ONE IDEA CAN CHANGE A NEIGHBORHOOD
How does it all begin?
One smile and someone feels safe.

One encouraging word and a child grows.

One brick and a home takes shape.

One outstretched hand and someone is back on their feet.

Success is the work of many, but it starts with one.
One voice. One word. One decision.

One person who cares.
Brochure photography features beneficiaries of United Way of Greater Houston
TOP THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE CIRCLE OF LIFE

Last year:

2.4M United Way of Greater Houston touched the lives of 2.4 million of our neighbors.

We helped more than 418,000 children and youth succeed in school and in life.

We helped more than 942,000 family members build a stronger foundation.

We supported more than 91,000 seniors with meals, transportation, help with daily life and more.

We were there to help more than 962,000 individuals rebuild their lives after emergencies.
Why United Way?

For more than 90 years, United Way of Greater Houston has been here for our community, in good times and bad, throughout the circle of our lives. We are, and have always been, committed to lifting up our neighbors and supporting them as they pursue better futures and big dreams. Guided by our strategic plan, Vision 20:20, we invest in services that achieve impact and are focused on supporting the safety net, transforming lives and creating systemic change in key areas, like family financial stability, education and the quality of life for returning veterans. Last year alone, we touched the lives of more than 2.4 million of our neighbors.

A look at how you’re helping:

- developing children and youth: 34%
- strengthening families and neighborhoods: 27%
- supporting senior independence: 10%
- helping individuals rebuild their lives: 29%

*Percentages denote United Way’s community investment by goal area.

Children

Last year, United Way helped more than 418,000 children and youth develop to their full potential through: child care • mentoring • tutoring • after-school programs • character development • initiatives that improve academic success • basic needs assistance • adoption and foster care • health care. 86% of the students in United Way programs are more successful in school.

Improving Academic Success: We’re helping young people succeed in school and in life through United Way Bright Beginnings, United Way Reading Together, peer-to-peer tutoring, summer learning initiatives and other academic supports.

Families

Last year, more than 942,000 individuals benefited from United Way services that strengthen families and neighborhoods through: job skills and career readiness • financial coaching and literacy courses • credit building • parenting classes and family counseling • health care and basic needs assistance.

United Way THRIVE helps families build stronger financial futures by acquiring skills and education, obtaining better jobs, developing good financial habits, building savings and acquiring assets like a home, car or business. Last year, United Way THRIVE helped 52,000 families establish a path to financial stability.
Did you know?

76% of those in United Way programs gained the skills they needed to enter the workforce.

Rebuilding Lives

Last year, more than 962,000 individuals got help rebuilding their lives after crises through: basic needs assistance • mental health services • housing and emergency shelter • domestic violence services • substance abuse services • transportation • life skills.

Seniors

Last year, more than 91,000 seniors got help staying healthy, strong and independent through: help with daily living • nutritious meals • home visits and care • social interaction • a citywide support network and advocacy for senior issues • senior specialists on call through 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE.

90% of seniors in United Way programs received the help they need to remain independent.

Care for Elders increases access to services, improves the quality of care and enhances the quality of life for older adults and their caregivers, along with informing public policy. The 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE is the access point to Care for Elders’ Access & Coordination Network, a collaborative working to improve older adults’ access to needed services.

The United Way Gatekeeper program is a collaborative network of thousands of public service and utility company employees who are trained to recognize the signs that a senior may be at risk and report it to a Gatekeeper specialist with the 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE.

2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE

Open 24/7, 365 days a year, our 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE is a free, confidential helpline staffed by trained HELPLINE specialists who speak a variety of languages and find real answers for callers as they work the most comprehensive social services database in the state.

In 2013, the 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE answered more than 935,000 calls for help.

Veterans Initiative

United Way of Greater Houston invests in services that help meet the needs identified by veterans, including employment services, assistance with job readiness, financial education, coaching and counseling.

