ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

United Way of Metro Chicago

2024/2025

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

Dear Supporters,

United Way of Metro Chicago and our partners continue to show up for our neighbors during times of uncertainty. Positive transformation is happening in communities across the region because we're built for this moment. We have proven time and again that we're stronger together.

And together, we're building a stronger Chicago region.

At the end of our 2024/2025 fiscal year, we celebrated the opening of the Aspire Center for Workforce Innovation in our Austin Neighborhood Network. More than a decade in the making, the revitalized Emmet Elementary School will bring essential job training, education, and economic development to the West Side. United Way is grateful and honored to walk alongside Austin Coming Together, BMO, and our other generous partners, helping make this vision a reality for Austin residents.

The development of the Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park will transform the long vacant U.S. Steel South Works site. We've been working alongside our South Chicago Neighborhood Network to ensure that our partners have a seat at the table and that the quantum campus supports the community's vision and drives economic development in the neighborhood.

We are so grateful for our longstanding top corporate partner, BMO, and its new, multi-year commitment to our Neighborhood Network Initiative. Announced last fall, BMO's $7.5 million gift will support resident-led initiatives building infrastructure and economic development in Auburn Gresham and Little Village.

This past year we also celebrated two years of 211 Metro Chicago, which was recognized with a 2024 Chicago Innovation Award. The 24/7 helpline has made more than 400,000 connections to critical health and social service resources. We have learned a lot about the greatest needs our neighbors are facing–affordable housing, access to food, and utility payment assistance. And we're continuing to uncover opportunities to use this rich data, expand the service, and develop new partnerships to reach even more people in need.

Thank you for continuing to show up. Thank you for believing in the power of our work together. It matters now, more than ever.

This is YOUR United Way.

SEAN GARRETT
President & CEO

LINDA T. COBERLY
2024/2025 Chair, Board of Directors

United Way of Metro Chicago

2024/2025 YEAR-IN-REVIEW

JULY 2024

"SUMMIT SOARS" CELEBRATES LAUNCH OF NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK

In partnership with United Way and Cook County's Transforming Places, the investment in suburban Summit supports community development led by SGA Youth & Family Services.

QUANTUM CAMPUS ANNOUNCED IN SOUTH CHICAGO

The development of the Illinois Quantum and Microelectronics Park on the former U.S. Steel South Works site is the first step in an exciting opportunity to pair economic investment with community vision in the South Chicago Neighborhood Network.

SEPTEMBER 2024

SANKOFA VILLAGE WELLNESS CENTER BREAKS GROUND

United Way partners in West Garfield Park celebrated the groundbreaking of the hub that will bring essential health resources, education, and economic development to the neighborhood.

OCTOBER 2024

A TOAST TO TOCQUEVILLE

United Way supporters at the $10,000+ level heard from urban historian Shermann "Dilla" Thomas, Amanda Vinicky of WTTW News, and Joe Myhra of the United Center about how high-profile investments and events like the Democratic National Convention can positively change the narrative of Chicago.

NOVEMBER 2024

211 METRO CHICAGO RECEIVES CHICAGO INNOVATION AWARD

The 24/7 health and social service helpline received the 2024 Collaboration Award, in partnership with United Way of Metro Chicago, the City of Chicago, and the Cook County's Bureau of Economic Development.

DECEMBER 2024

BMO ANNOUNCES $7.5 MILLION INVESTMENT IN NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS

The multi-year corporate gift will support community development and capital projects in Auburn Gresham and Little Village.

"UNITING FOR THE HOLIDAYS" SUPPORTS FOOD SECURITY

United Way and our community and corporate partners distributed 500 holiday meals, gifts, and other essential resources for our neighbors in Elgin.

JANUARY 2025

UNITED NEIGHBORHOODS EQUITY FUND COHORT FOUR ANNOUNCED

Ten community-based organizations were selected to receive up to $50,000 in unrestricted funds over two years, plus capacity building, networking, and investment opportunities to drive growth.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY WITH DILLA

Urban historian Shermann "Dilla" Thomas explored Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy and his unique connection to Chicago.

CLEAN ENERGY TRAINING CENTER OPENS IN SOUTH SUBURBS

The Park Forest / Richton Park Neighborhood Network celebrated the ribbon cutting of the NICI Southland Clean Energy Training Center, promoting workforce development and economic growth.

FEBRUARY 2025

TWO YEARS OF 211 METRO CHICAGO

2-1-1 celebrated its second anniversary with a special press event with the City of Chicago and Cook County, recognizing hundreds of thousands of connections to essential social services.

MARCH 2025

WOMEN UNITED ANNUAL BREAKFAST

Marianne Markowitz, President & CEO of First Women's Bank, discussed the gender lending gap and building community among women leaders.

APRIL 2025

APRIL FOOD DAY COLLECTS 100,000+ POUNDS OF FOOD

The annual event helped restock pantry shelves in the Southland and also recognized leaders driving positive change: Rev. Larry Jackson, Meridian, and United Auto Workers Local 551.

MAY 2025

STRONGER NEIGHBORHOODS AWARDS

The annual awards luncheon honored Sheila Penrose and Jenner & Block and raised more than $1 million to support United Way's work.

JUNE 2025

ASPIRE CENTER CELEBRATES GRAND OPENING

The Aspire Center for Workforce Innovation revitalized the former Emmet Elementary School and highlights the success of place-based investment in Austin.

ITW DAY OF ACTION

500 ITW staff came together for their annual volunteer day at David Speer Academy in our Austin Neighborhood Network.

JUNETEENTH WITH EVE L. EWING

The renowned writer, scholar, and Marvel Comics author discussed the connections between education, culture, and superheroes.

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA TO STAY UP TO DATE ON ALL OF OUR PROGRAMS, INITIATIVES, AND EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR!

@UNITEDWAYCHICAGO @UNITEDWAYCHI @UNITEDWAYOFMETROCHICAGO

FREEDOM TO ASPIRE:
DRIVING WORKFORCE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

"When one door closes, another one opens."

The story of the Aspire Center begins with a closing–the shuttering of Emmet Elementary School in 2013 as part of sweeping school closures across Chicago. Ten years later, local leaders broke ground in the Emmet parking lot. After two years of construction, on Juneteenth, June 19, 2025, United Way of Metro Chicago joined hundreds of residents at Madison and Central to celebrate a rebirth–the grand opening of the Aspire Center for Workforce Innovation.

Austin residents, nonprofit leaders, government officials, corporate partners, and philanthropic investors spilled out from under a white tent on what used to be the school's parking lot, now a manicured lawn with walking paths and young trees. All leading the way to the sprawling Aspire Center campus. The morning sun glistened off the grand main entrance–a three-story glass atrium connected to Emmet's refurbished red brick. The new merging with the old.

Darnell Shields, Executive Director of Austin Coming Together, addressed the crowd of friends and supporters before cutting the ribbon–and ushering in the "era of aspire."

