ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

UNITED WAY
Metro Chicago

2025/2026

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

SEAN GARRETT
President & CEO

LINDA T. COBERLY
Chair, Board of Directors

Dear Supporters,

Over the past year, three words have stayed with us: **joy, gratitude,** and **confidence**.

Joy in the progress taking shape across neighborhoods throughout our region. Gratitude for the donors, volunteers, community leaders, partners, and supporters who make that progress possible. Confidence in what we can continue to accomplish together.

This year reminded us that our work is as important as ever. Time and again, we witnessed something remarkable: communities responding with resilience, determination, and hope. Amid economic uncertainty, policy changes, and increased pressures on families and community-based organizations that created new hurdles for many of our neighbors, our United Way community showed up.

Through initiatives like our **Response Fund** and ongoing efforts to leverage real-time **2-1-1 data**, we worked alongside our partners to help meet immediate needs while advancing long-term solutions. At the same time, we celebrated powerful examples of what is possible when communities lead and supporters invest in their vision.

On the Southwest Side, a dream more than a decade in the making became reality with the opening of the **Brighton Park Neighborhood Council Service Center.** This vibrant community hub stands as a testament to resident leadership, partnership, and persistence.

On the South Side, United Way marked the opening of our new **211 Metro Chicago Contact Center** at **Xchange Chicago** in Greater Grand Crossing. This move reflects our commitment to investing in communities while expanding access to critical resources for neighbors across the region.

We celebrated the launch of **ChiNEXT**, a program designed to inspire and prepare the next generation of civic leaders. Through hands-on learning and community engagement, young leaders are strengthening Chicago's proud tradition of civic involvement and shaping its future.

We were also proud to welcome **North Lawndale** as the newest community in our **Neighborhood Network Initiative.** Together with residents and local partners, we are helping build on the neighborhood's rich history and support a community-driven vision for the future.

These stories represent more than individual accomplishments. They reflect growing momentum across our region and demonstrate what can happen when people come together around a shared belief that every neighborhood deserves the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for continuing to show up. Thank you for your generosity, your partnership, and your unwavering commitment to our neighbors. Every success highlighted in this report is possible because of you.

Together, we are creating stronger neighborhoods, responding to today's challenges, and building a brighter future for our region. That is why we look ahead with joy for what we've achieved, gratitude for all who make this work possible, and confidence in all that we'll accomplish together in the years ahead.

UNITED WAY
Metro Chicago

2025/2026 YEAR-IN-REVIEW

JULY 2025

City Club of Chicago: Revitalizing Historically Disinvested Communities

United Way joined BMO and Austin Coming Together for an engaging conversation about how United Way's Neighborhood Network Initiative has created a blueprint for revitalizing disinvested communities.

SEPTEMBER 2025

2-1-1 Contact Center Moves to the South Side

Our 24/7/365 health and social services helpline opened at Xchange Chicago in Greater Grand Crossing, underscoring our commitment to helping residents meet their basic needs and investing in historically disinvested communities.

9/11 Day of Service with Women United and Young Leaders United

United Way's donor networks teamed up with Garfield Park Rite to Wellness Collaborative to beautify the neighborhood through trash pickup, gardening, and painting projects.

OCTOBER 2025

A Toast to Tocqueville

United Way supporters at the $10,000+ level visited the Aspire Center for Workforce Innovation and learned how the Austin Neighborhood Network's Quality of Life Plan is a thriving model for neighborhood transformation.

NOVEMBER 2025

Response Fund Launches to Address Urgent Needs

United Way disbursed $250,000 to 24 organizations providing critical food assistance programs amid rising needs.

"The State of the Social Safety Net"

United Way launched the virtual discussion series, which explores how policy shifts affect basic needs and brings community voices together to showcase how we strengthen the social safety net.

DECEMBER 2025

"Uniting for the Holidays" Reclaims Holiday Joy

Our generous partners and donors provided 250 holiday meals for families in the west suburbs, plus toys and winter essentials for 1,000+ residents in Little Village.

JANUARY 2026

Neighborhood Network Launches in North Lawndale

With generous support from the Steans Family Foundation, North Lawndale Community Coordinating Council is building on a decade of community-driven progress.

JANUARY 2026 (CONTINUED)

Chicago BridgeBuilders Fund Announces Cohort 5

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

South Chicago Launches Quality of Life Plan

The blueprint will guide transformative community development projects in the South Chicago Neighborhood Network.

FEBRUARY 2026

ITW Hires Local Residents in Austin

Through United Way's "Commit to a Neighborhood Initiative," West Side residents were hired at ITW's new Grand Avenue mechanical fastening facility.

MARCH 2026

Carole Robertson Center for Learning Unveils Remodeled Space

Supported by United Way through One Lawndale, the renovated flagship site in Little Village houses early childhood education and youth development programs.

APRIL 2026

Brighton Park Neighborhood Council Service Center Ribbon Cutting

The hub is a one-stop shop on Chicago's Southwest Side, providing vital social services and resources for residents.

Women United Annual Breakfast

Women leaders from Chicago's iconic cultural institutions shared how access to resources and learning is critical to building a stronger Chicago region.

April Food Day Helps Thousands Put Food on the Table

The annual event stocked pantry shelves in the Southland and also recognized leaders driving positive change: Vernard L. Alsberry Jr., Advocate Health Care, and Kiwanis Club of the Crestwood/Oak Forest Area.

MAY 2026

Response Fund Invests in Housing Programs

United Way awarded $250,000 to 20 organizations to immediately address housing and homelessness prevention.

Sankofa Village Wellness Center Celebrates Opening

Garfield Park Rite to Wellness Collaborative cut the ribbon on a new hub bringing medical care, recreation, and community programs to the West Side.

Inaugural ChiNEXT Cohort Graduates

United Way's new program for early career professionals cultivates their journey of civic engagement as future business leaders.

Stronger Neighborhoods Awards

The annual awards luncheon honored Cheryl Francis and PNC and raised more than $1.5 million to support United Way's work.

JUNE 2026

Sean Garrett Honored at Civic Federation's Annual Civic Awards

United Way of Metro Chicago's President & CEO received the Gage-Msall Award for his outstanding contribution and consistent dedication to civic issues across the Chicago region.

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

@UNITEDWAYCHICAGO @UNITEDWAYCHI

@UNITED-WAY-OF-METRO-CHICAGO

UNITED WAY OF METRO CHICAGO RESPONDS: SHOWING UP FOR OUR COMMUNITIES WHEN IT MATTERS MOST

Over the past year, communities across the Chicago region have navigated extraordinary challenges. Policy changes affecting access to food, housing, health care, and other essential supports created new barriers for families already facing rising costs and economic uncertainty.

At the same time, heightened immigration enforcement activity in many neighborhoods created fear, disrupted local economies, and increased strain on community-based organizations working to meet growing needs.

WHEN PEOPLE NEED SUPPORT, UNITED WAY OF METRO CHICAGO SHOWS UP.

As a trusted partner deeply connected to communities across the region, United Way listened, responded, and adapted in real time. Through our partnerships, data, grantmaking, and community leadership, we worked alongside residents, nonprofits, government agencies, and philanthropic partners to help strengthen the social safety net during a complex and rapidly changing moment.

One of the most important tools guiding our response was **211 Metro Chicago**, United Way's free, confidential 24/7 social services helpline. Throughout the year, 2-1-1 data revealed significant increases in requests for assistance, including food, housing, health care, and employment services. In November 2025 alone, food assistance requests surged by 149%. These real-time insights helped us understand emerging needs and respond with urgency.

