

# United Way of Story County 2020-2025 Community Impact Goals

## A Collective Impact Strategy

### YEAR ONE (FY 19-20) UPDATE

# FROM THE CEO

Dear Story County community:

One year ago, we announced our five year Community Impact Bold Goals:

- Health: Improve community health by serving 4,500 more people
- Education: Decrease the achievement gap by reaching 30% more underserved learners
- Financial Stability: Strengthen financial stability by increasing the number of people served by 25%

At the time of our announcement, we could not have anticipated the length or the depth of the coronavirus pandemic and its effects. The pandemic has certainly created challenges for our work. Yet, it also has spotlighted both why our work is so vitally important and how resilient our community is. For example, mental health concerns have increased given the social isolation and stresses caused by the pandemic, yet our partner agencies have pivoted: they offer virtual support groups, tele-counseling, and much more. Similarly, financial instability has increased, with many households finding that they are without a regular or sizable paycheck, sometimes for the very first time. At United Way, we responded by launching a special COVID-19 Emergency Fund, disbursing your dollars to our partners who provide emergency rent and utility assistance (among others), and convening a brand-new emergency fund for immigrants in partnership with St. Cecilia and other partners.

Our pandemic response, of course, has gone well beyond the work documented in these pages. Shortly after the pandemic hit in March 2020, United Way of Story County developed a one-stop webpage with community resources to help those struggling during the pandemic ([www.uwstory.org/covid-19-resources](http://www.uwstory.org/covid-19-resources)). We brought together childcare providers and essential service providers to problem-solve potential childcare needs. We connected pantries with resources by launching a monetary food drive and working with business partners (like ISU Dining) to stock shelves. And so much more.

In other words, the value and practice of our motto, "LIVE UNITED," have been exemplified repeatedly. In this special update, read about our progress toward our goals in FY2019-2020. We also encourage you to follow along year round by regularly visiting [www.uwstory.org/our-impact](http://www.uwstory.org/our-impact). We hope you agree that this data helps raise awareness of key issues in Story County, increases accountability for change, and highlights the need for continued action.

Thank you for helping us **Reimagine What's Next**.

LIVE UNITED,



Jean Kresse

President and CEO

# OUR FOCUS AREAS

**Health is a central tenet of a great quality of life. Good health keeps kids in school, keeps adults employed, which helps keep households stable. By investing in the health of 4,500 more residents in Story County, we can chip away at the inequities that keep people from succeeding. Health services can range from in-home hospice to mental health, substance abuse counseling to healthy food.**

During the time period examined in this report, we saw a huge increase in need for food at school-based pantries. For example, one pantry experienced a 484% increase in visitors from February to April 2020, while another jumped as much as 937% in this same 2 month period.

**For years, we've focused on grade level reading. This work doesn't start and end in third grade. We need to give kids a great start by helping support parents, delivering engaging out of school experiences, utilizing proven intervention strategies, and equipping community members with tools to address issues of impact. We also recognize the vital nature of community support in volunteering for mentoring programs and summer learning.**

The doors of many of our providers were closed for periods of time over the last year. While our partners found ways to continue to engage parents and support kids' learning, we know that ground was lost too. For example, the Ames Community School District announced that literacy assessment benchmarks for first graders dropped by 25% from 2019 to 2020.<sup>1</sup>

**The work to build financially stable families can range from emergency support to helping families stay in school or maintain employment to strengthening their financial literacy. The final result of this is improved financial capacity and the ability to save for future emergencies.**

In 2019, 11.0% of individuals at or below the poverty rate were unemployed (American Community Survey, 5-year estimates), compared to 1.7% of the total population. When the pandemic hit, the overall unemployment rate rose to 8.1% in April 2020, before starting a steady decline (IWD, unemployment rate by county). While we don't have the unemployment figures disaggregated yet by income level, we know that those working in low wage jobs in the service sector were among those hardest hit.

