This year’s annual community campaign has provided the United Way staff and volunteers with an opportunity to continue educating current and potential donors about our impact work in Ottawa County. By investing in the areas of education, health, financial stability and basic needs, we are helping 36% of our struggling neighbors.

With thousands of donors and volunteers county-wide, we are changing lives and changing communities for the better. Although we are making progress, our work is never done. There are always families and individuals in need. In these uncertain times, we can all help to provide the support needed in our local communities.

Alongside our nonprofit partners, we enjoy sharing the powerful stories of the lives that have been transformed by this work. Rilya is one example. She was struggling with math and reading, and was paired with a tutor through an after-school mentoring program. After lots of hard work, she recently came running off the bus from school, waving a paper in the air. Rilya had received her test results at school and was thrilled that her scores in all subjects had soared. This was a very special moment for Rilya and her mentor as they celebrated her achievement.

Rilya now has the self-confidence and support to continue to do well in school. We know interventions like this can lead to post secondary education experiences which in turn lead to financial stability in adulthood. We all have the ability to change lives when we LIVE UNITED.

Read more stories of impact at OttawaUnitedWay.org/stories-impact.
Double your donation through the Lighthouse Leadership Circle Challenge Match, offered by some of our generous donors. When you give $500 for the first time, or increase your leadership gift, your gift will be matched. We currently have $93,500 in matching funds.

And, NEW THIS YEAR, young leaders (40 and under) are invited to join the Lighthouse Leadership Circle and have their gift doubled by giving a first time gift of $250 and up, or increasing their current leadership gift.

Thanks to our generous sponsors, when you give a new donation of $1 per week ($52) or increase your giving by $52, you will be entered into a drawing to win two tickets to paradise, which includes a 4-night stay at an all-inclusive resort and round-trip coach class airfare for two.

For more details, visit: OttawaUnitedWay.org/prize-drawing

On Thursday, January 24, members of the Holland/Zeeland Young Professionals (HYP) group toured several United Way partner agencies, including The Center for Women in Transition, Ottagan Addictions Recovery (OAR) and Hope College’s CASA program. Tour attendees also learned about the challenges facing our community during United Way President Patrick Moran’s presentation of the 2018 Community Assessment during the tour.

The event concluded at New Holland Brewing Company for HYP’s monthly UnWind networking event. During the evening, attendees heard from a tour participant, HYP and United Way speakers and shared their thoughts about community engagement during a live poll.

If you earn less than $66K per year, you can file your taxes for free at www.MyFreeTaxes.com.

Did you know you could make a donation when filing your taxes? When you check off the “United Way Fund” on your Michigan State Income Tax, your local United Way receives those dollars to help families in your community. Check out the “Voluntary Contributions Schedule” Form 4642 and check off the “United Way Fund” this tax season.
WELCOME, ALEXA!

United Way is proud to announce the addition of Alexa Redick to the United Way staff as development associate. Her responsibilities will include the growth of planned giving and major donor giving as well as annual campaign support.

Alexa grew up in Grand Haven and attended Grand Haven High School. She graduated from Michigan State University in 2015 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. She also graduated summa cum laude with a Master of Arts from DePaul University in 2018.

Alexa is particularly passionate about educating and advocating for social and racial justice in the United States. She also enjoys singing, acting and learning new things. Alexa says, “I look forward to collaborating with the Greater Ottawa County United Way team, and putting my education and passions to work in Ottawa County.”

LOCAL STUDENTS MAKE AN IMPACT

Members of United Way’s Students LIVE UNITED (SLU) program have been busy giving back during the fall and winter months. In November, students from West Ottawa, Allendale and Spring Lake braved the cold and snow to rake yards and clear leaves during Rake-A-Difference.

During the holidays, students collected items for soldiers at home and abroad during the Home for the Holidays drive. The stuffed stockings were then sent out in time for the soldiers to enjoy them during the holiday season.

Currently, 529 students from seven schools are involved in the program. To learn more about Students LIVE UNITED, visit www.OttawaUnitedWay.org/students-live-united-volunteers.

Would your business like to support local students? Consider a sponsorship: OttawaUnitedWay.org/slu-sponsorship-program.

SLU students organized and volunteered during the Home for the Holidays drive to support soldiers at home and abroad.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Students aren’t the only ones who can make a difference. Volunteers are needed at hundreds of organizations in our community. Explore volunteer opportunities online at OttawaUnitedWay.org. Just click the volunteer tab to get started!
Although these are challenging times, I remain hopeful because of how I’ve seen our community address challenges in the past. When we all come together to LIVE UNITED, we can accomplish so much more than we can on our own.

I was encouraged recently during our Community Engagement Tour with the Holland/Zeeland Young Professionals. The tour participants were clearly passionate and energized about making a difference in Ottawa County and beyond. Now, equipped with the research and resources to dive in, there are 35 more engaged community members who are ready to be a part of the change.

As the needs increase, so do United Way’s efforts in the community. With your help, we can continue to meet these needs in the areas of education, financial stability, health and basic needs. On a recent survey, we asked if our past Celebration attendees would consider inviting a friend or coworker this year. A vast majority indicated that they would. And, I’ll ask you to consider this idea as well. Who could you invite to join us? Is there someone in your circles who might be willing to give, to advocate or to volunteer alongside you? If we each invite someone to join us, we can double our impact in Ottawa County.

It really is that simple.

United we fight, United we win!

Patrick Moran, United Way President