



# 2024 ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

**LIVE UNITED**



**UNITED WAY**  
Passaic County

# DEAR NEIGHBORS

As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with gratitude and pride in the tremendous progress we've made in serving our community. 2024 has been a year of growth, collaboration, and resilience as we've worked together to address the pressing needs of our neighbors and advance our shared mission to create lasting change in Passaic County.

At United Way of Passaic County, we are committed to improving lives and building stronger communities, and our efforts have never been more urgent. The ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, but Employed) population—those working hard but still struggling to meet basic needs—continues to grow, with nearly half of our county's residents facing financial instability.

Thanks to the dedication of our donors, volunteers, and partners, we've achieved impactful outcomes that touch thousands of lives. In 2024 alone, we helped provide over \$1.4 million in tax refunds, distributed 1.16 million meals through emergency food programs, and engaged 376 volunteers who contributed over 2,700 hours of service. These are just a few of the milestones we've reached together in our ongoing efforts to lift up those who need it most.

On behalf of the United Way of Passaic County team, our Board of Directors, and the communities we serve, thank you for your ongoing support and commitment. Your contributions, time, and efforts help make this work possible. As we look to the year ahead, we are energized by the partnerships we've built and the promise of an even stronger, more resilient Passaic County.

We invite you to continue partnering with us in 2025 to advance our mission, whether through financial contributions, volunteering your time, or advocating for the changes we seek. Together, we will build a future where everyone in Passaic County has the opportunity to thrive.

With gratitude,  
Mary Celis  
President & CEO, United Way of Passaic County



**CORE STRATEGY 1:**  
Grow our community  
impact initiatives



**CORE STRATEGY 2:**  
Cultivate intentional  
partnerships



**CORE STRATEGY 3:**  
Impact ALICE  
through advocacy



**CORE STRATEGY 4:**  
Develop board  
and committee  
membership



**CORE STRATEGY 5:**  
Enhance  
operational  
efficiency



**CORE STRATEGY 6:**  
Expand and  
diversify funding  
sources



## MISSION

Our mission is to improve the lives of people in Passaic County by mobilizing the caring power of our community.

## VISION

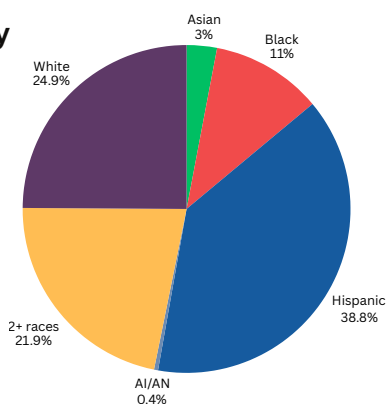
We envision a community where every child is ready to succeed in school, every person can meet their most basic needs and everyone can pursue healthy and satisfying lives.

# WHO WE SERVE : ALICE

ALICE, which stands for **A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, but **E**mployed (or retired), represents the growing number of families who are unable to afford the basics of housing, food, childcare, health care, technology, and transportation. Despite working hard, ALICE lives paycheck to paycheck and is one emergency away from falling into financial crisis.

Approximately 35% of the Passaic County population are ALICE, and an additional 14% are below the federal poverty line. Combined, 49% of our neighbors regularly struggle to afford basic household necessities. These numbers are even higher for residents of the City of Paterson (67% of population is ALICE), City of Passaic (65 %), and Prospect Park (64 %)

% of ALICE by Race/Ethnicity Households



# FINANCIAL SECURITY

United Way of Passaic County (UWPC) is dedicated to helping individuals and families achieve financial stability and build brighter futures. Since 2011, we've provided free financial empowerment services to help low-income households increase their income and make smarter financial decisions.

## VITA

Our VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) program has been a cornerstone of financial empowerment for over a decade, helping families claim vital tax credits, including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit. With bilingual volunteers and staff fluent in English, Spanish, Amharic, Arabic, and more, VITA ensures that Passaic County's diverse communities receive the resources they need to maximize their refunds and strengthen financial resilience. These tax refunds often act as a financial lifeline, helping families cover essentials like rent, utilities, and savings for the future. The program also offers financial advisement and education to help families improve their financial health and future.



\$574,714 in Earned Income  
Tax Credit (federal and state)



34 dedicated  
VITA volunteers



1.4 million in total  
refunds secured for clients



1,500 residents served



2.3M in economic impact  
for the economy



34 dedicated VITA volunteers  
with 1,142 hours of service



# HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

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UWPC is committed to fostering a healthier Passaic County by improving access to nutritious food and empowering residents to lead healthier lives. Our initiatives aim to address hunger and food insecurity by tackling systemic barriers and providing education and resources.

