

GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER. LIVE UNITED.

MERRILL AREA UNITED WAY, INC.

2022 ANNUAL REPORT
(Presented February 2023)

2022 – Our Year of Celebration and Recognition – 75 YEARS of Living United



Making 75 years of service memorable for our community was this past year's task at hand. October 27, 1947, marked the date the Merrill Area United Way established. Through the years United Way has provided an invaluable service by raising funds to support hundreds of local initiatives to help people.

Our 75th Anniversary Committee set forth several ideas to acknowledge this monumental achievement and to help United Way and embrace the community in celebration. While not every idea was conducted, the vast majority were. A high school logo contest, working through the Merrill High School Advanced Graphics course, was held with the winner being Kalynn Podgorski. She received a \$100 gift card and recognition for Podgorski's work, which was compliant with United Way Worldwide standards.

The Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce partnered with United Way in the development of a "Merrill Moments" video, shared with the Chamber membership, on their website and on United Way's social media pages.

Leah Burbach led the charge to develop a social media challenge of "75 Ways To Live United". It was developed with Merrill opportunities in mind. The document was also available at several events throughout the year. United Way utilized the 75th anniversary logo in its

documents, reports, and other print material. It was incorporated into our monthly article in the Foto News as well.

The Committee coordinated having banners made by the MAPS FAB Lab, getting logo T-shirts, pens, pencils, etc. to mark the celebrations. Considerable effort was put into event promotions, media announcements, talk-shows, articles. The Committee pursued a Mayoral Proclamation, signed, by Mayor Steve Hass in April, that clearly highlighted the significance of our United Way as a major benefit to the community. It was reported that since 2010 United Way raised and disbursed \$2,117,071.

United Way participated in the Kids Day Event in May, held at Riverside Athletic Club, and sponsored by Kathy Gress and her staff. Wonderful time! We had United Way information plus prizes and games at our booth.

A highlight of the activities was the concert held in early August, featuring **Leslie Blasing**, a fabulous entertainer from South Padre Island, with Bryce Thomaschefsky as her opener. Those attending had a fun time, tasty food, raffles and a 50/50 raffle. Blasing enjoyed it and is open to returning to help the United Way in the future. We then moved into preparing for our Labor Day Float. It was themed around the anniversary. Pencils were given to children on the Parade route, knowing there was plenty of candy already present.

In mid-September we had an Appreciation Picnic for the Agencies we support and our Board member, of course with much reference to the 75th anniversary. Everyone involved with United Way felt akin to the milestone we have achieved.

On September 29th United Way sponsored the "Business After Hours" event for the Chamber of Commerce members, again with reflection on our milestone anniversary. It was a wonderful evening.

Culminating the 75th anniversary activities was the United Way Fun Day held at the AGRA Pavilion on Saturday, October 15th. An estimated 150 people attended the event despite the first snowfall of the fall. Some of the outdoor games were not possible, most of the activities were brought inside and everyone had fun. The kids, however, did not mind the snow for the bouncy house. Juggler, magician, storyteller, face painting, indoor games at the agency booths and all the entertainment

and food were enjoyed by those attending. United Way was pleased to see the community come out and support them this year. Cannot wait to see what happens for the 100th Anniversary!!!

2022-23 Campaign was very successful
Even though we were down by – 9%

This fall's campaign brought in \$272,965 to support our funded agencies. The campaign was down from the 2021-2022 campaign, which was the best year in our history. However, the sensitive economy has faced fluctuating stock markets and high inflation, perhaps influencing donor decisions. As always, our key supporter is Church Mutual Insurance Company, and the employees again stood strong with United Way in the recent campaign. All donors are so greatly appreciated.

United Way and the agencies we support continue to see the numerous and varied needs of the community and we are so thankful for supporters that help address today's needs and work toward reducing tomorrow's impending needs.

Those who receive assistance because of the strong financial support United Way provides for our agencies may not recognize that United Way funds are helping. But ultimately several thousand people are served by United Way dollars.

2022 became a year when Americans again reflected on their freedoms as the people of Ukraine were attacked by Russian troops – innocent people in an unprovoked attack. On December 21, 2022, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine's President, addressed both houses of congress. His plight was to stand United – all nations in a free world. Stand united and suppress the tyranny of Russia. For if they lose, we all lose and America's allies may be next. By standing together this war could end in a victory.

With reflection, by standing together through United Way we can positively influence and improve our community. Times have changed and we are now presented with some unique ways of operating in 2021 and 2022. Together we can make certain people have a place to stay, have food on the table, are developing to be responsible citizens, receiving healthcare, can care for their families, and improving their quality of life.

Since the 2019 campaign, United Way and this community have raised \$1,292,051.10. United Way has worked hard and is stronger today. People have made that difference, understanding, giving, and seeing a new perspective to life and helping their fellow mankind. Yes, we are certainly Living United. This year was an exciting year with much activity around our 75th anniversary celebration. But also, it was a challenging campaign.