"Today we are no longer victims of disinvestment. We are victors in the fight for equity, justice, and healing," Darnell said. "We are not just opening a building. We are opening new doors of possibility."

The possibilities are endless. The Aspire Center will be a hub for workforce training, education, and economic empowerment. The joint project of Austin Coming Together and Westside Health Authority will house both nonprofits, plus Jane Addams Resource Corporation, a BMO bank branch, the Cook County Public Defender, and Legal Aid Chicago.

The $47 million investment fulfills key components of Austin's Quality of Life Plan, "Austin Forward. Together." A vision created by the community, for the community, under the leadership of Austin Coming Together and United Way's Austin Neighborhood Network.

"Through the Austin Neighborhood Network, United Way of Metro Chicago works alongside Darnell Shields and Austin Coming Together, plus leaders from business, philanthropy, government, and nonprofit, to bring the community's vision to life," said Sean Garrett, President and CEO of United Way

of Metro Chicago. “The opening of the Aspire Center is one example of the impact of the Austin Neighborhood Network in action and one step toward true community transformation, built from and led by Austin residents.”

In its first five years, the Aspire Center is projected to create 50 new jobs, help increase the incomes of more than 500 Austin households, and facilitate financing for new businesses or property for more than 250 residents.

None of this would be possible without the support of partners like BMO, the lead philanthropic investor of the Aspire Center and a founding partner of United Way’s Neighborhood Network Initiative. BMO will be opening a branch within the Aspire Center providing financial education, coaching, and banking services to help Austin residents make real financial progress.

“BMO believed in the vision for the Aspire Center and its promise for the Austin community from the beginning, which is why we became a cornerstone philanthropic funder to the project,” said Darrel Hackett, U.S. CEO, BMO, and United Way of Metro Chicago board member. “Witnessing its journey from concept to groundbreaking to grand opening has been truly inspiring and is a shining example of neighborhood-led transformation that aligns with our purpose to ‘Boldly Grow the Good in business and life.’ We look forward to deepening our commitment to the Aspire Center and driving progress for the people of Austin with the opening of our BMO branch.”

In addition to the commitment of its anchor tenants like BMO, the Aspire Center was made possible by collaborative funding of multiple partners, including more than $5 million from United Way of Metro Chicago, the single largest investment in the organization’s history.

Austin’s residents raised $20,000 from their own wallets. Because they believed in the Aspire Center and the power of investing in their neighborhood. “This is just the beginning,” Darnell said, as he charged everyone to keep the momentum going.

“Keep showing up in Austin, on the South and West Sides, and in the communities that have been long overlooked. There’s great power in these places,” Darnell said. “This isn’t just a building. It’s about our freedom to aspire, our freedom to dream, and our ability to walk in that freedom boldly every single day.”

> “Today we are no longer victims of disinvestment. We are victors in the fight for equity, justice, and healing… We are not just opening a building. We are opening new doors of possibility.
>
> **DARNELL SHIELDS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AUSTIN COMING TOGETHER**

UNITED WAY AND URBAN HISTORIAN TEAM UP TO TELL CHICAGO'S STORY

Lemar Johnson loved telling stories. Luckily for Shermann "Dilla" Thomas' father, his son enjoyed listening.

A drive through Chicago's neighborhoods was Lemar's stage. From their home on 81st Street in Auburn Gresham, Lemar and his family would drive north for Bulls games at the Chicago Stadium (demolished and replaced by the United Center in 1994). Sitting in the backseat, a young Dilla would listen as his father talked about each passing neighborhood.

Black entrepreneurs in Englewood. Irish stockyard and steel workers in McKinley Park. The vibrant Chinatown along Cermak. The bustling Mexican commercial corridor in Pilsen. Innovation and opportunity in the medical district. A journey around the world within a 10-mile drive.

Lemar, a Chicago police officer for more than 30 years, knew the city's streets well–and shared his knowledge before he passed. "He had a story for every neighborhood," Dilla said. "That's how we bonded, and a lot of it stuck with me."

Today, Dilla is carrying on his father's legacy, telling Lemar's neighborhood stories–and adding his own.

While working for a utility company, Dilla pursued his passion for history and storytelling by leading walking tours and posting videos on TikTok. In his signature candid style, Dilla's content highlights often overlooked history, including the rich culture and contributions of historically disinvested neighborhoods on the South and West Sides of Chicago.

The urban historian gained a following and before long, launched his own tour company, Chicago Mahogany. Today, he leads tours on his own bus, from Roseland to Little Village. Dilla's renowned tagline, "Everything dope about America comes from Chicago," is printed in bold lettering along the side of the 50-passenger vehicle.

Dilla's stories are rooted in pride for his city, lifting up narratives of community changemakers, which is why a partnership with United Way of Metro Chicago was meant to be.

This past year, the historian and United Way teamed up to share the ways history has inspired the present by highlighting the exciting work–and tangible impact–happening in our Neighborhood Networks. Through a series of jointly hosted tours, United Way and Dilla took audiences directly to local neighborhoods to see our work in action.

At United Way, we believe that community change is best led by residents and trusted neighborhood organizations. We come alongside in partnership with these local agencies as they set community goals, drive the work, and create thriving neighborhoods. It's important to United Way that the vibrant histories and cultures of our Neighborhood Networks are maintained–and not replaced. We know we have another partner for this effort in Dilla.

"The partnership between Chicago Mahogany and United Way is not only special but important for our work together. Our stories are being erased in a lot of spaces, and history is being retold. United Way supporting organic history and storytelling is a

way for these stories to live on," Dilla said.

He also notes that it provides important inspiration for the changemakers of today–and tomorrow. "If you know what's possible, if you know the adversities and the triumphs of what other people have experienced, it empowers you to keep working and moving forward," he said.

Blending those stories of the past into a vision forward is what this partnership is all about. United Way and Dilla are both committed to telling our city's story. Because storytelling builds awareness, and awareness leads to action–and, ultimately, transformation.

Along the way, we hope we're helping create new stories and giving Dilla more fodder, more ways to honor his father's legacy. Following Lemar Johnson's example, Dilla is committed to the work of telling Chicago's stories because he recognizes the power of stories to connect us.

"I knew it would bring a circle around me," he says of his storytelling pursuit. United Way is proud to stand in that circle.

> "The partnership between Chicago Mahogany and United Way is not only special but important for our work together. Our stories are being erased in a lot of spaces, and history is being retold. United Way supporting organic history and storytelling is a way for these stories to live on. **SHERMANN "DILLA" THOMAS**

CELEBRATING TWO YEARS OF 211 METRO CHICAGO

211 Metro Chicago celebrated its second anniversary on National 211 Day, February 11, 2025, bringing together the partners who made it possible, including Cook County and the City of Chicago.

Operated by United Way of Metro Chicago, the 24/7/365 helpline has made hundreds of thousands of referrals to essential health and social service resources such as housing, food, and utility payment assistance.