That data directly led to the launch of United Way's **Response Fund** in fall 2025. Designed to rapidly deploy resources where they were needed most, the fund provides flexible support to organizations addressing urgent and emerging community needs. The first round awarded $250,000 to 24 nonprofits responding to rising food insecurity across the region. Just months later, a second round distributed another $250,000 to 20 organizations focused on housing stability and homelessness prevention as housing-related requests climbed sharply across the Chicago area.

The Response Fund demonstrated what is possible when data, philanthropy, and community leadership come together. By creating a streamlined application process and moving funding quickly, United Way helped trusted local organizations meet urgent needs while continuing their essential day-to-day work.

At the same time, we recognized that responding to immediate needs was only part of the solution. Communities also needed opportunities to share experiences, elevate concerns, and better understand the changing landscape. To support those conversations, United Way launched **The State of the Social Safety Net** series, a free virtual discussion forum bringing together nonprofit leaders, community voices, corporate partners, advocates, and policymakers to examine how evolving policies are affecting families and neighborhoods across our region. Topics have included food security, housing, public policy changes, and the long-term impacts of federal legislation on Illinois residents.

Throughout the year, United Way of Metro Chicago President and CEO Sean Garrett and our staff also maintained regular communication with supporters and partners, sharing insights from 2-1-1 data and stories from neighborhoods experiencing the impacts firsthand. United Way staff met with community leaders, convened Neighborhood Network partners, amplified local voices, and helped connect residents to critical resources. We witnessed remarkable resilience amid challenging circumstances as our partners, neighborhood organizations, and residents worked together to support one another.

While this year tested our communities in complex and sometimes new ways, it also reinforced something we have long known: progress happens when we come together.

Whether deploying rapid-response funding, connecting residents to help through 2-1-1, convening important conversations, or standing alongside partners in community, United Way of Metro Chicago remained focused on what matters most — helping our neighbors meet their basic needs and creating pathways for them to thrive.

(left) Little Village Arch on 26th St. in the neighborhood's main retail district; (right) Housing Forward was one of 20 organizations that received a grant through United Way's Response Fund in May 2026 to address housing and homelessness prevention.

UNVEILING THE HEART OF BRIGHTON PARK: BPNC CUTS RIBBON ON SERVICE CENTER

THE BRIGHTON PARK NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL (BPNC) IS THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY ON CHICAGO'S SOUTHWEST SIDE. NOW, THAT VERY HEART IS EMBLAZONED ON THE HIGH CEILING OF THE NEW 13,000-SQUARE-FOOT SERVICE CENTER ON ARCHER AVENUE, A MAIN THOROUGHFARE OF THE PREDOMINANTLY LATINE AND IMMIGRANT NEIGHBORHOOD.

Designed by artist Roy Villalobos of Open Center for the Arts, the vibrant mural depicts a beating heart with a monarch butterfly, tree branches, and flowing water — symbols of rebirth, growth, and life — and hope for what's next.

"The mural represents how the work we're doing is the lifeblood of the neighborhood," said Patrick Brosnan, Executive Director of BPNC. "We are a proud immigrant community. We protect each other and have a vision for the future, recognizing the past and that we're going to continue to develop programs and support each other."

Celebrating its ribbon cutting on April 13, 2026, the Brighton Park Neighborhood Council Service Center is a "one-stop shop," Patrick said. Several partners of the Neighborhood Network will be housed in the hub, including mental health support through Centro Sanar, legal services through Beyond Legal Aid, and workforce development through PODER, plus youth mentoring, housing case management, job training, and more.

The massive project has been "a labor of love," Patrick said, with planning beginning more than 10 years ago with the launch of the Brighton Park Neighborhood Network — United Way of Metro Chicago's very first community coalition.

"Today, we're seeing years of hard work and resident-led vision come to fruition in Brighton Park," said Dr. Kimberlee Guenther, Chief Strategy & Development Officer for United Way of Metro Chicago. "United Way is proud to stand alongside our partners on the Southwest Side and celebrate this milestone investment that will offer the community the services they need in a beautiful space."

As the community celebrated this long-awaited investment, Brighton Park families continue to face urgent challenges that underscore just how vital a "one-stop shop" will be.

Brighton Park was targeted during Operation Midway Blitz last fall. Increased immigration enforcement activity separated families, many with legal work status. The ripple effects were dramatic. Many families were already living paycheck to paycheck and struggling with the rising cost of living, according to Sara Reschly, Deputy Director of Community Services for BPNC.

"Increased federal immigration activity really scared families," Sara said. "People didn't go to work. Families were afraid to walk their children to school." Missed work meant missed paychecks — and even greater difficulty meeting immediate basic needs. "We had families who literally did not have food in their house," Sara said.

The Brighton Park Neighborhood Network responded. The coalition of community organizations and schools immediately "got together to provide wraparound services for families in crisis," Sara said.

United Way launched our Response Fund in the fall of 2025 to address urgent and emerging needs, including food insecurity during the federal government shutdown and pause of SNAP benefits. BPNC received a Response Grant to support their food distribution events — and help families in crisis put food on the table.

"United Way came in with the Response Fund, which has just been tremendous," Patrick said. "It has grown our capacity to provide services to families. We were able to triple the number of households that received this support."

"United Way is instrumental in the work that we do," said Maribel Martinez, Director of Community Partnerships for BPNC. "Without United Way, we wouldn't have the Neighborhood Network coalition that allows us to have collaborative partnerships to address the community's needs."

That collaboration is now taking visible, lasting shape in the neighborhood through the BPNC Service Center — the heartbeat of Brighton Park.

"We have been able to create this dream come true for our community and for the organization," Maribel said. "We're very excited to continue strengthening the partnership with United Way through the expansion of services, community engagement, and the impact that the service center will have for the community." ●

(left) Mural on the ceiling of the BPNC Service Center designed by artist Roy Villalobos of Open Center for the Arts; (top left) community leaders, elected officials, and partners cut the ribbon at the BPNC Service Center; (top right) facade of the new Service Center.

211 METRO CHICAGO MOVES TO THE SOUTH SIDE

FOR NINA, WORKING AT 211 METRO CHICAGO IS PERSONAL. SHE WAS BORN AND RAISED IN CHICAGO – AND IS FILLED WITH PRIDE FOR HER HOMETOWN. FROM RIDING HER BIKE ALONG LAKE MICHIGAN TO DANCING WITH HER FRIENDS AT MUSIC FESTIVALS, SHE HAS FOND MEMORIES GROWING UP IN THE CITY.

But everyone isn't as fortunate. Which is why Nina serves as a Resource Navigator for 211 Metro Chicago. "I love this city, which is why it's especially hard knowing not everyone has what they need to get by," Nina said. "This is why my job at 2-1-1 is so important and truly makes a difference in people's lives."

Nina is one of the voices on the other end of the health and social service helpline. With empathy and expertise, she fields calls, texts, and web chats from residents across Cook County. Many are contacting her "in a time of crisis, sometimes on their worst day," she said. Nina searches 2-1-1's database of thousands of local services and programs to help residents find what they need: a food pantry, affordable housing, medical care, and more.

Last fall, more than 50 2-1-1 staff members moved into the 24/7/365 helpline's permanent home at Xchange Chicago on the South Side. The tech workforce hub was founded by Comer Science & Education Foundation, P33, and SDI Presence in the Greater Grand Crossing neighborhood. Now, 211 Metro Chicago is its latest tenant.

On September 2, 2025, Nina joined her 211 Metro Chicago and United Way of Metro Chicago colleagues, plus elected officials, funders, and partners, to officially cut the ribbon on the new 2-1-1 contact center.