Evidence of financial strain can be seen in the newly announced Free-or-Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) eligibility numbers: countywide, the rate has increased 0.6% to 26.0% since last school year, with 3 individual districts seeing increases of 2.3%, 3.0%, and 3.1%. In fact, one Story County district now sits at 43.1% of all students eligible for FRPL. (Iowa Department of Education)

HEALTH

EDUCATION

FINANCIAL STABILITY

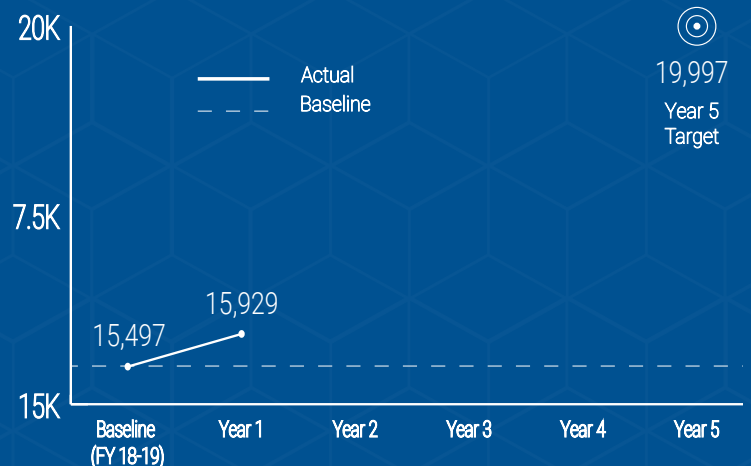
# HEALTH

Improve community health by serving 4,500 more people by 2025



Heartland Senior Services, Meals on Wheels

In FY19-20, **15,929 individuals were served to improve community health** through the four areas we are monitoring for this goal. That represents **an increase of 432 individuals over our baseline year.**



**806** individuals participated in healthy food access/nutrition programs.

This represents a 10% increase from the previous year. This gain is especially remarkable given that some of our health food access/nutrition programs had to close doors due to the pandemic for the final 3 months of this fiscal year.

**10,996** individuals participated in mental health awareness programming.

While this represented a decline from the previous year, the creative new programming formats, such as Zoom workshops, showed our partners' resilience.

**35%** increase in individuals provided with mental health services.

This means, 3,816 individuals total were served. This increase is a testament to the dedication of our partners.<sup>2</sup>

**90.9%** of those surveyed reported an improved quality of life, an increase of 12.7%<sup>3</sup>

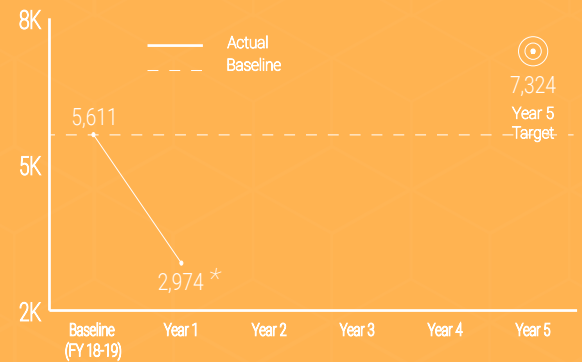
# EDUCATION

Decrease the achievement gap by reaching 30% more underserved learners by 2025



Boys & Girls Clubs of Story County, Virtual Learning Day Club

In FY19-20, **2,974 underserved learners were provided with high-quality early childhood programs**, access to summer enrichment programs, parenting and other community-based education programs, and literacy supports. In spite of the challenges due to the pandemic, we still had many successes!



*\*no in person summer education programs operated during the height of the pandemic*

**8%** increase in the number of surveyed families who reported an increase in their parenting knowledge and skills.

**257** youth from underserved populations able to access summer enrichment programs.<sup>4</sup>

**188** kids from underserved populations in high-quality early childhood programs

**434** kids improved or maintained their reading level.<sup>5</sup>

**92%** of surveyed participants in community-based education programs reported a better understanding than before.<sup>6</sup> They learned about a range of topics, from domestic violence and sexual assault to common mental health conditions and how to help a friend/family member in crisis, from how to advocate for disability rights to how to navigate Story County services as a newcomer.