2-1-1 is helping connect people with what they need most–and making a big impact. Thank you to our partners for being a part of this critical work together, including our generous funders:

Builders Initiative Foundation, The Chicago Community Trust, Comer Family Foundation, Crown Family Philanthropies, Ford Philanthropy, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Illinois Public Health Institute, The John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation, Michael Reese Health Trust, Northern Trust Foundation, Northwestern Memorial Hospital, Sprague Foundation, Polk Bros. Foundation, Pritzker Foundation, The Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation, Robert R. McCormick Foundation, The Steans Family Foundation, and Anonymous.

People call me every day asking for help. It is so important to be present for them, to be calm, compassionate, and say, 'I hear you.' When I share a resource, I have helped open the door for them to get what they need most in that moment. This is why 2-1-1 is so important. It is truly making a difference in people's lives.

BRIAN LEWIS
Resource Navigator,
211 Metro Chicago

The suburban safety net can be particularly challenging to navigate. I'm grateful for the 2-1-1 team's comprehensive approach to connecting people to the social services they are seeking. Having one place to call makes all the difference for our community!

JENNIFER HILL
Executive Director, Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County

Food consistently ranks among the top needs identified from 2-1-1 inquiries. This highlights the vital role 2-1-1 plays in connecting neighbors to food support and in linking them to the Food Depository's network of partners.

KELSIE KLINER
Director of Planning and Process Improvement, Greater Chicago Food Depository

I'm passionate about helping individuals navigate life's challenges by connecting them to critical resources. Being part of 2-1-1 means making a tangible impact in our community and ensuring no one feels alone in finding support.

SHERIEE LEE
Director, Navigation Center,
211 Metro Chicago

211 METRO CHICAGO BY-THE-NUMBERS

400,000+ CONNECTIONS
via phone, text, web chat, and website search
(as of June 30, 2025)

6,000+ PROGRAMS
in the database

TOP 5 NEEDS:
housing and shelter
utility assistance
access to food
employment
income assistance

LARGEST AGE GROUP OF PHYSICAL CONTACTS:
ages 25-34 (23%)
followed by 35-44 (19%)

TOP 3 CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOODS SERVED:
Auburn Gresham
Chatham
South Shore

TOP 3 SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY COMMUNITY AREAS SERVED:
Chicago Heights/Ford Heights
Calumet City
Phoenix/Harvey

STORIES OF IMPACT

When we embrace all of our neighborhoods and communities as the heartbeat of the Chicago region, every person has the opportunity to thrive. Here are some highlights from the past year and how we're working together to build a stronger Chicago region.

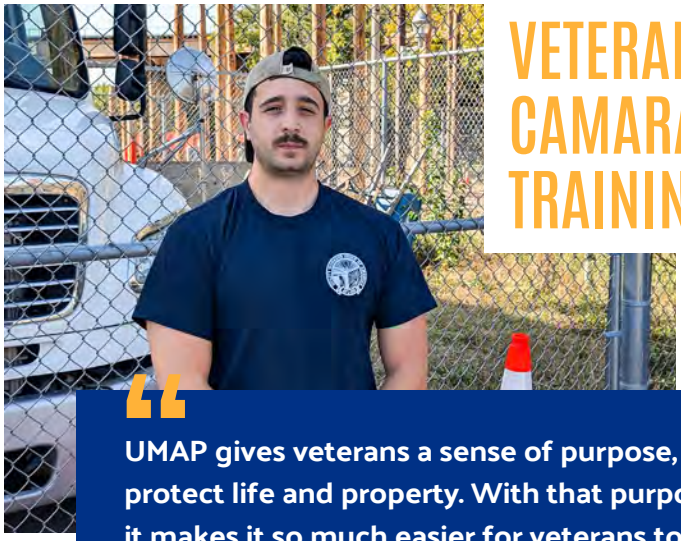
> **If you can give a young person an opportunity to test their ideas, activate their mind, and build creative confidence around projects that they want to see, and put resources around that, they're going to actively change their community.**
>
> **DAVID ROJAS JR.**
> **FOUNDER & CEO, THE ALLIANCE 98**

"THINKING GLOBAL, ACTING LOCAL" WITH YOUTH IN LITTLE VILLAGE

Founder and CEO of The Alliance 98 (TA98), David Rojas Jr. is making waves in Little Village. United Way is proud to support David and TA98 as they empower young people with the skills, networks, and experiences to create meaningful career opportunities–and lead fulfilling lives.

READ MORE

LIVEUNITEDchicago.org/TA98



VETERANS FIND PURPOSE, CAMARADERIE THROUGH JOB TRAINING PROGRAM

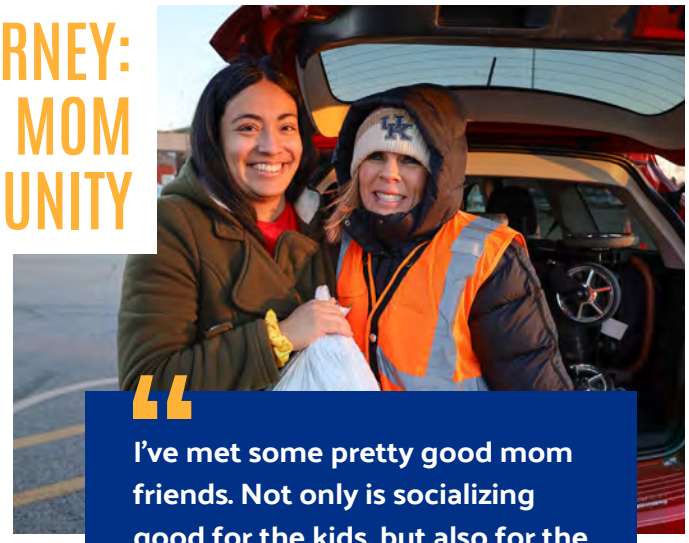
> **UMAP gives veterans a sense of purpose, to protect life and property. With that purpose, it makes it so much easier for veterans to move forward. When you get out in the field, you feel good about what you're doing. That purpose is what drives you through, and it's fantastic.**
>
> **JACK TORNABENE, UMAP GRADUATE, PEOPLES GAS JOURNEYMAN UTILITY WORKER, AND U.S. ARMY FIRST LIEUTENANT RESERVIST**

The Utility Workers Military Assistance Program (UMAP) is connecting veterans with more than just a job. It's giving them a sense of purpose–and building community. United Way supports the Chicago Federation of Labor's Workforce & Community Initiative, a key partner of the program.

READ MORE

LIVEUNITEDchicago.org/Veterans

JANET'S JOURNEY: ELGIN MOM EMBRACES COMMUNITY



A long-time Elgin resident shares how Enriching Partnerships for Early Learning and the Elgin Neighborhood Network have helped her connect with other moms–and fostered her kids' growth.