- We did our annual fundraising through company campaigns, some virtual, and with our September mailer to every household ad business in the area.
- Staff worked with Church Mutual Insurance Company. Their team was headed-up by Leah Burbach, to run their employee campaign. CMIC efforts met with great success. CMIC's campaign raised \$245,782, which includes the company match and donor designations. United Way will receive \$216,854.16.
- Given the many uncertainties of our economy, changing lives, job stability, and other outside influences, the efforts for our annual campaign were enhanced this year through additional outreach. Not knowing what to anticipate, MAUW closed the year with a very successful campaign.
- Our roster of funded agencies will increase in 2023, as this was a consideration in our fall campaign. Christmas Spirit Appeal program received the remaining funds of \$4,800 from the 2020 Children's Christmas Project, run by United Way because of the pandemic. *Christmas Spirit Appeal* applied for 2022 funds. In 2023 *Food For Kids* was urged to apply for

funds through our annual application process in. *Boys and Girls Club* is new to Merrill and now a part of our community serving our youth at Prairie River Middle School. They also applied for 2023 funding as a new agency. A third group, *The Nest*, applied for funding. They serve the needier children in our school district, providing basic needs for students who have no financial means from family to support school needs. The Nest serves, Kate Goodrich School, Washington School, Prairie River Middle School, and Merrill High School students. They provide school supplies, coats, boots, outerwear, personal hygiene items, snacks, and meet other special needs. All three of these new applicants were approved for funding by the United Way Board of Directors in December.

- Although we have three new agencies to fund, we will not be funding Healthy Minds for Lincoln County, as the County cut all funding for the UW Extension office in our County. HMFLC was managed through that office. The other agency, the Epilepsy Foundation is going through some restructuring and did not apply for 2023 but may be back the following year.

2022 Impact Made Through Funded Agencies

Our 19 funded programs/agencies were provided allocations in the amount of **\$233,092** from the combined United Way Campaign and CMIC direct, making a large impact for our community. This 2022-dollar amount represents a sizeable increase, allowing for more people to be served in a time of need. Additionally, several agencies received funds that were donor designations. CMIC's donor designations were processed through the Central Capital United Way in Pennsylvania. Yet, another **\$6,555** was spent directly through the United Way Community Fund used to support the 2-1-1 service to Lincoln County

and other smaller Merrill community requests and needs. The MAUW Disaster Relief fund paid out **\$2,000** to fire victims. *All totaled, United Way provided the means for \$241,647 to support our community and the people served by our agencies.*

United Way maintains a Disaster Relief Fund with dollars available to support local major disasters. That fund's year-end balance is \$11,241. \$6,000 was used in late 2021 and 2022 to support families after fires destroyed their homes. This fund is diminishing, and efforts should be considered to replenish the fund for future needs.

Did You Know

- In compliance with United Way Worldwide directives, our three major impact areas are: Health, Education, Basic Needs/Income.
- Once again, the Board designated \$6,000 for the 2-1-1 Call Center to service Lincoln County for 2022. This call center is a key referral service connecting people with services they need.
- The United Way held its annual Board Planning Session, and continues to focus on prior year organizational goals, while looking at changing trends and addressing a few new goals. These prioritized goals include:
 - *Recruit three new companies for 2022-2023 campaigns.*
 - *Take advantage of relaxed COVID protocols to re-connect with agencies via board outreach teams.*
 - *Collect & communicate stories from agencies.*
 - *Develop a stable funding source for the Disaster Relief Fund and maintain that fund.*
 - *Develop a \$75/750/7500 campaign around the 75th Anniversary of the United Way.*
 - *Plan, organize, and hold events around the 75th Anniversary celebration.*

- *Host a Business After Hours with supporting sponsors through the Chamber of Commerce.*
- During 2022 United Way continued to recognize the difficulties families have in finding daycare especially during the summer school break months. That includes the lack of infant care in the Merrill area. Onset discussions in 2020 and 2021 has evolved with community-wide concern into the opening of the new facility operated by Trinity and a county-wide coalition to continue addressing this need.
- We brought on a few additional business donors and worked hard to maintain our individual giving.
- The Board of Director members made their annual visits to our funded agencies to increase their understanding of the agency programs. This effort is beneficial to the Board and our agency representatives.
- Allocation Teams met in November. The teams reviewed mid-year progress reports of all impact programs and evaluated the 19 submitted agency allocation applications for 2023 funding.
- As our 75th Anniversary year, media releases, the Mayoral Proclamation, media interviews, highlight stories, information on our added activities as well as our regular monthly articles were covered by WJMT Blue Jay Radio and the Foto News to highlight the Anniversary, United Way and the services United Way supports.
- A shout out to Steve Resnick, and Lonnie Scott at Sunrise Broadcast for exceptional support and coverage.
- Two volunteers, Pat Burg and Joe Breaman II, were so helpful in getting our Anniversary and regular posts on social media.
- All United Way funded agencies provided a mid-year report demonstrating how they impact their clients through services offered.
- In December, concluding a very successful campaign, the Board approved allocations to the agencies.

2022 OPERATIONS AND COMPLIANCE

Merrill Area United Way has met all United Way Worldwide compliance measures, filing all required documents and vigorous reporting, including the annual Membership Certification and Data Base II reports.

United Way Worldwide annually acknowledges and credentials our organization for meeting the standards of excellence.