We have created a dedicated fund for specific grants for organizations that serve veterans and, after conducting a needs assessment and holding community conversations, have awarded 19 grants to serve returning military personnel.

In 2013, we helped more than 12,000 veterans rebuild their lives and our 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE answered more than 15,000 calls from veterans and their families.
Hearing Bryson talk about her family, her job and how excited she is to go back to school, it’s hard to believe that just a few years ago, she wished she was dead.

When Bryson was nine, her mom was diagnosed with cancer. That same year, Bryson got drunk for the first time. By the time she turned 13, Bryson was drinking heavily, using drugs and watching her life spin out of control. When her mom died two years later, things got even worse.

Bryson moved in with her dad and stepmom, but they hardly spoke. She went off to college, but the alcohol and drug abuse worsened. She came home, got clean and started a job, but then she started using again and blew it.

“I couldn’t stop,” Bryson says. “I lost my ability to make that choice. I didn’t care if I lived or died.”

After two DWIs and multiple probation violations, a judge sent Bryson to a six-month behavioral modification program. It was there that she learned about United Way and, when she completed the program, she immediately moved into a United Way residential treatment center.

“I was able to get a lot of help through grief counseling and therapy,” Bryson says. “I was provided a safe place to feel things again and to grieve for the people I lost.”

Bryson completed the 18-month United Way program, achieving sobriety and feeling confident that this time it would stick because for the first time, she had truly faced her demons, learned self-worth and gained the tools to cope and manage her day-to-day life.

“One of the moments that really clicked for me was sitting in a class and hearing the teacher say, ‘your alcoholism, your drug addiction no longer defines who you are,’” Bryson remembers. “It didn’t have to define who I was anymore.”

Drugs and alcohol definitely do not define Bryson anymore. She is too strong for that now. She has a job she loves, her own apartment, plans to go back to school, a relationship with her family and good, supportive people around her.

“When I look at myself now, I see somebody who is capable,” she says. “I see someone who has a choice. I wouldn’t be the person I am now without United Way.”
Top Things to Know About Family Financial Stability

Last year, United Way THRIVE:

- Put 52,000 families on the path to financial stability.
- Prepared 37,500 tax returns, returning $48 million to the local economy.
- Provided 6,900 families with workforce development services.
- Provided 10,600 families with financial education/coaching.

United Way THRIVE has achieved a return on investment of at least 10:1 every year.
One of the things that sets United Way apart is its ability to bring together stakeholders, partners and community leaders to collaborate on initiatives that break cycles and change community conditions.

Helping a family achieve self-sufficiency and long-term financial stability can change that family’s trajectory for generations. United Way THRIVE helps families build stronger financial futures by acquiring skills and education, obtaining better jobs, developing good financial habits, building savings and acquiring assets such as a home, car or business.

United Way THRIVE, a collaborative launched and led by United Way of Greater Houston, leverages more than 20 nonprofit partners and partnerships with community colleges, financial institutions, employers and city and state agencies, to provide families with the best and most comprehensive resources, wraparound support and the services they need to reach real and lasting financial independence.

With the right tools, families can achieve what we all want: good jobs with good wages, safe and affordable housing, success for our children and financial stability.

Did you know?

28% of Texans wouldn’t have enough savings to get by for three months during a sudden job loss or emergency. Last year, United Way THRIVE helped 5,100 families increase their savings.

United Way THRIVE focuses on three key strategies:

**Increasing income** includes job training and education, help finding better employment and taking advantage of free income tax preparation.

**Building savings** involves developing better financial habits through financial education and coaching, reducing debt and starting a savings plan.

**Acquiring assets** means saving for a car, a home, higher education or a business through matched savings programs and access to low-cost loans.
United Way THRIVE

THRIVE helps families move along the path to financial stability. Last year alone, 52,000 families benefitted from United Way THRIVE.

The reality:

1 in 4 families has trouble buying groceries each month.