> **I've met some pretty good mom friends. Not only is socializing good for the kids, but also for the stay-at-home moms. We've built a community at EPEL.**
>
> **JANET, PARTICIPANT AT ENRICHING PARTNERSHIPS FOR EARLY LEARNING**

READ MORE

LIVEUNITEDchicago.org/Janet

JACKIE HOFFMAN RUNS THE WEST SIDE

Jackie Hoffman founded Peace Runners 773 to create a safe and inclusive environment for movement. What started with a single 5k in Garfield Park has now expanded to three robust programs that promote health equity.

> **[United Way's support] has helped Peace Runners create new roles and responsibilities–a chief operating officer, community engagement, and coaches. This gives me space to grow. I credit a lot of that to United Way for helping me create access and giving me tools so I can be a better executive director and leader.**
>
> **JACKIE HOFFMAN, CEO & FOUNDER, PEACE RUNNERS 773**

READ MORE

LIVEUNITEDchicago.org/PeaceRunners

APRIL FOOD DAY 2025: "IT'S TIME TO GET UP"

United Way's biggest food collection event of the year distributed 109,000+ pounds of food to 10 local pantries and honored the Southland's movers and shakers.

> **We know some people have to make difficult choices. They have to choose between buying a dozen eggs and paying for medicine. That's why we're volunteering today. That is why United Way and every organization like United Way is so important.**
>
> **KAREN FREEMAN-WILSON**
> **PRESIDENT & CEO, THE CHICAGO URBAN LEAGUE**

READ MORE

LIVEUNITEDchicago.org/AprilFood25

NORTHERN ILLINOIS FOOD BANK MEETS THE NEED

The need for food is historically high. Northern Illinois Food Bank serves an average of 570,000 neighbors a month, which is double pre-pandemic numbers. Its team is rising to the challenge–and helping neighbors thrive.

READ MORE

LIVEUNITEDchicago.org/FoodBank

United Way of Metro Chicago has been working with us since 2019 and really supported us during the pandemic. They've stayed as a great partner, helping us get food out to the community and literally into the hands of our neighbors.

JENNIFER BUCKO LAMPLOUGH
CHIEF IMPACT OFFICER,
NORTHERN ILLINOIS FOOD BANK

17 NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS
140+ IMPACT GRANT PARTNERS
1+ MILLION PEOPLE IMPACTED

THANK YOU
TO OUR SUPPORTERS

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2024/2025 CAMPAIGN IMPACT

$41+ MILLION raised

$1+ MILLION raised at 2025 Stronger Neighborhoods Awards Luncheon

550+ corporate partners

24,000+ individual donors

2,500+ Leadership donors ($1,000+ gifts)

330+ Tocqueville donors ($10,000+ gifts)

6,000 volunteers participated in community engagement projects

"For us to truly realize our potential as a city, as a region, we need to help advance opportunities for everyone. I see United Way as the most effective organization at driving comprehensive, sustainable change so that all neighborhoods and all communities in the Chicago region are realizing their full potential.

SCOTT SWANSON, PRESIDENT, PNC BANK–ILLINOIS, 2024/2025 CAMPAIGN CHAIR

1

BMO "BOLDLY GROWS THE GOOD" THROUGH NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS

United Way of Metro Chicago, BMO, Latinos Progresando, and HIRE360 representatives celebrate BMO's investment in the Neighborhood Network Initiative, announced on Giving Tuesday 2024 during BMO's campaign kickoff event at HIRE360.

BMO lives up to its purpose–Boldly Grow the Good in business and life.

A founding partner of United Way of Metro Chicago's Neighborhood Network Initiative more than a decade ago, BMO believes in the power of place-based community support and recognizes that transformation doesn't happen overnight. The bank has continued to show up as a longstanding partner alongside United Way and local nonprofits driving the work.

So much so that BMO announced in November 2024 that the bank was investing another $7.5 million in the Neighborhood Networks. The renewed corporate gift builds on BMO's previous multi-million-dollar donation to the Austin Neighborhood Network, alongside the City of Chicago's INVEST South/West Initiative in 2019. The initiative supports resident-led efforts building infrastructure and economic development in Chicago's South and West Side neighborhoods.

BMO's recent gift goes further, supporting community development in the Auburn Gresham and Little Village Neighborhood Networks.

"At BMO, we believe that strong communities are the foundation of a thriving economy and that everyone deserves the opportunity to succeed. That's why we're proud to partner with United Way of Metro Chicago, an organization that shares our commitment to driving positive change," said Darrel Hackett, U.S. CEO, BMO, and United Way of Metro Chicago board member. "Our $7.5 million gift will help United Way scale its Neighborhood Networks in Little Village and Auburn Gresham, two vibrant neighborhoods with incredible potential. Supporting the communities we serve is inspired by BMO's purpose – to Boldly Grow the Good in business and life."

This focused support and capacity building in Auburn Gresham and Little Village will build on the momentum and work already happening in each neighborhood. Each community has a Quality-of-Life Plan that is guiding their vision forward and a campus-like approach to coordinated capital projects across their neighborhoods.

> **In Little Village, United Way is working with dual community quarterback organizations, Latinos Progresando and Enlace Chicago, to coordinate across issue-based coalitions and catalytic projects. Over the last couple of years, both organizations have opened new hubs where various partners provide services for residents. But this is just the beginning: Little Village has identified several capital projects that will create a connected web of community resources across the neighborhood. BMO's support through United Way will build on the lessons learned in Austin to assist the Little Village organizations in scaling this work.**

> **In Auburn Gresham, United Way is working with the Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation to continue the momentum of the catalytic projects around the 79th and Halsted Street corridor, which are beginning to transform the greater Auburn Gresham region. Since the announcement of BMO's renewed commitment, United Way, BMO, and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation have jointly given $1 million to expand the Green Era Campus.**

"United Way is with us to rebuild our community, not just in financial resources but through bringing in experts and capacity-building opportunities from corporate partners," said Carlos Nelson, CEO of the Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation. "United Way and supporters like BMO provide deep partnership support that reinforces Auburn Gresham's bright future, and I'm excited to be a part of that future." ●

BUILDING A LEGACY
CHERYL AND ZED FRANCIS GIVE A HAND UP

2

For Cheryl and Zed Francis, philanthropy is a way of life–and has been for decades.

Nearly 50 years ago, the young newlyweds had just graduated from Cornell University. That summer, they came to Chicago to attend business school at the University of Chicago. Scholarships made the move possible–and they've been here ever since.

Today, Cheryl and Zed are paying it forward, giving back to the community that embraced them.

They both started their careers in banking and finance. Zed held several executive leadership roles at Bank of America and its predecessors. Cheryl served as Treasurer of FMC Corporation and then Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of R.R. Donnelley and Sons Co. Today, she serves on multiple corporate boards and is co-founder and co-chairman of Corporate Leadership Center, a nonprofit that advances corporate leaders and leadership practices.

> "United Way is effective in understanding that you can't transplant something into a community. You've got to provide resources and work within the community in full partnership.