- The United Way 2021 finances were audited by Gassner Co., S.C., CPA's. MAUW met with acceptable accounting standards.
- All appropriate federal and state tax reporting were completed.
- Additionally, the Board ensures that all insurances are carried.
- Full oversight of all related employee records, tax reporting and filings are also accounted for.
- The Wisconsin Department of Finance Annual Report, our audited financial statements, our 990 Tax Forms and the Wisconsin Form 1952, and other State Credentials were filed by deadlines.
- Executive Director Olsen actively participated in organizational development programs through United Way Wisconsin and the Central WI United Way Director meetings.

2022 AGENCY INFORMATION

- United Way funds programs that impact people's health; education; and meeting their basic needs of food, shelter, electricity, and heat. Each agency/program brings important, necessary services to our local people in need.

Here is a brief glimpse of a few services:

EDUCATION: Parkside Preschool Center, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Merrill Safety Patrol, Family Resource Center, and Childcaring, Inc.

HEALTH AGENCIES: Healthy Minds for Lincoln County, Peaceful Solutions, Epilepsy Foundation, and Alzheimer's Association.

INCOME-BASIC NEEDS: St. Vincent De Paul Outreach, Merrill Community Food Pantry, North Central Community Action

Program, Merrill Community Homeless Center (MAC Home), HAVEN, Salvation Army, Our Sisters House, and Christmas Spirit Appeal.

- Healthy Minds for Lincoln County has worked tirelessly to support healthy choices regarding alcohol, drugs, and vaping and the effects these vices have on the social and emotional well-being of teens and others. Unfortunately, this program was supported by the UWEX, and the County Board has eliminated UWEX.
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters has two Merrill programs, school-based and community-based. They match adults and/or high school students (bigs) with younger kids (littles) to give them a reliable person to talk to, interact with, and do special activities with. Also, Bigs with Badges, matches police and fire department officers with kids.
- The Merrill Community Food Pantry provides food to help supplement families and individuals who are struggling to make ends meet. Approximately 5,000 people are fed during the course of a year. Incredible!
- HAVEN provides a wide range of services, including shelter, to individuals and families affected by domestic violence and sexual assault. HAVEN can house up to 24 individuals in 6 rooms. HAVEN provides unduplicated services to an estimated 300 plus people a year, about 30% children.
- St. Vincent De Paul, North Central CAP and Salvation Army all provide services to assist with rental issues, utility shutoffs, basic needs, furniture, gas cards, etc. etc. to help people in dire straits. Invaluable!
- Peaceful Solutions Counseling provides counseling for families struggling with AODA. They counseled and supported more than 50 Lincoln County clients the first half of 2022.
- MAC Home, Merrill's homeless center, opened in March of 2019. MAC Home has now provided over 5,000 safe stay nights for clients – impacting over 400 people, of which 20% are children. With

trained staff on premises 24/7/365 days, they counsel and guide clients toward independent living.

- MAUW also funds Our Sister Place, Tomahawk, another homeless shelter.
- So many dedicated agencies, 1,000's of successful stories!

2022 INITIATIVES

- Continue our marketing momentum including ongoing development of the United Way website and Face Book page to increase usage, value, links, and focus on user ease.
- Report on the success stories about improving and changing lives through United Way support.
- MAUW hosted an Annual Appreciation Picnic to recognize work by our supported agencies.

2022 APPRECIATION

- Thanks to the 75th Anniversary Committee members who directed our many celebration efforts.
- United Way gives a heartfelt Thank You to Reindl Printing for assisting MAUW with our marketing and campaign pieces.
- WJMT BlueJay 730 AM Radio Station and Merrill Foto News and have been wonderful media partners, and fully supported our 75th Anniversary messages and initiatives.
- Special thanks to Pat Burg and Joe Breaman, II for maintaining and managing our website and Facebook.

The Merrill Area United Way Board of Directors continues to seek improvements for the organization to better meet the needs of the Merrill community and our area people. The Board of Directors deserves a debt of gratitude for their ongoing work and dedicated service. The Board recognizes the importance of being exemplary stewards of the funds provided and ensures great accountability. The ongoing development of investment resources to support the funded agencies is imperative.

A HUGE DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO ALL UNITED WAY DONORS!

MAUW's success depends on the financial support provided by our participating companies and our generous, civic-minded community members who support United Way with their annual donations. For each donor whether an individual, retired person, employee, or corporate gift – we are so very grateful.

2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mike Ravn, President

Stacy Stevens, First Vice President

Joe Breaman II, Second Vice President

Maria Brickner, Immediate Past President

Jane Dehnel, Secretary

Brian Richards, Treasurer

Leah Burbach

Clyde Nelson

Kurt Rust

Janet Schreiber

Laura Forester

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Jamie Koch

Mark Zulliger

Nancy Kwiesielewicz

Shannon Murray

Susan Ryman

Becca Klessig

Tom Zentner

Dee Olsen, Executive Director

UNITED WAY'S MISSION AND PURPOSE!

“To mobilize our community so the health, welfare, and education needs of all people are met with the ultimate goal being to improve their quality of life.”

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