2-1-1 is operated by United Way of Metro Chicago, in partnership with the City of Chicago and Cook County — and has grown significantly since it launched in January 2023, according to Sean Garrett, President and CEO of United Way of Metro Chicago.

"Thanks to the work we've been able to do with our partners over the last three years, we have one of the most advanced 2-1-1s, serving our residents in ways that we can innovate every single day," Sean said. "That's the future of 2-1-1. Not only are we able to connect residents with resources, but we also get a deep set of data that tells us what is needed, where those needs are, and how we can respond."

The data is already painting a comprehensive picture. 2-1-1 and its homelessness prevention hotlines* have fielded more than 675,000 contacts to date (as of June 30, 2026). Top requested needs are housing, utility assistance, access to food, and income support. Most of the people contacting 2-1-1 live on the South and West Sides of Chicago. Young adults ages 25-34 make up the largest age group that contact 2-1-1, at nearly a quarter.

Opening the permanent 211 Metro Chicago contact center in Greater Grand Crossing was intentional. Not only does United Way help our neighbors meet their immediate basic needs, but we're also committed to investing in historically disinvested communities. This transformative work isn't possible without public and private partnerships, including with Cook County and the City of Chicago.

"Bringing the 211 Metro Chicago Center to Grand Crossing is a meaningful example of United Way's commitment to building stronger, more connected communities," said Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. "By opening this new call center in Xchange Chicago, 2-1-1 is strengthening its presence in Grand Crossing and contributing to neighborhood vibrancy and economic revitalization."

"By establishing the permanent 2-1-1 call center in Grand Crossing, we are not only responding to our residents' needs, but also investing in employment opportunities and the vitality of the Grand Crossing community," said Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson. "211 Metro Chicago is here to serve every person. You'll be met with compassion. This program is all about providing dignity and stability."

Driving this compassionate service are Nina and her fellow Resource Navigators. 2-1-1 is all about "building relationships and letting someone know they aren't alone," Nina said, as she shared a story about a recent client who called 2-1-1 looking for permanent housing after caring for her aging parent. The client had spoken to at least five other organizations that weren't able to help.

Nina shared a referral to housing and other resources. Just one week later, the same client called Nina asking for rental assistance — for her new apartment.

"She said she was ecstatic and grateful for 2-1-1 because not only did she find housing and resources to meet her needs, but her support system had grown — all thanks to her having the courage to make one more call for help that day," Nina said.

*211 Metro Chicago operates the City of Chicago Homelessness Prevention Hotline, Chicago Continuum of Care Coordinated Entry Line, and the Suburban Cook Homelessness Prevention/Diversion Hotline.

(top) Community leaders, elected officials, and partners cut the ribbon at the 211 Metro Chicago Contact Center at Xchange Chicago; (bottom right) 2-1-1 Resource Navigator Nina Singleton fields calls and messages in the new Contact Center, helping connect residents with health and social service resources across Cook County; (bottom left) Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle tours the new 2-1-1 Contact Center at Xchange Chicago with United Way of Metro Chicago President & CEO Sean Garrett (center) and 211 Metro Chicago Executive Director Richard LaPratt (left).

"Thanks to the work we've been able to do with our partners over the last three years, we have one of the most advanced 2-1-1s, serving our residents in ways that we can innovate every single day."

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

THE FUTURE IS NOW: CHINEXT GROWS THE NEXT GENERATION OF CIVIC LEADERS

by
CAITLIN CLOSSER PEART,
SENIOR DIRECTOR
OF CIVIC PROGRAMS,
UNITED WAY
OF METRO CHICAGO

AT UNITED WAY OF METRO CHICAGO, WE KNOW WE STAND ON A PROFOUND LEGACY. WE HAVE PARTNERSHIPS THAT SPAN DECADES, NEARLY 100 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE SERVING THE CHICAGO REGION, AND OUR CITY'S DEEP HERITAGE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.

"For generations, the leaders of our business community built a strong civic and philanthropic foundation in Chicago," said Bridget Gainer, Global Head of Public Affairs & Policy at Aon, and a United Way of Metro Chicago board member. They did so, Gainer said, "because they acted upon a commitment to our city – and each other."

For a long time, it's been a given in Chicago that business leaders are also civic leaders, giving back to the city where they made their careers. But what happens when that "given" is no longer guaranteed?

Changes in workplace cultures, the rise of virtual work, and declining trust in institutions by younger generations have meant that this beautiful legacy faces uncertainty.

But for United Way, our work is fueled by strong business partners and civic leaders who stand beside us to help individuals and families meet their immediate basic needs and create neighborhoods of opportunity.

We are committed to leveraging that support as we build the next generation of civic leaders.

In the fall of 2025, with the encouragement of our board, United Way launched ChiNEXT, a cohort-based learning and development program to inspire early career professionals towards a career and life of civic engagement. We recruited a cohort of over 40 young professionals, in the first five years of their careers, from different backgrounds and industries, and brought them together for a collective learning experience.

"Today, we're so social media-focused and desensitized to human interaction," said participant Jamie Adams of Loop Capital. "It's beautiful when we're able to come together as a group for real conversations

Update to: (top) Members of the ChiNEXT 2025-2026 cohort celebrate their graduation in May 2026; (middle) Bridget Gainer (far left) with ChiNEXT members; (bottom) 2025-2026 ChiNEXT members Broderic Mast (left) and Francesca Robinson (right).

and real-life experiences of civic duties. I walked away really proud to be a member of the cohort."

Through monthly sessions and homework assignments, our cohort visited some of United Way's Neighborhood Networks around the city and learned about Chicago's challenges and opportunities directly from the expert leaders working to address them. Session topics and locations ranged from health disparities at Auburn Gresham's Healthy Lifestyles Hub, to criminal justice at the Cook County Department of Corrections, to workforce development at Austin's Aspire Center.

United Way believes that this investment in the young professionals of today is critical for making change tomorrow. ChiNEXT seeks to cultivate empathy and action through experiential learning and exposure to realize the future we know is possible for Chicago.

"ChiNEXT helped me think more intentionally about how I can contribute my time to strengthen our city," said participant Francesca Robinson of PSP Partners. "It's a unique opportunity to connect with inspiring leaders and gain exposure that is hard to find early in your career."

Participant Broderic Mast of EY saw the value not just for himself, but for the neighborhoods the cohort visited and supported. "The more that we are in our communities showing up for people on a day-to-day basis, the more we can lift everyone up around us and make Chicago a better place for everyone to live."

United Way is excited to bring this program back for a second year, as we continue the important work of building a stronger Chicago region where everyone can thrive. The future success of Chicago and everyone who calls Chicago home requires the involvement and investment of committed business, civic, nonprofit, and community leaders.

At United Way, mobilizing caring people and resources is part of our legacy, part of who we are today, and part of what positions us to help grow the civic leaders of tomorrow.

"ChiNEXT brings young people together with some of the most effective and impactful Chicagoans to grow our next generation," said Gainer, who was instrumental in helping create the program. "It's yet one more way United Way is supporting communities – now and in the future – through its strong civic and corporate relationships."

DRIVING CHANGE FROM WITHIN: UNITED WAY OF METRO CHICAGO INVESTS IN NORTH LAWNDALE

NORTH LAWNDALE IS MAKING WAVES ON THE WEST SIDE. THE CULTURALLY RICH COMMUNITY IS THE LATEST TO JOIN UNITED WAY OF METRO CHICAGO'S NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK INITIATIVE.

In January 2026, with generous support from the Steans Family Foundation, United Way announced the launch of the North Lawndale Neighborhood Network, a powerful investment in the community's vision, leadership, and future.