Throughout their careers, Cheryl and Zed prioritized workplace giving. United Way of Metro Chicago was their charity of choice.

"When we came into the business world in Chicago, United Way was the organization that all the corporations supported," Cheryl said. "Everybody participated in workplace campaigns. It was a way to give back and feel engaged with what was happening in the city and surrounding communities."

As long-time United Way donors through workplace giving, Cheryl and Zed knew they wanted to deepen their impact. United Way's Neighborhood Network Initiative–a wraparound, place-based approach to community development–was the answer.

"The scale was impressive. To transform a community, you have to transform employment, housing, and improve the whole economic lot," Zed said. "We connected with the Neighborhood Network Initiative and believed in it. United Way is effective in understanding that you can't transplant something into a community. You've got to provide resources and work within the community in full partnership."

In 2019, Cheryl and Zed invested $500,000 in the Austin Neighborhood Network. Over the last five years, their generous gift has helped the neighborhood's goals come to life. In 2023, BUILD Chicago's sprawling youth and community center opened. Earlier this summer, United Way and our partners celebrated the ribbon cutting of the Aspire Center for Workforce Innovation, the brainchild of Austin Coming Together and Westside Health Authority. The formerly shuttered Emmet Elementary School will be a hub for economic and workforce development on the West Side.

As savvy businesspeople, Cheryl and Zed want their investments to be successful. The positive change happening in Austin is proof that place-based investment works, which is why they've dedicated another $500,000 gift–this time in the Little Village Neighborhood Network.

"When Zed and I think about our major gifts, it's through a 'hand up' approach," Cheryl said. "Our gifts aren't designated so that the people who are on ground can figure out the best use of the funds based on their community's plans and priorities. They can do more with the investment, and it grows and sustains itself. The Neighborhood Network is that kind of model."

"This type of investment is more complicated and takes longer, but you have the opportunity to make a significant and sustainable impact," Zed added.

Latinos Progresando and Enlace are leading the work in Little Village and have had a big impact on the community over the past 20 years. Most recently they celebrated the opening of the Little Village community center in 2023 and the launch of the Little Village-South Lawndale Quality of Life Plan in 2024.

Cheryl and Zed's gift to the Little Village Neighborhood Network will build on this momentum, Cheryl said. "Little Village is a very entrepreneurial community, the perfect place for a 'hand up.' They take an investment and run with it. With the right funding and attention, they are making the community strong and giving people a lot of opportunities."

The gift to Little Village also marked the end of Cheryl's tenure on United Way's board and serving as Chair from 2021–2023. The investment was an opportunity to leave her mark as a long-time United Way volunteer and leader.

For both Cheryl and Zed, the work isn't done–and they hope others will join them.

"There's no end point. The question is, how do we make things better?" Cheryl said. "United Way is in a unique position. It's trusted by the community, government, corporate partners, and foundations and can get the right people at the table. We hope that others will say, 'That sounds like a good idea. I'd like to do that.' Together, we can continue to accelerate the work and see more success."

Cheryl and Zed believe supporting United Way is the answer.

"We hope that our commitment is a catalyst," Zed said. "If you develop the right relationships with the right people, things will be carried forward. Whether we're here or not, we've got confidence that will happen. United Way is a place that can make a difference."

3

HONORING A POWERHOUSE

SHEILA PENROSE CULTIVATES CIVIC LEADERSHIP AND GENEROSITY

Sheila Penrose is a powerhouse.

She's a shrewd economist by trade. A trusted advisor. Chairman. Philanthropist. Teacher. Volunteer. Mentor.

Sheila's resume is impressive–and her success is rooted in humility. Her upbringing was humble. She grew up in public housing in England, and her parents left school as teenagers. The one thing they wanted for Sheila and her brother was a great education, she said.

"I think for my parents an education meant that we would have opportunity. It meant that we would have curiosity and we'd be able to reach beyond our small little world," Sheila said. "My dad was the nurturer, and my mom was the driver. They set me on a route to independence and achievement. I knew I wanted to set a path for myself."

Sheila's path began with pursuing the education her parents so desired for her. She studied economics and education at the University of Birmingham in England, obtained a master's degree from the London School of Economics, and attended the Executive Program at Stanford Graduate School of Business. Sheila taught economics and political science and soon became an Economic Advisor at the British Treasury.

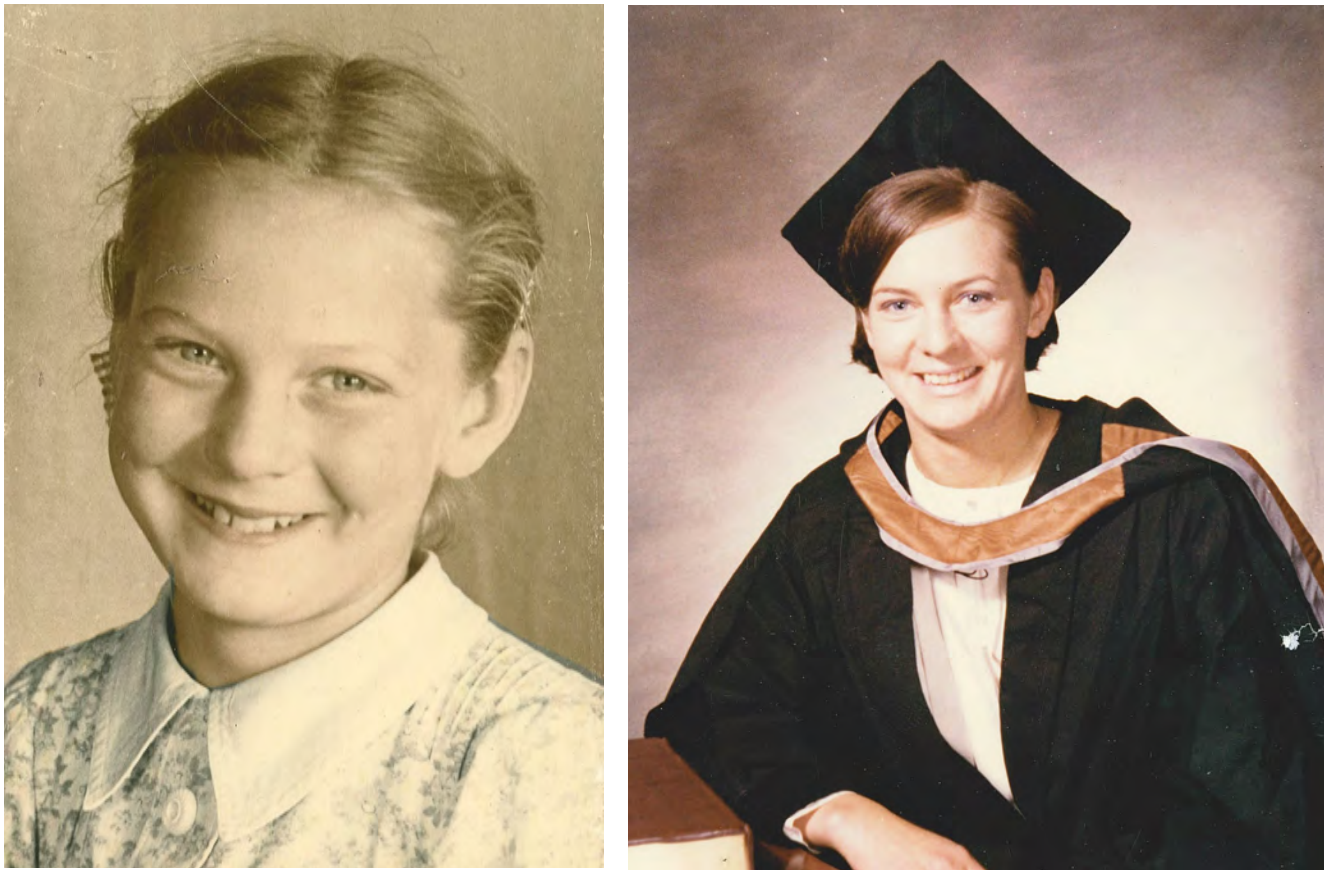
After moving to Chicago and navigating a different culture, Sheila landed a role as an international economist at Northern Trust. "I had to learn how to network and negotiate and was fortunate to end up at Northern Trust," she said. "I'm an introvert by nature, so networking didn't come naturally to me. But I appreciated that relationships were very important, being a part of a team and going beyond yourself."