$47,000 a year is the minimum to cover basic essentials, including employer-sponsored health coverage for a family of four.

320,000 Harris County households earn between $15,000 and $35,000 per year.

Margo’s Story

Margo’s home is a haven for her family. It’s a place where her kids can have slumber parties and play in the backyard. Margo’s home is also a reminder of how far she has come.

After a devastating divorce and an accident that caused Margo to lose her job, picking up the pieces seemed impossible. But when Margo found United Way THRIVE, she found that she didn't have to pick up the pieces alone.

Margo began United Way THRIVE financial education courses, learning how to budget, how to save money and how to build up her credit. She worked with a financial coach and, for the first time ever, realized she might one day be able to buy a home for her family.

“They taught me, with what little money I was making, how to manage it and live on a budget,” Margo says. “This is not just something for the time being. These are tools that you can use for the rest of your life.”

Margo started a new job and put her new financial skills to use managing her income. She expanded her financial education to include homeownership courses and deposited every penny she could into a savings account that United Way THRIVE matched to help her make a down payment on a home.

Margo remembers walking through the front door for the first time. “There were lots of happy tears,” she says. “I’m full now. I’m very proud of what I’ve accomplished.”

Margo’s heart is full, but she is not stopping there. Now, her goals are to become a supervisor at work and to build a savings account dedicated to home upkeep and repair so her family’s first home is never at risk.

“I’m hopeful for my future,” Margo says. “I have a steady job now, I own my home and I’m in a great place. Things are going nowhere but up for me with the help of United Way.”
After serving in the United States Navy, Christopher returned to Houston, ready to rebuild his life. But, he found it challenging to adjust and to translate his skills and he was unable to secure a job. He hit roadblock after roadblock until a friend told him about United Way THRIVE.

“When I first went to United Way, my goal was just to be employable,” says Christopher. “I just wanted a job and revenue coming in so I could start living a decent life.

Christopher started with a United Way THRIVE job training program, building new skills while getting help creating a resume, learning interview techniques and preparing for a career outside of the military. Through United Way THRIVE, Christopher earned his core construction certification and began training to earn his welding certification.

With help from his United Way THRIVE employment coach, Christopher landed a job in construction and, within a year, was promoted to foreman. He continues to build his skills and has his eye on the next step. “We’re moving on to another project and hopefully, I’ll be assistant superintendent by then,” he says. “I’m also going to school for welding and, probably by the end of this year, I’ll have my welding degree.”

Christopher plans to use those skills to build something for his family. He is currently taking United Way THRIVE’s small business classes, where he is learning the ins and outs of starting and running a small business. Knowledge he plans to put to use when he starts his own remodeling business.

And, United Way THRIVE is helping Christopher make another dream come true: the dream of homeownership. “That’s always been my dream,” Christopher says. “Ever since I was young, I’ve wanted to own my own home. That’s a big goal in my life. And now, United Way has made that goal attainable.”

Christopher has a lot to be proud of: a good job that enables him to support his family and save for the future, the opportunity to continue his education, and a growing savings account. But what Christopher is most proud of is the good example he is setting for his son, who recently completed a United Way youth program and got a summer job.

“I have a lot of confidence that I didn’t have before,” Christopher says. “I can apply the skills I learned in the military with the skills I’ve learned from United Way and I can put together a better life.”
WHAT
YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT
ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Last year:

95% of teachers reported that United Way Reading Together has improved their students’ reading fluency, comprehension and grades.

United Way Bright Beginnings alumni outperformed their peers on the Stanford and STAAR Math and Reading assessments.

United Way put more than 10,000 books into the hands of children who may not have any, or enough, reading material at home.

94% of teachers said peer-to-peer tutoring has improved their students’ attitudes about reading.

31,250 young people benefitted from United Way mentors.
When kids have a strong educational foundation, they have a better chance of succeeding and positively contributing to their communities. We are committed to supporting our kids as they enter and go through school—making sure they stay on track and have the support they need to reach their full potential.