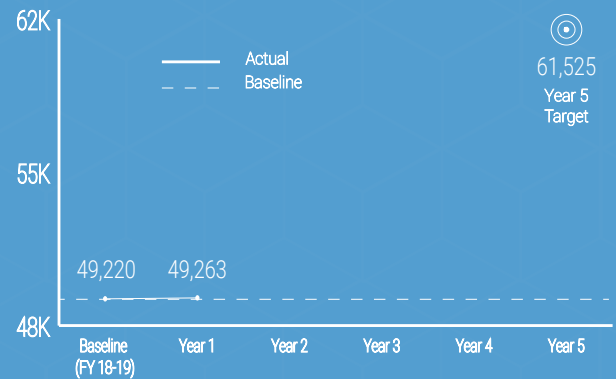
# FINANCIAL STABILITY

Strengthen financial stability by increasing the number of people served by 25% by 2025



Iowa Workforce Development Project

In FY19-20, **49,263 individuals were served to strengthen financial stability.** This represents an increase of 43 individuals from our baseline year. While our increase was modest due to the pandemic's financial blows and social distancing realities, we nonetheless made important strides.



**47,426** individuals served through emergency food programs.

From March to June 2020, shelters closed or modified their regular operations, and all of the pantries had to adapt to limit exposure for clients and staff. See footnotes for examples of how our partners were resilient.<sup>7</sup>

**1,454** households received financial assistance for rent and/or utilities

to help with housing cost burdens and prevent homelessness. This represents an increase in 17 individuals from the baseline year.

**138** surveyed individuals reported a general improvement in their financial situation, a **33% increase from baseline.**

While we suspect that many of these responses pre-dated the pandemic, it is heartening to see that our collective work is having a net positive effect!

**54%** decline in job retention or school enrollment among adults served by 8 of our funded programs.<sup>8</sup>

To help address the difficult employment landscape, United Way and partners applied for and were awarded a major Coronavirus Relief Workforce Innovation Grant from IWD in 2020. 26 individuals received free workforce certifications in C.N.A., Manufacturing, and Welding. Stay tuned for more!

# RECENT RECOGNITIONS

**United Way of Story County is a leader in human services and nonprofit accountability.**

## MidIowa Health Cohort

Story County Reads Director, Malai Amfahr, was selected to participate in an elite Fellowship with Mid-Iowa Health Foundation. She was nominated by multiple colleagues based on her expertise in aligning systems and working collaboratively towards children's well-being in Iowa. Her focus with the Fellowship has been dedicated to infusing equity guiding principles within the early childhood network.

## Campaign for Grade Level Reading Pacesetter Community, Story County Reads

Recognized by the national Campaign for Grade Level Reading as a Pacesetter Community, our local branch, Story County Reads, was applauded as "a civic leader whose time, talent, energy, and imagination have fueled progress in their community." The goal of the Campaign is to ensure children succeed in school, promoting early school success as a building block for children in economically challenged families and communities.

## Published in Youth Today

An article published in Youth Today, a nationwide independent media publisher, shared about Story County Reads' work in improving child literacy in our county. Noticed for our collaborative work with 29 partner organizations, Story County Reads Director, Malai, was interviewed on the barriers to success that the pandemic created and ambitious ways we hope to combat those barriers with learning programs this summer.

## COVID-19 Emergency Fund for Story County Immigrants

Convened by UWSC in March 2020, the Immigrant Fund as it is called has received multiple major grants of \$10,000 each. The fund was created to assist immigrants with rent, utilities, and other basic necessities.

## Wheels for Work

The Wheels for Work program gave away 12 vehicles during the past fiscal year, the highest number in UWSC history. Wheels for Work receives donated vehicles and gives them to individuals in need of reliable transportation to get back and forth to work.

## Community Partnerships

UWSC forged new partnerships with community organizations like Iowa State Dining, creating new paths to get food items out to programs reaching underserved populations.

## Guidestar Platinum Level Seal of Transparency



UWSC earned the Platinum GuideStar Nonprofit Profile Seal of Transparency, the highest level of recognition offered by GuideStar, the world's largest source of nonprofit information

## Charity Navigator - 100/100 Four Star Charity



UWSC earned a 4-star rating by Charity Navigator. This states that UWSC "exceeds industry standards and outperforms most charities in its cause."