## Passaic County Food Policy Council

The PCFPC is a coalition of partners dedicated to ending hunger and addressing the root causes of food insecurity. By advocating for policies and practices that make healthy food affordable and accessible, the council drives meaningful change across Passaic County. Its work is divided into six key focus areas: Expanding access to school meals, SNAP/WIC outreach and enrollment, cooking education, community and school gardens, healthy food retail, and local food procurement. These efforts ensure a holistic approach to addressing food insecurity and promoting healthier lifestyles.

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## Farm to School Program

In partnership with Paterson Public Schools, we launched the USDA-funded Farm to School Grant Program, creating school gardens that provide fresh produce and nutrition education. These gardens not only help alleviate food insecurity but also teach students about sustainability and healthy eating habits, creating lasting change in the community.



3,205 children  
and families served



12 PCFPC meetings  
convened



35 community-based partners  
mobilized for school meals and  
outreach campaigns

# YOUTH OPPORTUNITY

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UWPC believes education is the foundation of a brighter future. By supporting youth at critical points in their educational journey, we empower them to succeed in school, pursue careers, and achieve financial stability.

## Literacy Campaign

Our Reading Buddies program connects trained community volunteers with kindergarten to third grade students to improve literacy skills and foster a love of reading. Volunteers work directly with students during school hours, helping them meet grade-level reading goals. Community reading events and free book fairs further support literacy and education, ensuring children have the tools to succeed.



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## Backpacks 4 Kids

Every summer, our Backpacks 4 Kids initiative provides school supplies to low-income students, ensuring they start the academic year ready to learn. For many families, these supplies ease a significant financial burden and create an equitable learning environment.





# YOUTH OPPORTUNITY

## Scholarships

Through the Vincent D. Pavese Scholarship and scholarships for future teachers and tradespeople, UWPC supports students committed to community service and pursuing careers in education or skilled trades. These scholarships honor the legacy of service and invest in the next generation of leaders.



5 students received college scholarships



80% of students met or exceeded expected reading growth



370 hours of tutoring provided to 80 students



1,380 backpacks distributed to low-income students



\$55,200 value of donated backpacks and supplies



780 students received books through literacy events



# COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

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At UWPC, we strengthen Passaic County’s ability to prepare for and recover from disasters, ensuring individuals and families have the resources they need during times of need.

## Disaster Relief and Recovery Fund

UWPC coordinates with philanthropic partners and corporations to provide immediate and long-term assistance to families affected by disasters, such as flooding. This fund offers direct aid, case management, and service coordination to help communities rebuild and recover.



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## Meeting Essential Needs

The United Way of Passaic County rallies the support of our community to bring support to those in need throughout the year. Through the generosity of local businesses, faith-based groups, civic organizations, and caring individuals, we mobilize resources. We brightened the holidays for children, families, and individuals with disabilities across Passaic County. We also prepared hygiene kits for the unhoused and made sure families had access to cold weather gear and new sneakers for back to school.





# COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

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## Emergency Food + Shelter Program

EFSP provides financial support to low-income residents facing emergencies. This assistance prevents hunger and homelessness by covering essential needs like meals, rent, utilities, and temporary shelter. EFSP focuses on vulnerable populations, including families with children, immigrants, the elderly, and those experiencing homelessness.

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## Passaic County COAD

Community Organizations Active in Disaster COAD is a multi-sector coalition that enhances disaster preparedness and response by fostering collaboration among community organizations. By improving communication and coordination, COAD ensures an efficient and united approach to disaster recovery.



50 individuals received direct service from the Disaster Relief Fund



12,200 nights of shelter funded



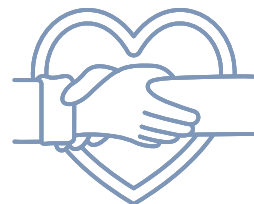
300 individuals provided holiday gifts



\$66,700 value of distributed new sneakers, cold weather gear and gifts



1.16M meals provided through emergency food distribution



27,000 individuals supported by EFSP

# VOLUNTEERISM

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Volunteerism is at the heart of UWPC's mission to create lasting change. By connecting community members with meaningful opportunities to serve, we amplify impact across all focus areas, from education to food security. Volunteers bring hope and tangible support to their neighbors, strengthening the bonds within our community.