The Network is designed to amplify and extend more than a decade of progress led by the Steans Family Foundation and North Lawndale Community Coordinating Council (NLCCC). The investment builds on the nonprofit's work that has organized residents, mobilized resources, and elevated shared goals that strengthen safety, stability, and opportunity for all who call North Lawndale home.

"Expanding the Neighborhood Network Initiative to North Lawndale reflects both the strength of the community's leadership and the momentum already underway," said Kimberlee Guenther, Ph.D., Chief Strategy and Development Officer for United Way of Metro Chicago. "Thanks to our partnership with the Steans Family Foundation, United Way of Metro

Chicago is investing in a neighborhood that has laid a solid foundation for transformative change, supporting the next chapter of impact and growth in North Lawndale."

NLCCC is at the heart of the North Lawndale Neighborhood Network, serving as the "community quarterback," or lead agency, driving the neighborhood's development. For more than ten years, NLCCC has brought together residents, nonprofits, local businesses, and public partners around a shared vision for neighborhood transformation.

"NLCCC's partnership through United Way's Neighborhood Network strengthens our ability to serve North Lawndale through three core strategies: deepened collaboration, shared resource alignment, and neighborhood-rooted capacity building," said Jesse Green, Executive Director of NLCCC.

Through 13 active committees, NLCCC has turned ideas into action across North Lawndale and ensured residents remain at the center of decision-making. From affordable housing development and workforce opportunities to cultural celebrations, youth programming, food access, safety initiatives, and new community spaces like Douglass 18 and local farm sites, the impact of this work is visible throughout the neighborhood.

"By leveraging the Neighborhood Network model, NLCCC is better positioned to scale impact while staying grounded in the voices and aspirations of the community," Jesse said. "Together, this partnership enhances NLCCC's ability to advance its vision for North Lawndale — expanding economic opportunity, strengthening families, and building a thriving, connected community."

United Way's investment in North Lawndale reflects both the community's track record and its readiness for the next chapter. NLCCC's clear vision, strong infrastructure, and deep resident engagement positioned North Lawndale to fully leverage the Neighborhood Network model.

Together, United Way, the Steans Family Foundation, and NLCCC are committed to advancing a bold community vision: a safe, healthy, and economically vibrant North Lawndale where residents lead decision-making, families thrive, and community systems work together to create lasting opportunities and equitable development.

"We're proud to partner with United Way to build on the incredible progress already underway in North Lawndale and support the next chapter of this community's growth," said Patricia Ford, Executive Director of the Steans Family Foundation. "We've seen firsthand what this community is capable of when residents are empowered to lead. Investments like this with NLCCC as quarterback help expand opportunity and ensure that the people who know North Lawndale best continue to shape its future."

One key goal for 2026 is enhancing resident engagement — bringing more neighbors into the work, boosting collective power between existing and new partners, and increasing the community's ability to shape its own future. The Neighborhood Network provides both the structure and the support to deepen this engagement, while scaling impact across the neighborhood.

North Lawndale now joins a network of 18 United Way Neighborhood Networks across the Chicago region, 10 in the city and 8 in the suburbs. Each is grounded in local leadership and resident-led vision and action.

In North Lawndale, momentum continues to grow. With United Way and the Steans Family Foundation standing alongside community leaders and residents, the future is bright. ●

(opposite) Mosaic outside Del-Kar Pharmacy in North Lawndale; (top) Douglass 18 miniature golf course; (middle) Jesse Green, Patricia Ford, and Jim Kastenholz at Fillmore Linen Service; (bottom) United Way of Metro Chicago, North Lawndale Community Coordinating Council, and the Steans Family Foundation celebrate the North Lawndale Neighborhood Network launch.

STORIES OF IMPACT

ACROSS THE CHICAGO REGION, NEIGHBORS ARE COMING TOGETHER TO OPEN DOORS, MEET URGENT NEEDS, AND CREATE LASTING CHANGE. THESE STORIES SHOW WHAT'S POSSIBLE WHEN WE WORK SIDE BY SIDE TO HELP EVERY COMMUNITY THRIVE.

READ FULL STORIES AT LIVEUNITEDCHICAGO.ORG/STORIES

URBAN MALE NETWORK EMPOWERS THE NEXT GENERATION

Life is coming full circle for Dr. Marlon Haywood. United Way of Metro Chicago joined the local changemaker for the official opening of Urban Male Network's Empowerment Center, just blocks away from where Marlon grew up on the South Side of Chicago.

> "UNITED WAY'S PARTNERSHIP HAS STRENGTHENED OUR CAPACITY AS AN ORGANIZATION AND MADE THE OPENING OF THE EMPOWERMENT CENTER POSSIBLE. THEIR SUPPORT HAS ALLOWED URBAN MALE NETWORK TO EXPAND PROGRAMMING, ENGAGE MORE YOUTH, AND CREATE A HUB FOR GROWTH, HEALING, AND OPPORTUNITY IN ENGLEWOOD.
>
> **DR. MARLON HAYWOOD**
> CEO AND FOUNDER, URBAN MALE NETWORK

HOLIDAY JOY DELIVERED: UNITING FOR THE HOLIDAYS 2025

More than 1,000 families received toys, food, and winter essentials to help meet their basic needs this season — and reclaim holiday joy.

> "COMING TOGETHER WITH UNITED WAY OF METRO CHICAGO THIS HOLIDAY SEASON BROUGHT TREMENDOUS JOY TO ENLACE CHICAGO AND TO OUR NEIGHBORS IN LITTLE VILLAGE. OUR PARTNERSHIP ENABLED ENLACE TO MOBILIZE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FROM DONORS AND THE PHILANTHROPIC COMMUNITY.
>
> **MARCELA RODRIGUEZ**
> EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ENLACE CHICAGO

CREATING A COMMUNITY OF CHOICE: SOUTH CHICAGO LAUNCHES 2026 QUALITY OF LIFE PLAN

South Chicago is reclaiming its story — and embracing a new beginning. The Southeast Side's Quality of Life Plan will guide transformative community development projects, creating a vibrant neighborhood and brighter future for residents.

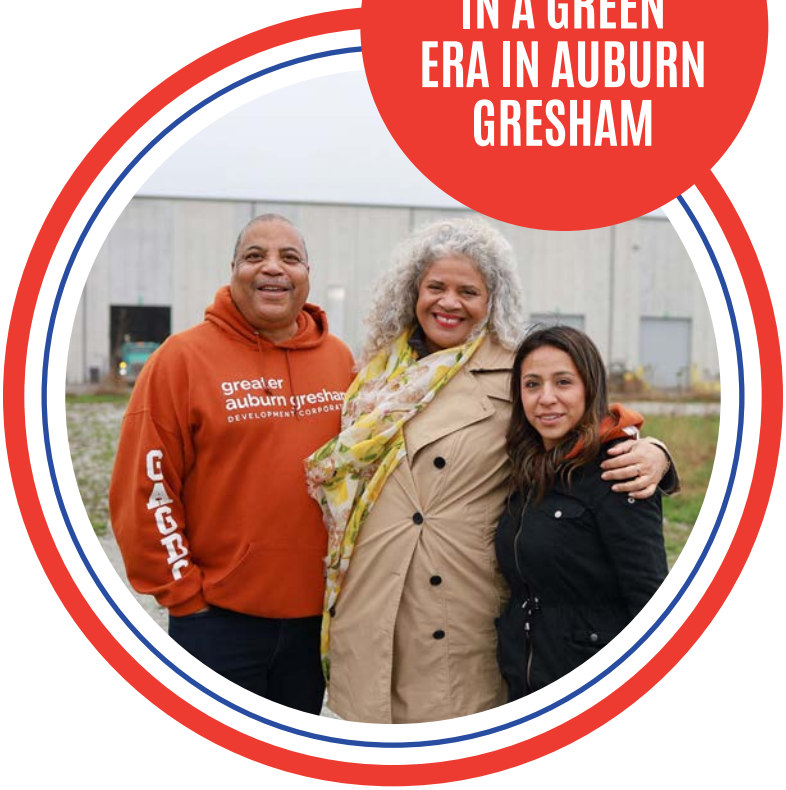
> FOR OVER A DECADE, UNITED WAY HAS REMAINED A STEADY AND ADAPTABLE PARTNER, INVESTING IN RESOURCES, RESPONDING TO EVOLVING NEEDS, AND EMPOWERING COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP. THEIR CONSISTENT SUPPORT HAS HELPED TRANSFORM SOUTH CHICAGO'S CHALLENGES INTO A RENEWED COMMITMENT TO GROWTH, RESILIENCE, AND OPPORTUNITY.
>
> **TIARRA OWENS,** PROGRAM MANAGER
> SOUTH CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK

