ottawa County Community Assessment – engaging residents, nonprofits, and local leaders to better understand needs and strengths.

The result? A clearer picture of where gaps exist and what solutions are already working. The assessment is shaping how we approach grantmaking in Ottawa County, ensuring our strategies reflect local realities while still connecting to our broader regional vision.

It's also reinforcing a truth we hold close: the most effective solutions are designed with the community, not just for it.



hwmuw.org/community-assessments





Investing in Resident-Led Change: Opportunity Empowered

In partnership with the Urban League of West Michigan, our Opportunity Empowered initiative provides one-time grants and ongoing capacity-building support to resident leaders in Kent County launching solutions in their own neighborhoods. These are grassroots projects with deep roots – ideas designed by the community, for the community.



From creating culturally responsive youth engagement programs to addressing neighborhood safety and mental health, this initiative invests in leadership that already exists. It ensures that people most impacted by inequity have the tools and trust to lead the change they know is needed.

By resourcing people – not just programs – we’re expanding what impact looks like and who gets to drive it.

hwmuw.org/capacity-building



Service in Action: Operation United

Each spring, we mobilize hundreds of volunteers across the region for Operation United – a targeted day of service supporting military families, veterans, and active-duty service members.

Projects range from outdoor home repairs and accessibility updates to community beautification and connection to essential services. Volunteers come from local businesses, schools, and civic groups—many meeting the families they serve face-to-face.



It’s a day where gratitude becomes action. And it reminds us that service isn’t something we schedule once a year – it’s how we show up, consistently and collectively, for the people who’ve served us.

This year, we were proud to have served 33 local veterans across all three counties because of local company support including Home Depot, Fifth Third Bank, Elevated Technologies, 92 for 22, and many more.



Stay informed, inspired,
and engaged. Join the
COMMUNITY PULSE

Celebrate United: HONORING WHAT WE BUILD TOGETHER

In April 2024, just before the streets of downtown Holland burst into bloom for Tulip Time, we gathered in that same spirit of renewal and unity to celebrate a milestone of our own.



Celebrate United is our annual gathering of community champions – those who give, volunteer, partner, and lead to make West Michigan stronger. This year’s event was especially meaningful, marking one full year of serving Allegan, Kent, and Ottawa counties as one united organization – with one mission, one voice, and one shared vision for what’s possible when we show up together.

Held in the heart of Holland, the evening brought together campaign leaders, corporate partners, nonprofit collaborators, and Giving Society members from across the region. We honored the people who made this first year of unified impact possible.



We celebrated:

- **\$12.5M invested in local impact**
- **Expanded programs reaching further across the region**
- **A record number of volunteer hours logged**
- **New and strengthened partnerships that set the stage for future innovation**

The setting was intentional. Holland, long a place of both tradition and transformation, symbolized our united reach and our shared future. It reminded us that the strength of our region lies not in any one county, but in the connections we are building between them. .

As we look ahead to 2025, Celebrate United will continue to be a signature moment to lift up the progress we’ve made and the purpose that drives us forward.

Because the real celebration isn’t just the event, it’s the impact we create all year long, together.



When crisis strikes or uncertainty overwhelms, a simple three-digit number connects thousands of West Michigan residents to the help they need: 2-1-1.



What makes 2-1-1 special is not just its reach, but its humanity. Every call is answered by a real person. Someone trained to listen without judgment, assess needs quickly, and offer referrals that are local, relevant, and actionable.

Behind the scenes, our 2-1-1 team collaborates with hundreds of partners to keep information up-to-date, identify trends in real time, and ensure that when someone calls, we're not just giving a number – we're opening a door.

Through natural disasters, economic shifts, or everyday emergencies, 2-1-1 remains one of the most important ways we live out our mission. It's where people go when they don't know where to start. And because of your support, we're always ready to answer.

2-1-1 is more than a number. It's how stability begins.

[Discover more at hwmuw.org/211](https://hwmuw.org/211)



OPERATED 24/7

And covers 15 counties across West and Northwest Michigan



TOP REQUESTED SERVICES

1. Rent Assistance
2. Tax Assistance (VITA)
3. Electric Payment Assistance



Get Connected. Get Help.™

Shining a Light on **COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS**

Across West Michigan, individuals and organizations of all kinds step up every year to create change – from the boardroom to the classroom, from community centers to media platforms. These honorees represent the best of what it means to lead with purpose and generosity.



BISSELL

UNITED PARTNER OF THE YEAR AWARD

For their longstanding leadership, employee engagement, and transformative giving across all three counties.



Acrisure

NEIGHBORHOOD HERO AWARD

Recognizing a partner deeply committed to uplifting local neighborhoods through grassroots action and bold philanthropy.

WZZM 13

INNOVATIVE ENGAGEMENT AWARD

For reimagining what it means to partner – with creativity, visibility, and a platform that amplifies community voice.



Arbor Circle (Ottawa), Christian Neighbors (Allegan), And Hispanic Center Of Western Michigan (Kent)

THE PINNACLE OF PARTNERSHIP AWARD

Celebrating three nonprofit partners whose deep collaboration and cross-sector engagement made a lasting difference across their counties and our region.