Sheila grew her network at Northern Trust–and had many mentors along the way–until eventually she served as President of Northern Trust's Global Corporate Bank. She was proud to be the first and only woman on the company's Management Committee at the time, she said. "I became a role model. You can't be what you can't see, and it's important for younger talented people coming up in an organization to be able to see what they can become."

Sheila also served as Chairman of JLL, a global real estate services company, for 15 years and went on to found Corporate Leadership Center with her business colleague, Cheryl Francis. Their goal was to help senior executives advance in their careers–and use business as a force for good, Sheila said.

"I've always believed that if you can help people become good business leaders, they're going to help create a good community. So many companies in Chicago do that," Sheila said. "It's an honor to lay the path for others, and it's an expectation, especially

Sheila Penrose (center) receives the 2025 Andrew J. McKenna Leadership Award, presented by John W. Madigan, Former Chairman & CEO, Tribune Company, and 2021 Andrew J. McKenna Leadership Award Honoree, (left) and Sean Garrett, President and CEO, United Way of Metro Chicago (right).



Sheila Penrose at ten years old and 20 years old

in Chicago, that you pay it forward. Chicago is such a unique community in terms of the business world, the philanthropic world, and the civic world coming together to try to create a better environment, a better community, and a better set of opportunities."

> "
> **You have power. Use it constructively, use it for the benefit of others, use it generously. It's not about yourself. It's about what you can do with and for others because that comes back to you in spades.**

United Way of Metro Chicago is one of those institutions working across sectors to build stronger communities, Sheila said. "United Way recognizes that those people who are underserved are deserving and they need our support. I love what United Way does to address that issue because it makes for a healthier community for all of us, a community that allows people to live up to their potential."

For decades, Sheila has helped people live up to their potential. In recognition of her commitment to cultivating generous civic leaders and philanthropists–and improving the quality of life of countless individuals and families across the Chicago region, Sheila Penrose received the 2025 Andrew J. McKenna Leadership Award at United Way of Metro Chicago's annual Stronger Neighborhoods Awards Luncheon on May 28, 2025.

"Andy McKenna was a huge role model for me. I held him in very high esteem," Sheila said. "It's a huge honor for me to have this award . . . It makes me emotional. It's an absolute privilege to be in the same ranks as people that I've admired so much."

The young girl in England who once sought a life of independence and achievement now serves as a trusted mentor to many. And encourages others to recognize and use their power for good.

"People don't often talk about power in association with women," Sheila said. "You have power. Use it constructively, use it for the benefit of others, use it generously. It's not about yourself. It's about what you can do with and for others because that comes back to you in spades." ●

UNITED WAY DRIVES **TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE**

“

Our outstanding partners consistently set the standard by investing in our neighborhoods and helping to create communities where everyone has the resources they need to thrive. Dedicated civic leaders like Sheila Penrose, Jenner & Block, and our many other generous partners are deeply committed to supporting United Way as we drive transformative change and work alongside our partners to expand opportunities for people across the Chicago region.

SEAN GARRETT, PRESIDENT AND CEO, UNITED WAY OF METRO CHICAGO

4

SETTING THE STANDARD

JENNER & BLOCK HONORED FOR COMMITMENT TO PRO BONO

Andrew W. Vail, Partner at Jenner & Block and General Counsel for United Way of Metro Chicago, (left) and Randy Mehrberg, Co-Managing Partner at Jenner & Block, (right) accept the 2025 Corporate Leadership Award on behalf of Jenner & Block, presented by Sean Garrett, President and CEO, United Way of Metro Chicago (center).

Pro bono is in Jenner & Block's DNA.

The internationally recognized law firm was founded in 1914. Four decades later, Jenner & Block Partners Thomas P. Sullivan, Prentice H. Marshall, and Jerold S. Solovy launched one of the industry's first formal pro bono programs, establishing the firm's commitment to giving back. A commitment embraced by Partners Albert E. Jenner, Jr. and Samuel W. Block as leaders of the firm that would ultimately carry their names.

Since the pro bono program's launch in the 1950s, Jenner & Block has set the standard. The firm is deeply committed to promoting justice for all people–and lifting up nonprofits and marginalized communities.

"Jenner & Block's commitment to pro bono is unparalleled," said Andrew W. Vail, Partner at Jenner & Block, and General Counsel for United Way of Metro Chicago. "We're proud of our longstanding, strong commitment to communities."

> "Pro bono service is a cornerstone of our work... It reflects our deep commitment to community–an essential part of our DNA.

In 2021, Jenner announced a five-year commitment to provide $250 million in free legal assistance, meeting their goal 18 months ahead of schedule. In 2024, 97% of Jenner & Block lawyers contributed more than 50 pro bono hours, totaling more than 90,000 hours across the firm's locations.

"Pro bono service is a cornerstone of our work at Jenner, and our partnership with United Way of Metro Chicago is one we're especially proud of. It reflects our deep commitment to community–an essential part of our DNA–alongside our unwavering advocacy on behalf of our clients. Last year, our lawyers contributed over 90,000 hours of pro bono work, with more than 31,000 of those hours dedicated right here in Chicago."

Not only has Andrew provided strategic advice and legal counsel to United Way for years, but Jenner & Block lawyers have served as executive volunteers on United Way's Board of Directors and various organizational task forces. Jenner & Block also supported United Way's launch of 211 Metro Chicago in January 2023. Its team provided hundreds of hours of specialized work navigating contracts, data/privacy counseling, and more, all to make the critical health and social service helpline a reality for our neighbors in Cook County.