CAROLE ROBERTSON CENTER FOR LEARNING CELEBRATES RENOVATED HUB

The early childhood education and youth development nonprofit cut the ribbon on its flagship site in Little Village, celebrating a milestone for the community through One Lawndale and the Little Village Neighborhood Network.

> THIS SITE REPRESENTS OUR ASPIRATIONS, OUR HOPES, AND OUR DREAMS FOR THE NEXT 50 YEARS, CONTINUING TO GROW, INNOVATE, AND PROVIDE THE BEST POSSIBLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR OUR CHILDREN, OUR FAMILIES, AND OUR YOUTH.
>
> **BELA MOTÉ,** PRESIDENT AND CEO,
> CAROLE ROBERTSON CENTER FOR LEARNING

USHERING IN A GREEN ERA IN AUBURN GRESHAM



On the South Side of Chicago, the Green Era Campus is an ambitious, community-led project transforming food waste into clean energy, local jobs, and long-term neighborhood wealth.

> "WE'RE FUELING A MOVEMENT OF URBAN AGRICULTURE AND GROWING NUTRIENT-RICH FOOD, ALL TO ENERGIZE THE CONTINUED GROWTH OF OUR COMMUNITY. UNITED WAY IS ACCESSIBLE AND A TRUE AND GENUINE PARTNER IN THIS WORK.
>
> **CARLOS NELSON**
> CEO, GREATER AUBURN GRESHAM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

APRIL FOOD DAY 2026

United Way of Metro Chicago and the Southland community once again came together to help families put food on the table. Thousands of pounds of food and household items were collected and sent to local pantries — because everyone deserves access to nutritious food.

65,000+
POUNDS OF FOOD

$100,000+
RAISED

150+
VOLUNTEERS

10
FOOD PANTRIES

INDIVIDUAL LEADERSHIP AWARD
VERNARD L. ALSBERRY JR.

BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AWARD
ADVOCATE HEALTH CARE

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARD
KIWANIS CLUB OF THE CRESTWOOD/ OAK FOREST AREA

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THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

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2025/2026 CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS

WE'VE GOT TO ENGAGE THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS... AT EY US, I SEE MORE YOUNG PROFESSIONALS WHO ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT CREATING SOCIAL IMPACT AND WILLING TO ROLL UP THEIR SLEEVES AND VOLUNTEER. THEY GIVE FINANCIALLY AND WITH THEIR HEARTS, SOULS, AND TALENTS.

KEVIN COLE
EY CHICAGO OFFICE MANAGING PARTNER AND
2025/2026 CAMPAIGN CHAIR

$41 MILLION+
RAISED

20,000
INDIVIDUAL DONORS

1,000+
LEADERSHIP DONORS

300+
TOCQUEVILLE DONORS

500
CORPORATE PARTNERS

5,000+
VOLUNTEERS

18
NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS

130+
IMPACT GRANT PARTNERS

5,000+
PEOPLE PLACED IN JOBS

400,000+
MEALS PROVIDED

675,000+
2-1-1 CONNECTIONS
TO BASIC NEEDS

1 MILLION PEOPLE
IMPACTED

A CATALYST FOR POSITIVE CHANGE: KEVIN COLE LEADS AS 2025-2026 CAMPAIGN CHAIR

Kevin Cole's first job was a paper route. Before sunrise, at 4:30 a.m., the fourth grader would jump in the car with his mother and drive up and down his neighborhood's streets outside of Fort Smith, Arkansas, delivering papers to his customers — always on time and carefully placed in each mailbox or on the doorstep.

By the time he graduated from high school, Kevin's paper route had grown to serving three neighborhoods and delivering over 700 papers each morning. His childhood job and involvement in the local Boys & Girls Club were catalysts for his future success — and a career in business. "The Boys & Girls Club was a great place for me to be when there was no other place to go," Kevin says. "It's where I learned teamwork and played sports. I also received a Boys & Girls Club scholarship that helped me pay for college."

After graduating with a BA in Business Administration from the University of Arkansas, Kevin and his wife, Eliza, began what he calls their "Southeast Experience." They were young professionals bouncing from one place to the next every three to five years, following job opportunities, from Nashville to Orlando to San Antonio to Atlanta. They finally landed in Chicago in 2003 when Kevin took on the role of director of accounts and business development with professional services firm Ernst & Young LLP (EY US), a longtime corporate partner of United Way of Metro Chicago.

Twenty-two years later, the Coles are still here. Kevin is now the EY Chicago Office Managing Partner after holding several leadership roles that took him across the country and around the world. The best part about his current position is being Chicago-based and "getting to focus on local impact and support the EY Chicago team's success," Kevin says.

"At this point in my career, I want to really impact the EY Chicago office and the community," Kevin says. "Our business is apprentice-driven and I can look back at all the people I've worked with, supported and mentored who are now running businesses, leading practices and engaging in their communities at a high level. That legacy is important to me. My biggest career accomplishment has been the growth and development of EY business and EY people."

Kevin's legacy includes leading the EY commitment to civic engagement — and being an outspoken supporter of United Way of Metro Chicago and our work meeting immediate basic needs and driving long-term neighborhood transformation.

"I'm extremely passionate about United Way's place-based work in communities as a pathway to real impact," Kevin says. "Place-based investing changes the dynamics in a neighborhood and creates more opportunities. Closing the opportunity gap is a game changer."

Kevin has been a United Way donor for more than two decades through the EY workplace giving campaign and serves on United Way of Metro Chicago's Board of Directors. This past year, he took his civic leadership even further, serving as United Way's 2025–2026 Campaign Chair. His goal? Keep the momentum going.

"I wanted to continue to be a catalyst for the work that United Way is doing in building strong neighborhoods through place-based investment," Kevin says. "Through this year's campaign, we aimed to raise awareness and help donors understand their impact through supporting United Way initiatives."

Kevin has also mentored many young leaders — who have played an active role and made United Way their charity of choice.

"We've got to engage the next generation of leaders," Kevin says. "At EY US, I see more young professionals who are passionate about creating social impact and willing to roll up their sleeves and volunteer. They give financially and with their hearts, souls, and talents."

"I've always admired the civic leadership of the business community in Chicago and United Way has an impressive platform for developing the next generation of civic leaders," Kevin says. "I look forward to continuing to lean in and work together across EY US and with my fellow business leaders to further highlight the work of United Way and energize our donors."

ITW and BMO staff assemble hygiene kits and snack packs during campaign kickoff events with United Way of Metro Chicago.

Cheryl Francis receives the 2026 Andrew J. McKenna Leadership Award at United Way of Metro Chicago's Stronger Neighborhoods Awards.