ITW

EMBLEM OF SUPPORT AWARD

For tremendous energy and consistent support that fuels our work behind the scenes and sustains critical initiatives year after year.

Stephanie Slingerland

DEFENDER OF TOMORROW AWARD

For visionary leadership that lifts up future generations through transformative investments in youth and family opportunity.



Aashna Cross

WORKPLACE COORDINATOR OF THE YEAR

Recognizing outstanding campaign leadership that inspires participation, generosity, and shared purpose.

Lauren Davis

ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR

For using her voice, network, and platform to champion United Way's mission and bring new partners into the fold.

Mary Van De Riet & The Young Family

YEARS FORWARD AWARD

For their decades of dedication to United Way and the enduring impact of their leadership, loyalty, and generosity.

To every partner, advocate, and community leader – thank you. Your partnership creates real, measurable change. And together, we're just getting started.

Leading by Example: **DONOR & PARTNER SPOTLIGHTS**

Throughout the year, certain individuals and organizations embody what it means to lead with purpose, act with compassion, and invest in a better future for all. These spotlights highlight just a few of the many who are making a measurable impact across West Michigan.



Bissell Volunteer Team



Perrigo Volunteer Team



Dick, Doug, and Cam Young



As this year's United Partner of the Year, Bissell sets the standard for what corporate partnership can look like. Their

best-in-class campaign engages employees across departments and levels, fueling both fundraising success and long-term community investment.

Bissell goes beyond the basics. They host a recurring series of impact tours for their leadership

team to connect firsthand with the outcomes of their giving. They plan creative fundraising events, mobilize volunteers, and participate in collection drives that directly support neighbors in need.

One of their most distinctive contributions is the refurbished vacuum program, which has provided over 1,000 vacuums to individuals and families served by United Way's community partners. It's a tangible, practical example of how Bissell lives its values – cleaning up more than floors, but also the barriers that stand in the way of dignity and stability. Their team shows up, not just in numbers but in spirit.





Rooted in West Michigan and reaching across the globe, Perrigo

continues to demonstrate what it means to care for community. Their support of United Way initiatives—from workplace giving to health equity partnerships—has created lasting impact in Allegan County and beyond. Perrigo doesn’t just invest in health; they invest in hope.

The 2023 campaign marked the final year with their long-time Employee Campaign Coordinator, who led the effort for nearly two decades. In 2024, two new coordinators stepped into the role with energy and determination—rolling out new incentives and hosting in-person opportunities to connect employees directly with United Way staff.

Their efforts paid off: donor participation and giving increased, and Perrigo’s impact expanded well beyond Michigan, reaching employees and communities across Ohio, Vermont, and New York.

The Young Family

Few families have left a deeper imprint on Heart of West Michigan United Way than the Young family. Their legacy spans generations of leadership, philanthropy, and unwavering belief in the power of community.

Richard (Dick) Young, former campaign chair and lifelong supporter, set the tone for what it means to lead with generosity and purpose. His example continues to inspire not only his family but also the broader philanthropic community.

His son, Doug Young, CEO of Behler-Young, has carried that torch with distinction. Doug recently completed his service on our Board of Directors and co-chaired the 2019-2020 Annual Campaign alongside his son, Cam Young.

Together, Doug and Cam brought multi-generational energy to the effort and continue to serve on the Campaign Cabinet. In 2025, the family is marking another important milestone: the 100th anniversary of Behler-Young Company. This centennial celebration honors a century of leadership, innovation, and deep roots in West Michigan – a legacy that continues to grow through both business and community impact.

This enduring family commitment reflects more than tradition – it shows the ripple effect of leadership rooted in values. In recognition of this deep and lasting impact, the Young Family will be honored with a special award this year, celebrating not just their service, but the legacy their family continues to build.



These are just a few of the many stories driving our work forward. We’re proud to spotlight these leaders and grateful to walk alongside so many others shaping the future of West Michigan.



HOW YOU CAN STAY INVOLVED

Creating lasting change in our community doesn't happen in one moment. It is built over time, through consistent action, shared commitment, and community-wide engagement. Whether you've been part of this work for years or you're just getting started, there are countless ways to deepen your involvement with Heart of West Michigan United Way.

GIVE

Make a one-time donation, start a monthly gift, or explore giving options that reflect your values and vision. Your support powers local solutions and strengthens the systems our community depends on.

VOLUNTEER

Join us in showing up where help is needed most. From packing school supplies to joining a Day of Service, every hour makes a difference.

ADVOCATE

Help us amplify the needs of our neighbors and the solutions that work. Advocacy is about making sure every voice is heard, especially those too often left out.

- Follow and share our work on social media
- Invite us to speak at your workplace, school, or peer community
- Use your network to champion this mission

GET CONNECTED

Stay informed, inspired, and engaged all year long:

- Sign up for our bi-monthly Community Pulse newsletter
- Join an Affinity Group
- Explore a Corporate Partnership



Every step you take brings our community closer to a future where everyone – across Allegan, Kent, and Ottawa counties – has the opportunity to thrive.

TAKE YOUR NEXT STEP AT: HWMUW.ORG





Let's keep moving forward. Together.

hwmuw.org

