



When a Community Comes Together, No One Faces Crisis Alone

It was an otherwise ordinary Wednesday evening in Allentown's Second Ward. Residents were preparing dinner, heading home from work or settling in for the night, unaware that their lives were about to change. Within moments, a six-alarm fire engulfed an abandoned warehouse and spread to nearby homes on Front Street, displacing families and leaving many facing loss, uncertainty and urgent needs.

In those first chaotic hours, before the full extent of the damage was known, Flor and Robert Velez responded the way they always had: by helping their neighbors.

What they did not yet realize was that the fire had also impacted their own home. After more than three decades there, they suddenly found themselves facing the same uncertainty as the families they were trying to support. The experience was overwhelming, but it also revealed the strength of a community willing to come together in a time of crisis.

"Many of us were still going through the shock of the fire when United Way arrived," said Flor. "We felt that we were not alone."

As recovery efforts began, United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley helped connect affected families with critical resources and information. Flor and Robert became trusted messengers in their neighborhood, sharing what they learned and helping neighbors understand where to turn for assistance.

"You could feel the help from United Way right away," Robert said. "It was evident in the way people showed up, the way information got to families and the way our neighbors knew there was support behind them."

In the days that followed, United Way established a fund for families impacted by the fire, giving people across the region a way to turn compassion into action. The response was immediate. In less than a month, individuals, businesses and community organizations raised more than \$60,000 to help meet urgent needs. Those funds provided immediate assistance to families who had been displaced, helping them navigate loss and begin rebuilding stability.

For Flor, Robert and many others, the support represented more than financial assistance. It was a reminder that recovery is possible when a community stands together.

Nearly half of all households in the Lehigh Valley struggle to afford basic essentials, making it difficult to weather unexpected setbacks. When emergencies arise, United Way mobilizes neighbors, partners and resources to help families recover, rebuild and move forward.

Your gift to United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley helps ensure that families facing crisis find stability, connection and hope when they need it most. Together, we can help more neighbors shine bright. [Give today.](#)