CHERYL FRANCIS HONORED WITH 2026 ANDREW J. MCKENNA LEADERSHIP AWARD

UNITED WAY OF METRO CHICAGO WAS PROUD TO RECOGNIZE CHERYL FRANCIS AS THE RECIPIENT OF THE ANDREW J. MCKENNA LEADERSHIP AWARD AT OUR 2026 STRONGER NEIGHBORHOODS AWARDS LUNCHEON. THE HONOR REFLECTS NOT ONLY EXCEPTIONAL LEADERSHIP, BUT A LIFELONG COMMITMENT TO BUILDING STRONGER, THRIVING NEIGHBORHOODS. CHERYL EMBODIES THIS – AND IS DEDICATED TO GIVING BACK TO THE CHICAGO COMMUNITY THAT HAS GIVEN HER SO MUCH.

Fifty years ago, Cheryl and her husband, Zed, graduated from Cornell University and arrived as newlyweds to attend the University of Chicago's business school, supported by scholarships that made their journey possible. They quickly fell in love with the city, raising two sons while building successful careers in finance. Cheryl was 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.

PAYING OPPORTUNITY FORWARD

Throughout her success, Cheryl never lost sight of the opportunities she and Zed were given — and the importance of extending that same hand to others.

"We received scholarships to the University of Chicago and were helped by so many people," Cheryl said. "Someone that didn't know us gave us a gift that allowed us to have a very different start in Chicago that we otherwise would not have had. It makes us want to provide that kind of opportunity for other people."

That philosophy has defined Cheryl's impact ever since.

LEADERSHIP THAT BRIDGES BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY

A respected business leader and dedicated philanthropist, Cheryl has long demonstrated that corporate and civic leadership are not separate pursuits but complementary forces. She brings a rare combination of intellect and empathy to every role she takes on — whether in the boardroom or in the community — earning her a reputation as a leader who can "do it all," while never losing focus on people and outcomes.

At United Way, Cheryl's influence has been transformative. Over the past decade, she has served as a board leader, donor, fundraiser, and trusted advisor, continually challenging the organization to think bigger and reach farther. Her leadership has inspired United Way's staff and partners alike, setting a standard for what it means to lead with purpose, integrity, and vision.

Beyond leadership titles, Cheryl is known for how she shows up. She listens. She engages. She builds relationships rooted in trust. Community partners speak of her willingness to be present in neighborhoods, to have real conversations, and to invest deeply — not just in programs but in people.

Together, Cheryl and Zed have translated that belief into meaningful, lasting impact through United Way's Neighborhood Network Initiative. In 2019, they made a $500,000 investment in the Austin Neighborhood Network, helping catalyze community-driven developments, from BUILD's youth and community center to the Aspire Center for Workforce Innovation hub on the West Side.

Their approach is grounded in what Cheryl describes as a "hand up, not a handout." By providing flexible, community-informed funding, they empower local leaders to determine how best to drive progress and create sustainable change. That same commitment led to a $500,000 investment in the Little Village Neighborhood Network in 2024, further expanding opportunities across Chicago neighborhoods.

"Our gifts aren't designated so that the people who are on the ground can figure out the best use of the funds based on their community's plans and priorities," Cheryl said. "They can do more with the investment, and it grows and sustains itself. United Way's Neighborhood Network is that kind of model."

A LEGACY OF MENTORSHIP AND IMPACT

Cheryl's leadership is especially fitting for an award that bears the name of Andy McKenna, a mentor and friend she deeply admired. Like Andy, Cheryl leads with humility and warmth, while remaining deeply committed to lifting up the next generation. She invests in future leaders, champions new ideas, and consistently raises the bar for what's possible.

"I think about all of the help that I've been given over my life," Cheryl said. "I'm very grateful for that and try to think about how I can be that investor for other people and pay it forward to the next generation."

That mindset — generous, forward-looking, and deeply rooted in community — has made Cheryl Francis an unstoppable force for good in Chicago.

Her impact can be seen in stronger neighborhoods, more empowered leaders, and a growing network of people inspired to give back. Through United Way's 2026 Andrew J. McKenna Leadership Award, we celebrate all Cheryl has accomplished, plus the example she continues to set.

"It's mind blowing to be receiving an award named after Andy McKenna, who was one of my great supporters and mentors and was a phenomenal human being," Cheryl said. "He was such a good person and a good friend. To be a reflection of him in the eyes of the city and United Way is the best, most significant honor anybody could have."

INVESTING WHERE IT MATTERS MOST:

PNC HONORED FOR BUILDING A STRONGER CHICAGO

EVERY CITY'S STRENGTH IS REFLECTED IN THE INSTITUTIONS THAT GROW ALONGSIDE IT – AND IN CHICAGO, PNC IS ONE OF THOSE STEADY, TRUSTED PARTNERS.

(left) PNC staff volunteer at the Greater Chicago Food Depository; (right) PNC receives the 2026 Corporate Leadership Award at United Way of Metro Chicago's Stronger Neighborhoods Awards, accepted by Scott Swanson, President of PNC Illinois and Midwest Territory Executive.

For more than 160 years, PNC has earned its place as one of the nation's largest and most trusted banks — supporting clients at every stage of their journey.

That commitment runs deep in the Chicago region. With approximately 120 branches and more than 2,000 employees locally, Chicago is more than a market for PNC. It's a cornerstone of the bank's Midwest presence, built on long-term relationships, stability, and trust.

"Chicago is a city defined by its neighborhoods, its resilience, and its people. And one thing I've always believed is that real progress happens when people come together with intention and stay committed for the long term — and that's a belief we share with United Way," said Scott Swanson, President of PNC Illinois and Midwest Territory Executive.

WHERE INVESTMENT MEETS IMPACT

PNC's impact is felt well beyond banking. Community investment sits at the heart of how PNC helps shape Chicago's growth, brought to life through collaborations that strengthen the city's civic, educational, and cultural fabric. From Big Shoulders Fund, Metropolitan Family Services, and the Greater Chicago Food Depository to the Adler Planetarium and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, PNC's partnerships help ensure Chicago's neighborhoods remain vibrant and resilient.

One of the most significant expressions of this commitment is PNC Grow Up Great®, a landmark $500 million initiative focused on early childhood education. In Chicago alone, $17 million has been dedicated to helping children build a strong foundation for lifelong success — because when children thrive, families and neighborhoods thrive too.

A TRUSTED UNITED WAY PARTNER

PNC's long-standing partnership with United Way of Metro Chicago reflects a shared commitment to expanding opportunity and strengthening neighborhoods across the region. Through investments in initiatives such as the Neighborhood Networks and the Chicago BridgeBuilders Fund, PNC helps advance solutions that create lasting change for families and communities.

Thanks to generous corporate support and individual employee contributions, PNC has given nearly $3 million to support United Way of Metro Chicago's mission of building a stronger, more vibrant region.

"United Way has a unique ability to bring organizations together in ways that drive meaningful, lasting change. That gives us great confidence that our support is making the greatest possible impact in the communities we serve," adds Swanson.

PNC's commitment also shows up through its people. Employees contribute time, talent, and leadership by volunteering in the community, participating in civic leadership programs, and serving on Women United and United Way of Metro Chicago's Board of Directors.

That leadership is exemplified by Scott Swanson, President of PNC Illinois and Midwest Territory Executive, a current United Way Board Member, and 2024–2025 Campaign Chair.

Through leaders like Scott and hundreds of dedicated employees, PNC demonstrates its belief that business success and community progress go hand in hand — ensuring that growth aligns with real local needs and opportunity.

In recognition of PNC's enduring commitment to the Chicago region, and its deep, impactful partnership with United Way, PNC received the 2026 Corporate Leadership Award at United Way of Metro Chicago's Stronger Neighborhoods Awards Luncheon on May 28, 2026.