"What's been so truly rewarding about my time with United Way has been collaborating with the amazing United Way team, my Jenner & Block colleagues, and others in the legal community to provide support to the organization and its daily work to improve the lives of those in our Chicagoland community," Andrew said.

In recognition of the firm's longstanding commitment to United Way and its support of nonprofit organizations across the Chicago region, Jenner & Block received the 2025 Corporate Leadership Award at United Way of Metro Chicago's annual Stronger Neighborhoods Awards Luncheon on May 28, 2025.

"In 1914, Wrigley Field was built, Carl Sandburg wrote of Chicago's 'Big Shoulders,' and our law firm was formed," Andrew said at the Stronger Neighborhoods Awards, accepting the 2025 Corporate Leadership Award on behalf of Jenner & Block. "Ever since, Jenner & Block lawyers have served Chicago, and the nation, and passed that commitment to community and clients down . . . to the next generation of Jenner lawyers. With partnerships like United Way and standing together with the 'Big Shoulders' of so many in this room, I commit to you that Jenner & Block will continue to serve our communities and clients for at least the next 100 years." ●

5

"BETTER DECISIONS FOR A BETTER WORLD"

AON MODELS GIVING BACK

Aon is in the business of better decisions–not only by helping clients navigate volatility and complexity, but also through its commitment to social impact.

For nearly two decades, Aon has worked with United Way of Metro Chicago in a variety of ways: from Aon colleagues serving on the board of directors, to corporate giving and employee giving campaigns, to event sponsorship and volunteer initiatives.

Aon's multi-layered approach to giving back is a model for what's possible through corporate collaboration. And the firm recognizes the impact it can have through United Way, said Anna Piepmeyer, Director of Community Impact for Aon.

"United Way is one of our signature collaborations," Anna said. "We love United Way because you're also in the business of better decisions. Aon is committed to supporting in as many ways as we can."

"Aon colleagues bring time, expertise, and resources to the table," Anna added. "Organizations like United Way offer opportunities to get involved at every level."

Aon's financial support is equally impactful. Over nearly 20 years, Aon employees have given $6 million to United Way of Metro Chicago through workplace giving campaigns. Aon's corporate gifts total nearly $9 million.

"Aon and United Way are proud to link arms to create a stronger community in Chicago," said Chris Rafferty, Chicago Managing Director at Aon. "Aon has contributed millions of dollars to United Way over many decades–much raised directly from our colleagues who understand the value of giving to the community where they live and work. We are energized by United Way's bold thinking and excited to continue to work with the organization for years to come."

Aon colleagues also show up through service–whether packing hundreds of snack packs or hygiene kits for families in need, or stepping into civic leadership roles.

Bridget Gainer, Global Head of Public Affairs & Policy at Aon, currently serves on United Way of Metro Chicago's Board of Directors, and brings over 25 years of experience in nonprofit, government, and corporate sectors.

"United Way and Aon share a commitment to building and supporting the next generation of civic leaders in our city," Bridget said. "I am honored to represent Aon on United Way of Metro Chicago's Board of Directors and to help shape programs and strategies that strengthen our neighborhoods and empower young people to solve the challenges facing Chicago today and tomorrow."

Bridget is also the executive sponsor of Aon's U.S. apprenticeship program, which began in Chicago in 2017 and has expanded to seven cities. The two-year program combines education and work experience to offer a unique path to a career at Aon. Apprentices work a full-time role at Aon where they receive career coaching and mentorship while attending classes at a local community college.

Many apprentices are from historically disinvested neighborhoods. Aon offers apprentices a connection to a thriving career. It's all a part of Aon's broader strategy–and commitment to investing in local, high-potential talent, Anna said.

"Aon has done a lot of work through the apprenticeship program and other workforce strategies to recruit non-traditional talent," Anna said. "Organizations like United Way are critical in accessing that need and identifying talent in under-resourced communities across the city."

Aon apprentices receive associates degrees and many are hired at the firm after completing the program. Many get involved in Aon Uniters, a volunteer and engagement group for early career professionals who are "hungry to give back to communities," Anna said.

"We want to build a pipelines of colleagues within the firm who will grow into civic leaders. One way we do that is by working closely with nonprofit organizations like United Way to create meaningful entry points for early career colleagues to get involved. Because in ten years, we want them to be serving on United Way's board and becoming influential voices in their communities," Anna added.

With this talent pipeline–and commitment to building opportunities and strengthening communities, Aon truly believes Chicago is "worth investing in," Anna said.

"We've always been a city that comes together in civic and corporate spaces. United Way and other organizations are leading innovative, place-based work," Anna said. "And we're fortunate to have incredibly talented colleagues who are ready to stand shoulder to shoulder and do the work. My aspiration is for Chicago to remain a vibrant, thriving place for people to live, work, and lead."

6

FORD STEPS UP FOR ITS NEIGHBORS

Ford representatives meet with United Way of Metro Chicago Corporate Engagement Manager Ashley Palomo (left).

Every year, Chicago's Ford team comes together to make a difference through its employee giving campaign–and support United Way of Metro Chicago's work. Employees from Ford's Chicago Assembly Plant have always stepped up in a big way, raising nearly $3 million over the last decade.

Ford's generosity does not stop there. Together with United Way and the Chicago Federation of Labor, employees have collaborated on many projects to benefit their neighboring communities. One of these early collaborations was building removeable ramps for residents in the Oak Lawn area who had a physically disabled family member. The ramps allowed families, some of whom include a Ford employee, to stay in their homes.

> "Together we continue to build not just cars but a better future for our plant, for our union, and for our community.

"The ramp project made a tangible difference in the lives of dozens of individuals and families by providing wheelchair ramps that helped break down barriers and improve accessibility for those who need it most," said Maya Hardy, Regional Director of Development, South-Southwest, for United Way of Metro Chicago. "United Way is always proud to partner with Ford to support communities through their initiatives."

Ford employees have also joined United Way and the Chicago Federation of Labor at the Chicago Pride Parade and have hosted activities to drum up donations during their campaign. Their giving spirit aligns with Ford's mission to connect with the communities they work in.

The Ford Chicago Assembly Plant's union, United Auto Workers Local 551 (UAW Local 551), was awarded United Way's 2025 April Food Day Community Leadership Award, recognizing the dedication of UAW 551 Chairman Alan "Coby" Millender, and UAW Quality Representatives Angela Dulaney and Kayekethia Evans.

UAW Quality Representative Angela Dulaney (left) accepts the 2025 April Food Day Community Leadership Award on behalf of United Auto Workers Local 551, presented by Deborah Stevens, Chief Executive Officer, Perspectives Charter Schools, and United Way of Metro Chicago South-Southwest Suburban Regional Board Member

"I am honored to accept the award on behalf of Local 551," Angela said. "The recognition means so much to me this year, with every member of our team who has contributed [to United Way]. Together we continue to build not just cars but a better future for our plant, for our union, and for our community." ●

KATIE JAHNKE DALE
BUILDS A STRONGER CHICAGO

7

As the seventh of eight children, Katie Jahnke Dale learned at a young age how to hold her own.

