

United We Fight For ALICE



Before the arrival of a worldwide pandemic, 10% of Charlotte County households had incomes below the Federal Poverty Line, and another 30% had incomes just above the line. This represents nearly 30,000 households in our community where living paycheck-to-paycheck was the norm.

And then we were introduced to COVID-19. A year and a half later many households are still unemployed or underemployed, possibly in debt but at a minimum operating with depleted or non-existent savings accounts.

United Way of Charlotte County (UWCC) mobilizes the power of our community to break the cycle of poverty. This includes fighting for the 10% who meet the federal definition of poverty as well as those whose incomes fall just outside that definition – ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed).

Our friends, our family, our neighbors are ALICE. And ALICE needs us now more than ever. In Charlotte County,

more than one in five children live in poverty. Charlotte County ranks 2nd highest in the state for child abuse (children ages 5-11). One in five adults do not have health insurance coverage. And Charlotte County ranks 11th highest in the state for deaths due to suicide. We cannot ignore these issues.

Through mobilizing the community's collective desire to help our neighbors, UWCC is able to help meet acute needs through programs such as Season of Sharing and VITA, and fund innovation and collaboration to address and prevent more complex issues.

ALICE struggles with transportation, health care, affordable childcare and housing, food insecurity, and more. At United Way of Charlotte County, we know that we are better together. Every donation goes to help us address these needs. By joining together to help ALICE, our entire community benefits.

To learn more about **ALICE**, [click here](#).

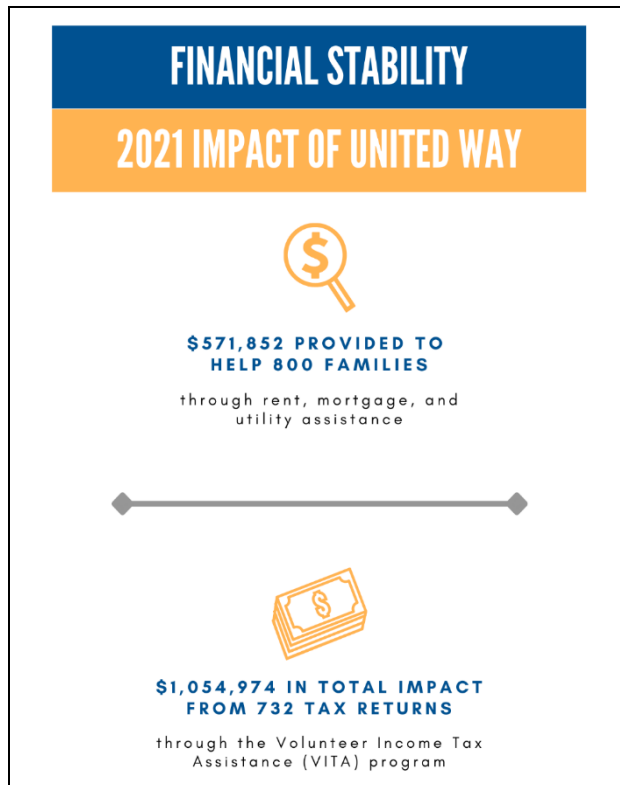
To read the **2020 Charlotte County Community Health & Needs Assessment**, [click here](#).

To learn more about **the top three health and wellness strategic issues for Charlotte County**, [click here](#).

United We Fight for Financial Stability

Breaking the cycle of poverty is about more than money, but money is a crucial component.

Season of Sharing (SOS) and **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)** are two core programs of United Way of Charlotte County that put money back into the hands of our friends, family, and neighbors.



United Way of Charlotte County (UWCC) has served as the fiscal agent for SOS for over 20 years. These funds help individuals and families cover their rent, mortgage, and utility payments when they hit a bump in the road.

This past year, over two thousand people were served through SOS, people you may know, who were just dollars away from having to choose between paying their rent or buying groceries that month. Season of Sharing allows them to do both.

VITA truly mobilizes the power of our community, as it is run almost exclusively by volunteers. For Tax Year 2020, our volunteers made a total impact of \$1,054,974 from 732 tax returns filed for low-income individuals and families in Charlotte County.

Not only does this save each taxpayer possibly several hundred dollars in tax preparation fees, but it also helps ensure that each tax return

claims every deduction and credit the taxpayer is eligible for.

At UWCC, **we fight for ALICE** (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). These are hardworking individuals who are struggling to make ends meet. When someone is living paycheck to paycheck, a bump in the road can be the starting point toward homelessness.

United We Fight for Grade-Level Reading

Is this the first thing you've read today? Maybe it's the fifth. Maybe you read the newspaper before coming into the office. Maybe you scrolled through social media for a bit as well. Maybe you cracked open a morning devotional or self-help book.

Undoubtedly, if you are reading this email, you have already spent much of your time today reading other things as well.

Many of us take our ability to read for granted, but there are children in our community who struggle daily with the challenge of deciphering words on a page.