Through innovative early childhood education, reading tutors and academic support, mentoring, after-school and character development programs, and quality child care, we are preparing our kids for education beyond high school, including college, to compete in the workforce, and to lead our community into the future.

Educational programs with impact:

**United Way Bright Beginnings** is an innovative early education program designed to help children from lower-income families achieve social, emotional, physical and cognitive milestones and enter school ready to succeed. Bright Beginnings’ hands-on curriculum and child-centered approach make a measurable difference in preparing children to start and succeed in school. United Way Bright Beginnings has helped more than 6,600 children build a foundation for the future.

Last year, United Way Bright Beginnings alumni outperformed their peers in HISD and nationally on the Stanford Math and Reading assessments and the STAAR Math and Reading assessments.

**United Way Reading Together** pairs elementary school students with corporate and community volunteers to ensure that students are reading proficiently by the time they enter fourth grade. Since its launch, United Way Reading Together has grown from three to five schools and has tripled the number of student and volunteer pairs to 150.

In our **peer-to-peer tutoring** program, fourth and fifth graders who can benefit from the opportunity to be student leaders tutor second and third grade students whose reading skills are behind grade level, with all students building reading skills and confidence.

The impact of United Way

- **86% of students** in United Way programs were more successful in school.

At the 10 year mark, United Way Bright Beginnings alumni scored higher than their peers on 45 of 51 standardized tests over four years.

- **150 students** improved their reading skills in United Way Reading Together.

- **150 students** became better readers, gained confidence and built leadership skills through peer-to-peer tutoring.

- **1,500 students** continued their education in our summer learning initiatives.
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Reading Together

Nita’s grandson, Makari, is part of United Way Reading Together. Nita has seen her grandson, who struggled with reading, not only become a strong reader, but also develop a love for it.

“I saw his grades pick up, especially in reading,” Nita says. “He is more confident when he reads. He’s got a lot of self-esteem now and raises his hand in class more than he used to.”

Makari is pretty happy, too. “I love to read,” he says. “Thank you for reading with me and helping me with the big words that I couldn’t read.”

Houston’s Kids, a holistic out-of-school program, provides enrichment, character development, academic assistance and family support services to at-risk students. Houston’s Kids engages students in a curriculum that supports their academic, social, emotional and physical development.

United Way summer learning initiatives help prevent the learning loss that lower-income students often experience during the summer. Last summer, we engaged more than 1,500 students in book clubs, digital game design, robotics and other fun activities that reinforce academic skills.

Parent Education engages parents and provides them with the knowledge and tools to best participate in the academic success of their children. Last year, we served almost 2,500 parents in these programs.

Did you know?

United Way collected and distributed more than 10,000 books to children who may not have enough, or appropriate, reading material at home.

“The students involved in United Way’s peer-to-peer tutoring all have made gains in reading. They are excited, enthusiastic and ready to take on new challenges. They have become leaders on campus.”

April Blanco, principal, Terrace Elementary

The reality:

1 in 5 Greater Houston area students doesn’t graduate from high school.

Less than 50% of Houston’s third graders have the reading skills necessary for success in fourth grade.

1 in 4 children is left alone after school.

61% of low-income families have no books at home for their children.

More than $2 billion a year is spent on students who repeat a grade because of reading problems.

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He told me that I could have that. He told me that I was smart enough and hardworking enough to achieve success.

Darryl grew up in a neighborhood where drugs, gangs and violence were almost unavoidable. His mom was a single parent working two, sometimes three, jobs just to make ends meet. She knew that alone, she couldn’t give her son the life she wanted for him and that if she didn’t do something, he would follow the path of so many others from his neighborhood.

Darryl’s mom reached out to United Way and United Way connected Darryl with Greg and Barbara, mentors who would become Darryl’s second parents and his lifelong friends.

Greg and Barbara showed Darryl a different world than the one he knew. They provided a positive and consistent presence in his life, setting an example for him and giving him something to aspire to.