"My large family taught me relationship building from the outset and how to be scrappy and speak up," Katie said. Skills that, today, have helped make her a force in real estate law–and committed to giving back.

> "Giving back through United Way is important to me because I see the value of this work in improving and lifting up our entire community

The Kansas native moved to Chicago for law school at Chicago-Kent College. Katie knew she wanted to practice in a city, and Chicago offered "the best of both worlds," she said. "Chicago has the food, culture, and energy of a large city but all the benefits of being in the Midwest where people are friendly and approachable."

She immediately started making connections and building relationships while in law school and landed a summer internship at DLA Piper. Katie spent her first year at the firm as one of the inaugural Krantz Fellows. She focused solely on pro bono work supporting education for children and DLA Piper's nonprofit affiliate dedicated to global pro bono projects.

Today, Katie is a highly respected and sought after real estate attorney. Last year, she was named co-managing partner at DLA Piper and recognized by Crain's Chicago Business 40 Under 40.

Amid her success, Katie has remained committed to serving her community through pro bono work–while also giving back through United Way of Metro Chicago. She has served on United Way's Campaign Cabinet for four years, hosted gatherings, made connections, and been an enthusiastic advocate of our work throughout the region. Katie has also helped coordinate opportunities for DLA Piper to volunteer through United Way. Employees have packed hundreds of snack packs and hygiene kits for individuals and families in need.

"Giving back through United Way is important to me because I see the value of this work in improving and lifting up our entire community," Katie said. United Way's Neighborhood Network Initiative invests directly in communities and walks alongside residents and organizations leading tangible transformation like the Aspire Center for Workforce Innovation in Austin and the Healthy Lifestyle Hub in Auburn Gresham.

Katie values this tangible impact and how it intersects with her own work leading real estate and development. "I get to feel like I'm helping grow and improve the community, by facilitating investment, creating construction and permanent jobs, enhancing the tax base, and improving affordability," she said. "This is critical to the long-term success of Chicagoland and ensuring it continues to be a world class city and global leader."

Our success as a city is rooted in community and collaboration. United Way is grateful for our generous civic leaders like Katie who believe in the power of working together to create a region where everyone can thrive.

"In recent years, Chicago and other major cities have faced new and unique challenges with population loss, financial challenges, and other headwinds," Katie said. "I think we're fortunate in that we have an incredible business community that has a long history and culture of civic engagement. I'm hoping we can continue to leverage that community to help the region face these challenges."

8

BANKING ON A BETTER FUTURE: LYLE LOGAN'S LEGACY OF COMMUNITY GIVING

After 45 years in the banking industry, Former Vice Chairman of Northern Trust Lyle Logan has retired. His professional career may be coming to a close, but his commitment to the community remains as strong as ever.

As a lifelong Chicagoan, Lyle was raised in a family that gave back. "My parents were teachers, and we were actively involved in the community. We ended up working with organizations that had been supported by United Way," Lyle said.

Lyle briefly left Chicago to study accounting and economics at Florida A&M University. Following graduation, he returned to the Windy City and started his banking career at Continental Bank, which later became Bank of America, all while attending business school at night at the University of Chicago.

Lyle's childhood connection to United Way of Metro Chicago came full circle at Continental Bank – and two decades later when he would join Northern Trust. He embraced both banks' culture of philanthropy, where business leaders set an example of community giving through United Way.

> "United Way creates energy around people giving their time and treasure to our great community.

"Like many Chicago corporations, Continental Bank was a dedicated supporter of United Way," Lyle said. "The same with Northern Trust. There was an expectation set by previous CEOs of Northern Trust that it's not just your shareholder wealth that's important but also your clients, your staff, and your communities. The commitment to the community was a critical issue of why we support United Way."

Through workplace giving, Lyle generously supported United Way of Metro Chicago for decades because he believes in the power of working together and investing in neighborhoods so everyone can thrive. "If we don't invest in our communities, if we don't challenge the status quo, I think we'll see a deterioration in our quality of life as a community. We can only be as good as those who are challenged with the basics in life," Lyle said.

Lyle was inspired to give back early in his career – and he's

paying it forward. He has served as a mentor and "financial expert and pillar of the community" for many, said United Way of Metro Chicago's Chief Financial Officer Ronald DeNard. "I've been fortunate to benefit from his wisdom and guidance across all aspects of life – career, social, civic, and political," Ronald said. "His influence has profoundly shaped my own journey, as well as the lives of my family and countless others in our community."

Now, while enjoying his retirement, Lyle isn't slowing down. He continues to cultivate his relationships and support organizations – like United Way – that are making a real positive difference in the Chicago region. And he charges others to join him.

"Find something you're passionate about. Put your time, energy, and money into that organization, into that cause, into that perspective, and it will make a difference," Lyle said. "I got involved with organizations because I was passionate about the work. You've got to give back your time. It's easy just to write a check, but you've got to give your time."

"I'll continue to stay involved and support United Way because it does a really good job of leveraging community energy," Lyle added. "United Way creates energy around people giving their time and treasure to our great community."

EVERYONE DESERVES **THE OPPORTUNITY TO SUCCEED**

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At BMO, we believe that strong communities are the foundation of a thriving economy and that everyone deserves the opportunity to succeed. That’s why we’re proud to partner with United Way of Metro Chicago, an organization that shares our commitment to driving positive change.

DARREL HACKETT, U.S. CEO, BMO

2024/2025 TOP 25 CORPORATE PARTNERS

1 BMO

2 ITW	3 Northern Trust	4 Nicor Gas	5 Peoples Gas — We Keep Life Moving
6 PNC	7 Exelon ComEd — An Exelon Company	8 AON	9 Sargent & Lundy LLC
10 Kellanova	11 Baird	12 Fifth Third Bank	13 Related
14 Caterpillar	15 Harris Associates Oakmark Funds	16 KPMG	17 Target
18 Burns McDonnell	19 Costco Wholesale	20 US Bank	21 EY — Building a better working world
22 Conagra Brands	23 Deloitte.	24 CIBC	25 Kimberly-Clark

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211 METRO CHICAGO EXECUTIVE BOARD

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United Way of Metro Chicago

211 METRO CHICAGO ADVISORY BOARD

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Cook County Department of Public Health
Greater Chicago Food Depository
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BUILDING ON OUR MOMENTUM, **TOGETHER**

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Nothing is an overnight success. We’ve got to be committed to the long game. United Way started investing in that infrastructure through our Neighborhood Network Initiative. It honors the unique culture of each neighborhood we work with and starts from a place of strength. Let’s build on that momentum.

DR. KIMBERLEE GUENTHER, CHIEF IMPACT OFFICER, UNITED WAY OF METRO CHICAGO

United Way
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