UNITED WAY FOR CORTLAND COUNTY IMPACT FUNDING
2027 COMMUNITY IMPACT PRIORITY AREAS
JANUARY-DECEMEBER

Community impact work is the way local United Ways create positive community changes to improve the lives of residents and address underlying issues. United Way is a champion for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA) as well as programs and policy addressing Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) individuals and households. The United Way for Cortland County aims to increase social and economic stability for ALICE community members through these three key priority impact areas:

Youth Opportunity
Healthy Community
Financial Security

These impact areas, working in congruence, have the collective power to change lives for the most vulnerable and the most secure alike. United, the Cortland County community can work together to ensure greater prosperity and reduce the cycles of poverty that keep individuals and families from reaching their full potential and strain social care networks. Robust programmatic pathways and pipelines provide steppingstones through the entire spectrum of the social services network. In each of the three key priority impact areas, wrap around services are essential to bridge the gaps that define an individual's ultimate success. This effort reduces barriers, builds trust, and closes the circuit of supportive care.

Youth Opportunity

Building Pathways to Lifelong Stability and Empowerment

UWCC wants to enable young people to reach their full potential in life. We seek to support programs that connect them with comprehensive support, from early childhood through their transition into fulfilling careers, fostering lifelong stability and breaking cycles of poverty. This includes ensuring kindergarten readiness, academic success through high school graduation, and preparedness for both college and career pathways. We are committed to creating self-reliant individuals by focusing on economic opportunity and empowerment. Our specific strategies and approaches include:

- **Investing in Early Childhood Development:** Proactively supporting the healthy early development of young children and their smooth transition to kindergarten through initiatives such as enriching pre-school childcare options.
- **Promoting Foundational Literacy:** Providing literacy support to guarantee all students achieve reading proficiency by the end of third grade, a critical building block for future academic and economic success.
- **Expanding Learning and Enrichment:** Offering robust learning and enrichment opportunities, particularly for academically at-risk students, through after-school and summer programs that not only reinforce academic skills but also spark curiosity and broaden horizons in personal and civic growth.

- **Empowering Families as Partners:** Engaging parents and families by equipping them with the essential resources, tools, and information to actively support their child's development, educational journey, and understanding of future economic opportunities.
- **Creating Integrated Support Systems:** Partnering with K-12 schools and community-based organizations to deliver holistic, wrap-around support within the school environment, addressing both academic and socio-economic barriers.
- **Cultivating Life Skills that lead to College and Career Readiness:** Actively supporting youth in their transition to adult life through targeted interventions to stabilize and uplift personal dignity and empowerment in a preventive or crisis management environment. Providing further support through mentorship, career exploration, soft skills development, and leadership training that opens doors to a greater diversity of opportunities.
- **Advancing Equity and Closing Opportunity Gaps:** Implementing targeted efforts to dismantle persistent disparities in educational access and outcomes, ensuring that all young people, regardless of background, have equitable opportunities for success and economic mobility.

Healthy Community

Fostering Wellbeing, Economic Opportunity, and Empowerment

We are committed to improving the mental health and physical wellbeing of individuals and families, recognizing that a healthy community is foundational for economic opportunity and breaking cycles of poverty. Our focus includes but extends beyond metabolic health to address the interconnected factors that empower self-reliance and lifelong stability. We strive to enable individuals and their families to not only live healthy lives but also to access pathways towards financial stability. This includes:

- **Ensuring Equitable Access to Diverse Healthcare:** Increasing access to a broader range of healthcare services by strategically expanding the availability of care in areas where gaps in ability to pay, coverage, specialized care, or greater need for representation currently exist.
- **Promoting Healthy Lifestyles through Food Security:** Improving access to healthy, nutritious food, essential for metabolic health and the cognitive function necessary for personal advancement.
- **Creating Safe and Healthy Environments for Growth:** Increasing access to and the accessibility of safe, healthy spaces that support physical and mental wellbeing, fostering environments conducive to recovery/rehabilitation, learning, working, and greater community engagement.
- **Addressing the Social Determinants of Health for Economic Mobility:** Championing community advocacy efforts that foster a greater understanding of the Social Determinants of Health (e.g., employment, education, housing). Recognizing the critical interconnectedness of these areas and their profound impact on overall health outcomes, we support the collective goal of addressing them as fundamental to individual self-actualization and stability.

Financial Security

Empowering Economic Opportunity for Lifelong Stability and Self-Reliance

We believe everyone deserves the opportunity to earn a living that not only sustains their family but also builds security for future generations, breaking cycles of poverty and fostering self-reliance. United Way's Financial Security strategy is centered on empowering individuals to achieve lasting financial stability and access pathways for upward economic mobility. Our comprehensive approach includes:

- **Increasing Parental Employment and Education:** Affordable and accessible childcare allows parents, particularly mothers, who often bear the primary caregiving responsibilities, to participate more fully in the workforce or pursue further education and training. This leads to increased household income and career advancement, key drivers of economic mobility.
- **Increasing Access to Interventions:** Proactively guiding individuals and families through the social support system, connecting them with stabilizing programs to assist in building and maintaining forward momentum. Both preventative and crisis interventions provide comprehensive care as each option meets people where they currently are. These efforts have the power to prevent or stall financial setbacks requiring greater public funding to address.
- **Strengthening Food Security and Emergency Support:** Promoting and supporting agencies and programs that effectively address food insecurity and provide crucial emergency food access, ensuring basic needs are met as a steppingstone towards greater financial stability.
- **Facilitating Pathways to Household-Sustaining Employment:** Opportunities that help individuals attain jobs that offer living wages, essential benefits, and clear opportunities for advancement through continuing education, vocational training, and career development support, fostering long-term economic independence.
- **Securing Safe, Affordable Housing, and Homeownership Opportunities:** Assisting individuals and families in securing safe and affordable housing, working to reduce homelessness, and providing tangible pathways to homeownership, recognizing housing stability as a cornerstone of financial security and community integration.
- **Advancing Economic Equity and Opportunity Creation:** Working to close persistent economic gaps and disparities by fostering economic opportunity creating a more inclusive and equitable economic landscape.
- **Improving Upward Economic and Social Mobility:** Implementing strategies that foster upward economic and social mobility within the community, thereby increasing overall resilience and long-term stability for individuals and families.
- **Providing Holistic Wrap-Around Support:** Supporting programs that offer comprehensive wrap-around services, effectively addressing the interconnected barriers and gaps often present in publicly funded social services, ensuring individuals receive the multifaceted support needed to achieve lasting self-sufficiency.