"I'm honored to accept the United Way's Corporate Leadership Award on behalf of PNC. It reflects the strength of our longstanding partnership and our shared dedication to building thriving communities. We're committed to building on that work, because there is so much more we can achieve together," adds Swanson.

PNC's example reminds us of what's possible when companies do not just invest in communities — but stand with them for the long term.

BUILDING A LEGACY:

BOB AND LINDA SULLIVAN INVEST IN CHICAGO'S FUTURE THROUGH THE 1837 SOCIETY

MORE THAN 50 YEARS AGO, A YOUNG BANKER IN SOUTH BEND, INDIANA, WAS ASKED TO SERVE AS A UNITED WAY LOANED EXECUTIVE DURING THE COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN. JUST TWO MONTHS AFTER GRADUATING FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME, BOB SULLIVAN ACCEPTED THE OPPORTUNITY WITHOUT REALIZING IT WOULD SHAPE A LIFETIME OF SERVICE.

He remembers thinking the title "executive" sounded pretty impressive. That experience marked the beginning of a lifelong relationship with United Way.

Visiting local nonprofits, meeting families, and helping lead workplace campaigns gave Bob an early appreciation for the difference a community can make when people come together. It was a lesson he carried with him throughout his banking career, serving communities in Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, and eventually Chicago.

For Bob, however, none of those accomplishments happened alone. "If it wasn't for Linda," he said, "all the things we've been able to accomplish wouldn't have happened." His wife was "there every step of the way," supporting countless community events over the years while giving back through organizations that were important to her as well.

Today, Bob and Linda are among the founding members of United Way of Metro Chicago's new 1837 Society, recognizing donors who have made a planned gift to support the organization's and Chicago's future. Their planned gift builds on more than 50 years of supporting United Way through both their generosity and volunteer leadership.

"To know that 100 years from now the city is flourishing and you played a small part in making that happen," Bob said. "That's a wonderful legacy."

Giving back has long been part of the Sullivan family's story. Bob's father chaired United Way campaigns in both South Bend and Newark, New Jersey. His sister, Mary, dedicated more than 40 years to United Way in

Louisville, where the organization's annual volunteer service award now bears her name.

As Bob's banking career took him across the Midwest, United Way remained a constant.

When Fifth Third Bank brought Bob to Chicago in 2011, he wasn't sure what to expect. After spending much of his career in smaller cities, Chicago felt intimidating at first. But one of the first people he met was civic leader Andy McKenna, who encouraged him to get involved with United Way of Metro Chicago.

"Chicago was such a warm and welcoming community," Bob said. "Within six months, I knew as many people in Chicago as I probably knew after years in Cincinnati. There was no greater place I could spend my time and my resources than with United Way," he said.

As a member of United Way's Board of Directors, Executive Committee, and Campaign Cabinet Chair, Bob watched the organization sharpen its focus through the Neighborhood Network Initiative, investing alongside residents to create lasting change.

"You can't really understand it until you go into the neighborhoods and see the work," Bob said. "When you visit Austin, Little Village, and the other Neighborhood Networks, you see what's possible when people come together around a shared vision." Those visits reinforced something Bob believes deeply: "A zip code should not determine your opportunities in life."

As a career banker, Bob has always believed in return on investment. "I've always felt you get the biggest bang for your buck with United Way," he said. "United Way knows where the needs are greatest. I trust them to put resources where they'll make the biggest difference."

(top) Bob and Linda Sullivan; (middle) Bob Sullivan (far left) with Pat Canning, Andy McKenna, and Ellen Costello at United Way of Metro Chicago's Celebration event in 2018; (bottom) Bob Sullivan and Fifth Third colleagues volunteer at the Salvation Army in 2015.

That philosophy has shaped Bob and Linda's giving for decades. Their planned gift is another way Bob and Linda are investing in United Way's future, helping strengthen neighborhoods and expand opportunities for generations to come.

Bob often shares a story his father used when speaking about philanthropy. Imagine driving through Chicago years from now with your grandchildren. One of them looks out the window and asks, "Grandpa, did you help build this city?" The first instinct is to answer, "Of course not."

Then comes another thought. "Well," Bob says with a smile, "maybe we did."

No one transforms a city alone. It takes neighbors, businesses, nonprofits, volunteers, and philanthropists working together over generations.

Through the 1837 Society, Bob and Linda hope their legacy, and the legacies of others, will help build a stronger Chicago region for generations to come.

ALIGNED FOR IMPACT:

UNITED WAY OF METRO CHICAGO AND THE STEANS FAMILY FOUNDATION WORK TOGETHER TO TRANSFORM COMMUNITIES

FOR DECADES, THE STEANS FAMILY FOUNDATION (SFF) HAS INVESTED DEEPLY IN THE PEOPLE, ASSETS, AND POTENTIAL OF THE CHICAGO REGION. GROUNDED IN A BELIEF THAT LASTING CHANGE COMES FROM WITHIN COMMUNITIES THEMSELVES, THE FOUNDATION HAS HELPED MEET URGENT NEEDS TODAY WHILE BUILDING A STRONGER FUTURE.

Now, that philosophy is amplified through a powerful partnership with United Way of Metro Chicago, bringing together shared values and complementary approaches to address both immediate needs and sustainable neighborhood transformation.

"At its core, our work is about developing long-term, trusting relationships," said Heather A. Steans, Board Chair of the Steans Family Foundation. "We started in North Lawndale 30 years ago. It's been a terrific way to really get to know and be trusted in a community."

United Way of Metro Chicago, North Lawndale Community Coordinating Council, and the Steans Family Foundation celebrate the North Lawndale Neighborhood Network launch.

A SHARED VISION FOR CHANGE

SFF's place-based approach centers on the idea that communities already possess the networks and strengths needed to thrive — with the right investments and partnerships. United Way's model aligns closely with this philosophy, pairing support for basic needs with efforts to drive systemic change through the Neighborhood Network Initiative.

"One of the things we really like about the United Way model is they work with a community organization that's a lead partner in bringing people together and developing in a way that the community wants," Heather said.

This focus on resident-led vision is key, said Patricia Ford, Executive Director of the Steans Family Foundation. "Walking alongside communities, respecting their leadership, and amplifying community voices are core values we share with United Way of Metro Chicago and its Neighborhood Network model."

This alignment has made United Way a natural partner for SFF — one capable of not only delivering resources efficiently but also convening stakeholders across sectors to create lasting impact.

INVESTING IN LONG-TERM TRANSFORMATION: NORTH LAWNDALE NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK

A cornerstone of the partnership is the launch of the North Lawndale Neighborhood Network in January 2026. The collaborative effort strengthens coordination among community organizations and accelerates resident-informed development.

SFF's longstanding commitment to North Lawndale makes it clear that lasting progress requires coordinated systems and strong local leadership. Through United Way's Neighborhood Network model, the coalition builds on the growing capacity of the North Lawndale Community Coordinating Council (NLCCC), helping translate community vision into actionable plans and projects, under the leadership of Executive Director Jesse Green.

"NLCCC is really growing in its capacity," Heather said. "United Way's partnership through the Neighborhood Network is going to help that capacity exponentially grow and bring to fruition a more comprehensive development plan."

The opportunity in North Lawndale is significant, from supporting affordable housing and job creation to driving population growth and business investment. Unlocking that potential requires aligning multiple systems and stakeholders. "United Way can really help knit those opportunities together," Heather said.

MEETING URGENT NEEDS: RESPONSE FUND AND 211 METRO CHICAGO

While SFF remains focused on community revitalization, it also recognizes the urgency of meeting immediate needs — especially during times of crisis.