# WHAT'S NEXT?

United Way is a community convener focused on creating long-lasting, positive change. As we continue to work toward these goals, we know the steps we need to take:

1. **Assess community conditions, including identifying gaps in reaching the underserved**
2. **Raise and invest financial support in vital programs**
3. **Measure results**
4. **Mobilize the caring power of our community**

We can't do this work without you. Please join us in making these goals a reality for Story County. If you're ready to join with a financial gift, please visit our website at [www.uwstory.org](http://www.uwstory.org). If you'd rather pledge your time and expertise, we welcome your voice. Here are a few of the opportunities currently happening at our organizations. Find more at [www.uwstory.org/volunteer](http://www.uwstory.org/volunteer). Finally, stay in the know by joining our email list at [www.uwstory.org/newsletter](http://www.uwstory.org/newsletter).

## UWSTORY.ORG/VOLUNTEER

*Interested in bettering your community?*

**EDUCATION:** Volunteer for our summer enrichment programs, engaging young minds during school breaks. Contact Malai Amfahr at [mamfahr@uwstory.org](mailto:mamfahr@uwstory.org).

**FOOD/HUNGER:** Join the Story County Hunger Collaboration or volunteer to distribute summer food at sites throughout the county. Contact Anneke Mundel at [amundel@uwstory.org](mailto:amundel@uwstory.org).

**IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE SUPPORT:** Participate in the Immigrant Fund Collaboration. Contact Anneke Mundel at [amundel@uwstory.org](mailto:amundel@uwstory.org).

**WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:** Consider volunteering as a mentor or childcare provider for our Women United series. Contact Jerri Baumeister at [jbaumeister@uwstory.org](mailto:jbaumeister@uwstory.org)



# ENDNOTES

Report update is based on fiscal year 19-20 spanning July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020.

1. <https://www.kcci.com/article/ames-to-bring-back-elementary-students-to-class-citing-lower-test-scores/34457002>
2. When the coronavirus pandemic arrived, they had to pivot to maintain vital health services. Providers started offering telehealth. (Sidenote: United Way was proud to offer an emergency grant for one partner to purchase “DoxyMe,” a safe virtual platform for clinical appointments.) Some providers also continued to offer in-person appointments, adding new sanitizing, mask-wearing, and social-distancing guidelines to keep clients and staff safe. We are grateful for our partners’ steadfast work to provide mental health services during this time of social isolation and disrupted routines, leading to increased anxiety, depression, substance use, etc.
3. The raw number of individuals surveyed declined as one partner was unable to conduct its regular annual survey due to pandemic closures.
4. This number represents a dramatic decline from the previous year as the majority of programs canceled in-person summer 2020 programming. Those that operated had to reduce capacity to maintain social distancing.
5. While this number represents a decline from the previous year, this is because the total number of children assessed for literacy declined due to program closures. Overall, the percentage of children who maintained or improved their reading proficiency level stayed comparatively stable, from 97% of those assessed in FY18/19 to 92% of those assessed in FY19-20. This is in spite of reduced programming hours in some cases.
6. The raw numbers of those served, unfortunately, declined due to pandemic closures.
7. The Bridge Home began housing its clients in motel rooms and arranged meal drop-offs there, MICA Food Pantry started offering food deliveries to central pick-up spots and doorsteps (even bringing on a new AmeriCorps volunteer to coordinate this), and The Salvation Army pantry provided larger sacks of food to help households get by for longer.
8. The coronavirus pandemic of 2020 caused devastation to the employment landscape in Story County, with close to 8,000 individuals becoming unemployed from late February to July 2020 (source: Ames Chamber). Unfortunately, this was borne out in our programs as well, with a huge decline of individuals able to remain in school or at their job. Compounding this, many childcare centers had to close temporarily, leaving working parents suddenly without childcare. United Way partners worked tirelessly, however, to come up with solutions to safely reopen.



**United Way of Story County**