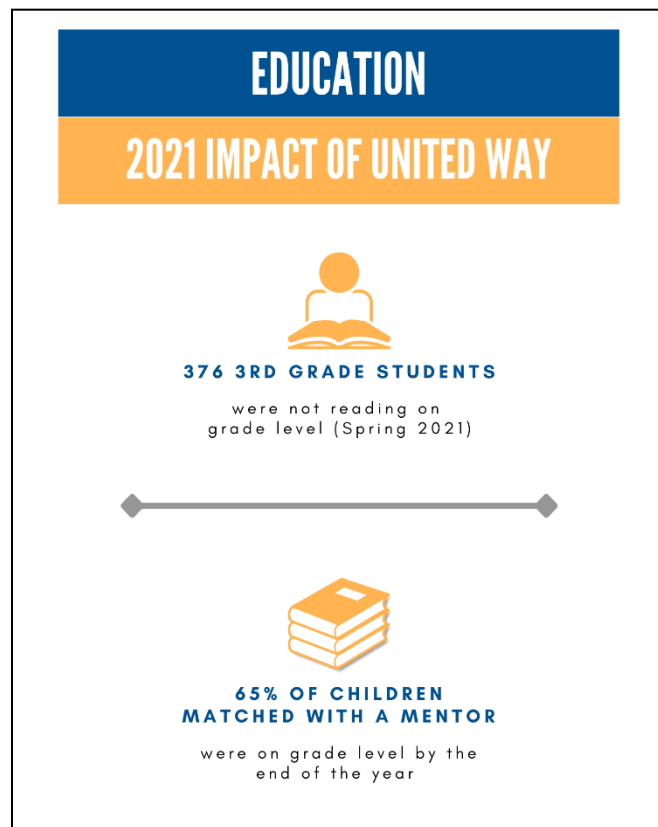
It has been said that through 3rd grade, students are learning to read, and after 3rd grade, they are reading to learn. Students who are unable to read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade will not only struggle to read, but they will struggle to learn. **United Way of Charlotte County is the Lead Agency for our local Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.** As such, our challenge is to ensure all students are supported in being able to read on grade level so they can achieve their full potential in school and beyond.

Our work spans from prenatal through third grade, supporting children and their families from a variety of angles that impact a child's ability to read. To name a few:

- We fund Kids Thrive, which uses family reading experiences to build bonds between parents and children.
- We coordinate the packing and distribution of Kindergarten Readiness bags for preschool-age children to better prepare them for kindergarten.
- We fund afterschool scholarships for struggling readers at the Boys & Girls Club and YMCA of Southwest Florida that includes a mentor and extra reading support for these students.

Your donations to United Way of Charlotte County stay in Charlotte County, helping set local children up for success. **Join us as we work to help every student be successful.**

To learn more about the **Charlotte County Campaign for Grade-Level Reading**, [click here](#).





Through funding from donors like you, innovation and collaboration by community partners, and that bold goal, Charlotte County effectively ended chronic homelessness at the end of 2020.

By donating to United Way of Charlotte County, you help provide financial stability through programs like Season of Sharing and VITA. And you also help solve complex problems like homelessness that is tied to complex medical and behavioral health needs.

We invite you to join us as we continue to work with chronically homeless individuals but also shift our focus to end youth homelessness in our community as well.

To learn more about the **Ending Youth & Chronic Homelessness Collaboration**, [click here](#) for a 2-minute video.



Kids Thrive is a partnership between the following organizations:

- Drug Free Charlotte County
- Charlotte County Healthy Start Coalition
- The Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Heartland
- The Florida Center - Healthy Families Charlotte
- The Boys & Girls Clubs of Charlotte County
- Charlotte County Imagination Library

By meeting at-risk families where they are, supporting them through substance use issues, navigating being new parents, and exposing them to the joy and educational benefits of reading with their children, Kids Thrive is guiding both generations (parents and children) toward a better life.

Your contributions to United Way of Charlotte County are what makes this work possible. Donations impact individuals, families, and generations of Charlotte County residents who are struggling to break the cycle of drug use, trauma, and poverty.

To learn more about the **Kids Thrive Collaboration**, [click here](#) for a 2-minute video.

United We Fight for Women

Women are often seen as the glue of a family. They plan the meals, schedule the doctor appointments, read the bedtime stories, balance the checkbook, and do everything in their power to keep all the balls they are juggling in the air no matter how much is thrown their way.



We greatly appreciate the amazing men in our lives, but there is something special about a group of women coming together with a shared purpose. We believe in the collective power of women and empowering each other to accomplish more together.

The mission of our local Women United chapter is to empower the women of Charlotte County in the areas of education, financial stability, and health & wellness. More specifically, Women United has wrapped its arms around the Kids Thrive Circle of Parents peer support group.

Women United members collaborated on a cookbook of healthy (and not-so-healthy!) recipes from their own repertoire and hosted a cooking demonstration that included tips for making quick meals and working with picky eaters. Circle of Parents families also received organic vegetables from Worden Farm in conjunction with this effort.

Another event hosted by Women United was entitled **Manic Moms**. Circle of Parents moms were able to gain

insight into how to plan and set goals in the midst of the chaos of running a household with young children underfoot. We then gifted them with goal setting planners to set them up for planning success!

And most recently, Women United hosted **Fashionista Friday**. The event brought together donated clothing pieces, volunteer personal shoppers and moms (some with children in tow) who were eager for new additions to their wardrobes. While the stereotype is that women spend much of their free time shopping for clothes, shoes and makeup, that is often far from the reality for many young moms.

The work of Women United to support the Circle of Parents has proven to be a win-win for all involved. Women United members enjoy giving back to other women in the community and serving as mentors based on their life experiences. Circle of Parents moms feel supported and have been able to access new information and resources that will help them grow as mothers and as women.

Joining Women United is as simple as making a donation to United Way of Charlotte County of \$250 or more and signing up! We welcome women from all walks of life, as each of us have different life experiences we can share.

To learn more about **the impact of UWCC** over the past year, [click here](#).