Launched in November 2025, United Way's Response Fund has provided a critical vehicle for doing just that, offering rapid support to communities facing widening gaps in the local safety net, including access to food and safe and stable housing.

"United Way's partnerships are embedded in these communities, and its infrastructure across neighborhoods makes it easy to respond," Heather said.

Similarly, SFF has invested in 211 Metro Chicago, United Way's health and social services helpline, as a vital piece of community infrastructure. The 2-1-1 system connects residents to essential resources such as food, health care, and utility payment assistance, while also generating valuable real-time data to identify emerging needs and trends.

"It's so much easier to have one place that's doing it all," Heather said. "The 2-1-1 system is highly effective, cost efficient, and gives you a real-time pulse on what communities need."

A MODEL FOR IMPACT

At the heart of the United Way and Steans Family Foundation partnership is a shared understanding: real change requires both immediate relief and systemic transformation. United Way's comprehensive model — addressing urgent needs while convening partners to drive policy and systems change — has proven to be a powerful platform for SFF's investments.

"It's not just about meeting needs right now," Heather said. "It's about changing the forces that are working on these neighborhoods so they can thrive — and that takes everyone working together."

From philanthropy and business to government and community organizations, United Way plays a critical role in bringing these voices into alignment. "United Way has a big role to play. They're a very critical piece," Heather said.

A CALL TO PARTNERSHIP

SFF's collaboration with United Way shows that when investments are aligned with community leadership and supported by strong infrastructure, their impact multiplies.

"We are excited to partner with United Way," Patricia said. "Our impact together is going to be powerful. I'm excited for what the future holds and building on the momentum we're already seeing in North Lawndale through innovative and responsive ways to help families meet their basic and aspirational needs."

By combining deep community knowledge with a comprehensive, systems-driven model, SFF and United Way of Metro Chicago are not only meeting today's challenges — we are building a stronger future for neighborhoods across the region.

OWNERSHIP BEYOND THE WORKPLACE: BURNS & MCDONNELL'S COLLECTIVE IMPACT WITH UNITED WAY

FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS, BURNS & MCDONNELL AND UNITED WAY OF METRO CHICAGO HAVE PARTNERED TO STRENGTHEN LOCAL COMMUNITIES, CREATING A LEGACY OF GENEROSITY THAT HAS RESULTED IN NEARLY $2 MILLION IN CONTRIBUTIONS OVER THE PAST 28 YEARS.

What makes the partnership especially powerful is not just the dollars raised, but the culture behind it — one that starts with leadership, is embraced by employees, and continues to grow organically across the engineering, architecture, and construction firm.

This culture is rooted in one defining characteristic: 100% employee ownership.

"What drew me to Burns & McDonnell was the people," said Tim Faber, Vice President and General Manager of the Great Lakes Region at Burns & McDonnell. "The fact that we are all [company] owners gives a different level of care. You're working together. It's almost like a family and for a common purpose."

Burns & McDonnell empowers its people to think beyond their individual roles and consider the broader impact they can make. According to Tim, that mindset influences everything, from serving clients to supporting coworkers and giving back to the community.

"Ownership is the biggest differentiator for us," Tim said. "It affects the type of people that are attracted to us. When people come to work here, they don't leave. You build this long history with folks, and it creates an incredible culture."

That culture is evident in the company's longstanding support of United Way of Metro Chicago. Senior leaders champion the campaign each year, while employees enthusiastically participate through kickoff events, volunteer opportunities, raffles, leadership challenges, and other creative activities that bring people together. Last year alone, more than 450 employees — including senior leaders, young professionals, and new hires — all participated in the Chicago-area campaign, demonstrating the depth of engagement across the organization.

For Tim, United Way's value lies in its ability to unite individual passions into collective action.

"There is great value in coming together around a shared purpose," he said. "Through our partnership with United Way, our collective passion is translated into meaningful, lasting impact in our community."

That sense of shared purpose aligns closely with Burns & McDonnell's mission of making clients successful while creating communities of opportunity. Employees are encouraged to look beyond day-to-day responsibilities and consider how they can leave a lasting impact on the neighborhoods where they live and work.

Many of the company's most meaningful community initiatives are not directed from the top down. Instead, they emerge organically from employees who identify needs and take action. Tim points to a recent partnership with Genevieve Melody STEM School in West Garfield Park as an example of how employee passion can develop into a sustained community impact effort, reflecting both the quality of the company's people and its commitment to service.

United Way helps create the space for those passions to come together.

"What I really value about United Way is its ability for us to collectively engage in one common cause," Tim said. "This is our way of driving that significance through our business into a greater purpose. We're trying to make the world a better place."

(top) Burns & McDonnell leadership participate in a "Hot Ones" challenge during United Way of Metro Chicago's 2025 campaign; (bottom) Burns & McDonnell employees participate in a charity run.

2025/2026 TOP 25 CORPORATE PARTNERS

1 BMO			
2 ITW	3 Nicor Gas	4 PEOPLES GAS We Keep Life Moving	5 NORTHERN TRUST
6 Sargent & Lundy	7 AON	8 COSTCO WHOLESALE	9 verizon
10 BAIRD	11 Kellanova	12 EY	13 Allstate You're in good hands.
14 comed AN EXELON COMPANY	15 Ford	16 PNC	17 FIFTH THIRD
18 Harris Oakmark	19 CATERPILLAR	20 BURNS McDONNELL	21
22 CIBC	23 AT&T	24 CONAGRA BRANDS	25 imc

2025/2026 EXECUTIVE VOLUNTEERS

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Manuel Flores

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Kenneth Escoe
Bridget Gainer
Darrel Hackett
Teresa Wilton Harmon
Hannah Hayes
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Linda Imonti
Lisa N. Johnson
Kunal Kapoor, CFA
Carina Markel
Edward W. McGrogan
Randy Mehrberg
Eileen Mitchell
Neil Murray
Alicia Ponce
Mark Prindiville
Robert Reiter
Mark Skerjan
Scott C. Swanson
Julia Morsch Sznewajs
Wolfe Tone

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Deborah L. DeHaas
Cheryl A. Francis
Lester H. McKeever Jr.
Kristie P. Paskvan
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Sean Garrett

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Kevin Cole
Manuel Flores
Lisa N. Johnson
Carina Markel
Alicia Ponce
Scott C. Swanson
Julia Morsch Sznewajs

COMPENSATION & HR COMMITTEE

Chair
Julia Morsch Sznewajs

Members
Monique Pinnock
Frowene Rodgers
Wolfe Tone

EQUITY COMMITTEE

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Members
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Paulette Dodson
Rev. Larry L. Jackson, MDiv
Mark Skerjan
Shermann "Dilla" Thomas

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Travis C. Hunter Jr.
Carina Markel
Edward W. McGrogan
Mark Prindiville
Adam Schlesinger
Julie Scott
Laura Stern

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Chair David C. Blowers

Members
Linda T. Coberly
Deborah L. DeHaas
Derek Douglas
Cheryl A. Francis
Lester H. McKeever Jr.
Neil Murray

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Members
Kant Desai
Manuel Flores
Bridget Gainer
Marcia Macphearson
Randy Mehrberg
Eileen Mitchell
Neil Murray
Kristie P. Paskvan
Michael Pinckney
Mark Prindiville

211 METRO CHICAGO ADVISORY BOARD

Access Living
AgeOptions
Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County
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Chicago Office of the 33rd Ward
City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services
City of Chicago Office of the Mayor
Cook County Bureau of Economic Development
Greater Chicago Food Depository
Office of Cook County Commissioner of the 8th District
Peoples Gas

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