376 volunteers engaged



2,767 hours of  
service provided

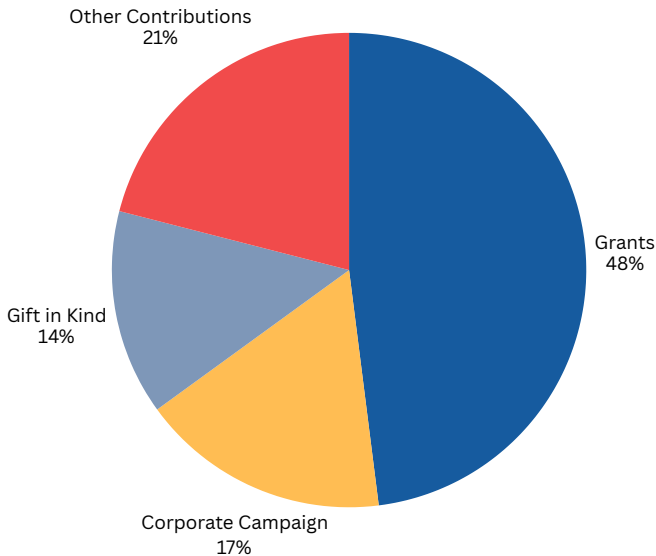




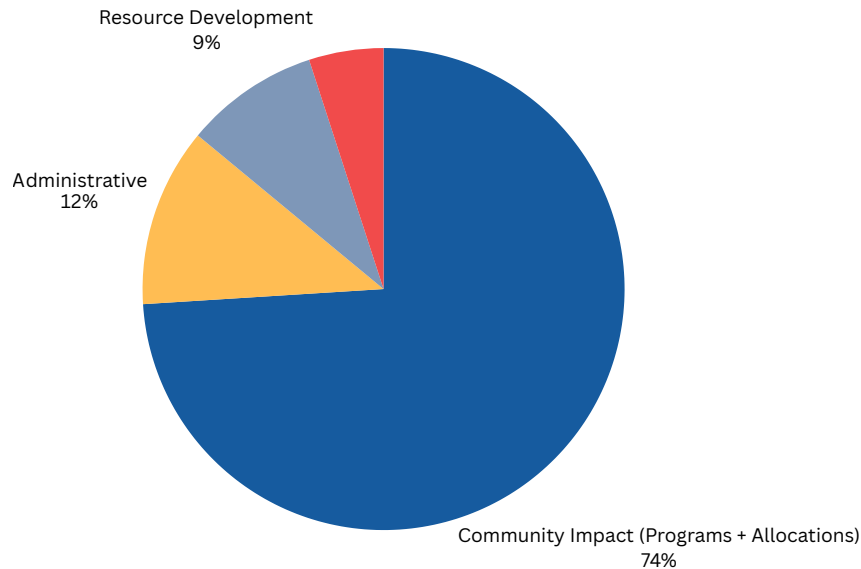
# FINANCIALS

LIVE UNITED

## Revenue



## Expenses



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Steven Gerber, Esq., Barton Gilman Law

Fayth L. Holt, Enterprise, *Vice Chair*

Kenneth Morris, Jr., St. Joseph's Health

Nicole Olaya, Columbia Bank

George C. Riley, *Chair*

Adrian Rodriguez, CFP

Eric Rojas, Six + One Advertising Agency

Dr. Steven M. Rose, Passaic County Community College, *Treasurer*

Learn more about United Way of Passaic County  
and how you can contribute at  
[www.unitedwaypassaic.org](http://www.unitedwaypassaic.org)

Scan here to give back



# IMPACT REPORT 2024



UNITED WAY  
Passaic County

United Way of Passaic County solves complex community challenges by **forging partnerships** and **mobilizing resources** to find solutions to problems that no organization can address alone. By inspiring others to join our mission, we **empower individuals** and **families** across our region.

**COMPLEX PROBLEMS - REAL SOLUTIONS - LASTING IMPACT**

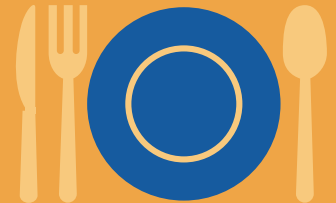
**2,767**  
**VOLUNTEER HOURS**



**STUDENTS IMPROVED  
LITERACY  
80%**



**1.2 million**  
**HEALTHY MEALS**



**27,000**  
**SERVED IN EMERGENCY FOOD  
& SHELTER PROGRAM**



**STUDENTS ACCESSED  
FARM TO SCHOOL  
3,205**

**RESIDENTS SERVED  
1,500**



**\$2.3**  
**MILLION DOLLARS IN  
ECONOMIC IMPACT**