Darryl was 10 years old the first time he walked into Greg’s office and saw the view of downtown from 17 stories up. “He told me that I could have that,” Darryl remembers. “He told me that I was smart enough and hardworking enough to achieve success.” Greg and Barbara, both engineers, encouraged Darryl to focus on school, go to college and pursue success.

Over and over again, they told Darryl that he could be anything he wanted to be, even an engineer like them.

“In retrospect, that was the single most impactful moment of my life,” Darryl says. “I attribute all the success I’ve experienced to that moment on the 17th floor of that building when Greg told me that I would be successful. I believed I would be an engineer, and that’s what happened, I became an engineer.”

Greg and Barbara have remained strong influences in Darryl’s life. They were there to cheer him on as he walked across the stage at his college graduation and to see the seed they had planted so many years ago not only sprout, but spread, as Darryl started his career as an engineer—and a mentor.

Now, Darryl is giving another young man an expanded vision, like his mentors gave him. He is making sure that his mentee, Jaylin, gets a good education, sees beyond what he knows, and can dream bigger and better dreams.

“I don’t know where I would be had I not met Greg and Barbara,” Darryl says. “I don’t know where I would be without United Way. I know that what United Way and Greg and Barbara did for me, they indirectly did for Jaylin. And I know, without a shadow of a doubt, that Jaylin will pay that forward when his opportunity comes.”
TOP THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT OUR 2-1-1 HELPLINE

2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE answered a record 935,000 calls in 2013.

2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Top calls: basic needs, like food, followed by prescription assistance, help paying rent/mortgage, utilities, shelter.

15,000 calls in 2013 came from veterans and their families.
ONE NUMBER
FOR HELP AND HOPE

Did you know?

2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE has veterans specialists and a United Way THRIVE specialist on staff to connect families and veterans with resources to meet their unique needs.

When someone faces a crisis or needs a hand with the basics, when someone feels desperate and alone and doesn’t know where to turn, the 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE is the one number to call for help and hope.

Open 24/7, 365 days a year, our 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE is a free, confidential helpline staffed by trained HELPLINE specialists who speak a variety of languages and find real answers for callers as they work the most comprehensive social services database in the state.

In 2013, the 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE provided much needed assistance to a record 935,000 callers. 2-1-1 is the number to call when you don't know whom to call.

2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE facilitates the State of Texas Emergency Assistance Registry and is the primary point of contact during times of disaster.
ONE IN FIVE households experienced a job loss in the last 12 months.

ONE IN FOUR families have trouble buying groceries.

WHY UNITED WAY?

TO IMPROVE lives and change community conditions through strategic and impactful services.

TO MAKE a lasting difference on the financial stability of 100,000 families.

TO IMPROVE the academic success of children.

TO BE the safety net for the community.

HOW DO WE KNOW THE NEEDS?

From Census data

From our biennial Community Assessment

From 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE data

From community conversations

From program data and outcomes

SOME OF THE NEEDS

ONE IN FIVE households experienced a job loss in the last 12 months.

ONE IN FOUR families have trouble buying groceries.

TOP 5 CALLS TO OUR 2-1-1 HELPLINE: food • utilities • rent shelter • medical assistance

50% of third graders can't read at the level to succeed in 4th grade.

1 in 3 families live on an ANNUAL INCOME of $40,000 or less.

1 in 5 students don't graduate from high school.

HOW DO WE TACKLE THE ISSUES?

Volunteers study the data and make investment decisions during biennial COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PROCESS.

Volunteers evaluate and oversee every service making sure we're achieving measurable outcomes through continuous MONITORING AND OVERSIGHT.

United Way creates and leads SPECIAL INITIATIVES to generate long-lasting, systemic change in key areas.

ANNUAL CAMPAIGN fuels our work. In 2013-14, contributions to our Community Campaign topped $83.7 million.