DOING GREAT WORK

Together with our volunteers, partners, donors and business supporters we are building caring communities where each person has the opportunity to achieve the aspirations we all share: a good education for our kids, a roof over our heads, food on the table and the security that comes with financial self-sufficiency. Because of our wide array of partnerships we effectively create change on two levels: 1) drive systemic change that impacts entire communities, and 2) transform individual lives.

ENSURING CHILDREN AND YOUTH SUCCEED

Research shows that children’s brains are 90 percent developed by the time they reach age five, and the early experiences they have from birth to age five set the stage for whether they’ll be prepared to achieve in school and beyond, but the obstacles are many:

• The U.S. Census shows one in four Arizona kids, age 18 and under, live in poverty.1
• In 2010, 51 percent of Arizona children did not receive early education through enrollment in nursery school, preschool, or kindergarten.2
• Kids age 3 from middle-income families have a cumulative vocabulary of 1,100 words versus 500 words for kids from low-income families.3 Studies by the US Department of Education show that children who are read to three times a week are nearly twice as likely to score in the top 25 percent in reading throughout their academic years.
• Many youth struggle academically and have difficulty making a strong transition from middle school to high school and in 2011, nearly 22 percent of Maricopa County high school students did not graduate within four years.4
• High school non-graduates are almost twice as likely to live below poverty, be unemployed, and receive welfare than graduates.5

To ensure children and youth succeed, together with our partners we focus on improving the quality of early care programs, providing better access to those programs (especially for low-income families), educating and engaging parents and the community, and providing teacher training and professional development opportunities.

With an overall goal of improving graduation rates, United Way strives to develop and support diverse programs that address needs, reduce risk and build protective factors in the lives of youth. Long term, we’re helping to build a continuum of support, assuring our at-risk youth are ready to enter college and the workforce as active participants in our community. Together with Donors, Volunteers and Partners, Valley of the Sun United Way creates brighter futures for thousands of kids in our community.

• Last year, nearly 1,800 children received early developmental screenings before entering school
• United Way distributed more than 97,000 School Readiness Kits in Maricopa County and 110,000 statewide to parents and caregivers of young children providing the tools they need to prepare children to enter kindergarten ready to learn and succeed.
• More than 100,000 students participated in academic enrichment programs last year at school, including mentoring and tutoring.
• More than 1,500 students have participated in the Destination Graduation Program.
• Our ASPIRE program enables youth who live below the poverty level to have a successful first-time work experience. More than 33,000 teens were given a brighter future, thanks to job development and training programs.
INCREASING FINANCIAL STABILITY

According to the 2010 Census, one in five Arizonans live in poverty. Our work to improve financial stability for individuals and families is centered on helping people break the cycle of poverty for themselves and their families. United Way and our partners are focused on job training and workforce preparation, financial literacy education, and connecting people to benefits they might not otherwise know about.

- United Way led the West Valley VITA Coalition to open and staff Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites during the 2013 tax season and assisted 1,079 individuals in accessing state and local benefits and tax credits they may not have otherwise received, bringing $1,793,352 in total refunds back into the community. Of this, 414 taxpayers claimed $774,714 in Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC).
- Last year, United Way assisted nearly 5,000 individuals in completing job training and obtained employment.
- Nearly 1,400 adults took financial education courses last year.
- We are also training nonprofit staff to be financial coaches, and providing agencies with the tools, resources and coordination needed to collectively address the financial health of low-income individuals and families. To date 136 coaches have graduated the 32 hour long training session.

ENDING HUNGER & HOMELESSNESS

About 82,000 households in Maricopa County struggle to put food on the table for their families every day. The good news is that ending chronic hunger is possible. United Way partnered with the Association of Arizona Food Banks to build Maricopa County’s Hunger Plan. With your help, we’ve started a series of actions beginning this summer through 2016 to end hunger for one-third, or 27,000 of our most chronically hungry households in the county.

- This means 17,000 children and youth will receive meals during or after school, or in the summer.
- About 15,000 families with children and seniors will soon be connected to reliable food sources.
- Chronically hungry families will receive financial literacy coaching to improve their self-sufficiency placing them on a path to financial stability.
- Last year, 74 million meals distributed to families and seniors in need

Thousands of individuals and families experience homelessness on any given night in Maricopa County. In partnership with public, private and faith-based organizations, United Way is committed to providing permanent housing solutions for the chronically homeless (people experiencing homelessness for 12 months or longer or four times in the past three years), while freeing up the resources for those experiencing homelessness for the first time.

- We’ve formed community partnerships to create 1,000 units of permanent supportive housing by 2015. To date, we are nearly three quarters towards achieving this goal.
- United Way hosted more than 50 Project Connect events over the past five years – serving more than 13,000 people and providing tens of thousands of connections to life-changing services.
- Last year, United Way supported homelessness prevention, intervention with 900,000 nights of emergency shelter.