



2023 POLICY PLATFORM

United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley envisions a community where every person belongs and every person thrives. Our **2030 Bold Goals** guide and focus our work toward that vision, with policy and advocacy central to reaching our targets in **education, healthy aging** and **community stability**.



Three policy objectives form the underpinning of the advocacy platform tied directly to the Bold Goals, including diversity, equity and inclusion; trauma-informed and culturally responsive practices; and support for ALICE households. United Way is committed to strengthening the regional nonprofit ecosystem by connecting partners to funding and advocacy opportunities.

United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley



EDUCATION

2030 Bold Goal: Increase the percentage of students ready to learn and successful in school so they can graduate ready for life, college or career

UNITED WAY COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Schools have the resources and supports they need and can offer them in a coordinated manner so that students' academics and social well-being thrive.

United Way is centered around the Community School model and place-based investments in our highest-need neighborhoods. United Way Community Schools advance student success by meeting students' and families' basic needs and building trusting relationships. Over the past year, Community Schools reported:

- **Improved** academic growth
- **More** students' and families' basic needs met
- **Increased** student and family engagement
- **Improved** attendance
- **Improved** school culture and student behavior

WE SUPPORT:

- Increasing funding for full-service Community Schools.
- Increasing awareness of the impact of United Way Community Schools on academic and social-emotional outcomes.
- Enhancing investments for state and local funding to expand access to high-quality out-of-school programs.
- Increasing financial stability for Community School families.
- Trauma-informed and culturally responsive practices including a statewide expansion of the Handle with Care program, a model of enhanced police-school communications to better support students exposed to traumatic events.

Our Partners

Coalition for Community Schools, Lehigh Valley Reads, Resilient Lehigh Valley, Resilient PA/Heal PA, Summer Learning Coalition, United Way Community Schools Network

20,341 STUDENTS
31 SCHOOLS, 4 DISTRICTS

2,872
STUDENTS AND FAMILIES
IMPROVED
FOOD SECURITY

1,049
STUDENTS AND FAMILIES
IMPROVED
HOUSING SECURITY

***100% of families** in Bethlehem pilot program maintained stable housing



EDUCATION

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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION/KINDERGARTEN READINESS

Children in our region have access to consistent, high-quality and affordable pre-kindergarten, childcare and early learning opportunities.

High-quality early learning opportunities are critical for kindergarten readiness and lead to improved math and language skills, healthy development and reduced grade repetition. Providing access to early learning opportunities to every child is a policy that's critical to also reducing racial inequity.

■ WE SUPPORT:

- Increasing funding for pre-kindergarten, Head Start programs and the childcare development block grant.
- Increasing pay equity, access to continuing education and enhanced benefits for early childhood workers.
- Equitable access to high-quality pre-kindergarten, childcare and early learning opportunities.
- Trauma-informed and culturally responsive care, practices and resources in early childhood settings.

Our Partners

Early Childhood Coalition, Lehigh Valley Reads, Resilient Lehigh Valley, Resilient PA/Heal PA

**741 CHILDREN
RECEIVED EARLY
EDUCATION PROGRAMMING**

■ **91% READY FOR
KINDERGARTEN**

Through the online pre-k program **Waterford UPSTART**, United Way prepared Allentown 4-year-olds to start kindergarten on time and ready to learn.

■ **100% STARTED
KINDERGARTEN
READING ON GRADE
LEVEL**



HEALTHY AGING

2030 Bold Goal: Increase the percentage of older adults connected with resources to improve their health and quality of life.

RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS FOR CAREGIVERS

The Greater Lehigh Valley is dementia-friendly and caregivers have the resources and information they need and those with dementia are supported.

United Way supports programs that provide safety measures for older adults with Alzheimer's, dementia or other cognitive impairments. **Project Lifesaver**, a search-and-rescue program, ensures individuals with dementia who are prone to wandering can be located and brought home safely. The program improves older adults' safety, gives caregivers peace of mind and ultimately increases the chances of a positive outcome when someone goes missing.

Silver Alert is a program that notifies the public when an older adult with dementia or other cognitive impairment is missing. Pennsylvania is one of 22 states that do not offer this program.

■ WE SUPPORT:

- Increasing state investments into Project Lifesaver to expand and sustain the program statewide.
- Establishing a Silver Alert program in Pennsylvania.

RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS FOR OLDER ADULTS

Older adults are connected to the resources and supports they need to improve their health and quality of life.

Older adults who participate in senior programs can delay the onset of chronic illnesses and improve their physical and mental health. In fact, strong social connections can boost a person's life span by 50%.

■ WE SUPPORT:

- Increasing funding and reducing barriers to resources for older adults.

25,000 PEOPLE
IN THE LEHIGH VALLEY ARE LIVING WITH
**ALZHEIMER'S
AND DEMENTIA**

Expected to triple by 2050

14,839 SENIORS
CONNECTED TO RESOURCES

through United Way-supported solutions

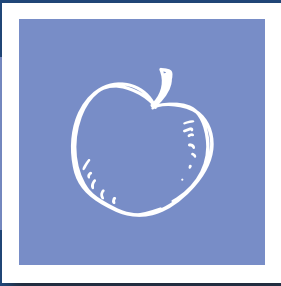
10,656 SENIORS

served through food, at-home care, transportation and senior center programs

- **99% ABLE TO STAY IN THEIR HOMES**
- **1,596 RECEIVED AT-HOME MEAL DELIVERY**

Our Partners

Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley, Bethlehem Health Bureau, Dementia-Friendly Lehigh Valley



COMMUNITY STABILITY

2030 Bold Goal: Increase community safety and stability through food, housing and mental health services.

ALICE HOUSEHOLDS

Those living under the ALICE threshold are financially stable, with access to safe and affordable housing, healthy food and are able to access resources and supports when needed.

In the Lehigh Valley, 122,000 families experience serious financial instability on a daily basis. They face impossible choices like choosing whether to buy groceries or pay the rent. Since the pandemic, there has been increased rates of housing and food insecurity. One in 10 people are food insecure, including one in every six kids in the Lehigh Valley. Thousands are at risk of homelessness or eviction. In addition, rising inflation and slow wage growth is putting additional pressure on household budgets.

ALICE stands for Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed and describes households who are above the federal poverty level, but who don't make enough money for their basic needs. They are working and paying taxes, but not earning enough to be financially stable.

■ WE SUPPORT:

- Expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) including the creation of a state EITC that will benefit Pennsylvania families.
- Enhancing investments of state funds to continue a public-private partnership, strengthen PA 211 and assure a consistent experience for every user in the state. PA 211 provides resources to alleviate barriers such as food insecurity and high utility bills.
- Increasing funding and reducing barriers to access for child, senior and COVID-related nutrition programs.
- Eviction prevention policies that affords representation to households facing eviction; eviction sealing.

FOR EVERY \$1

spent on a state Earned Income Tax Credit,

PENNSYLVANIA SAVES \$3

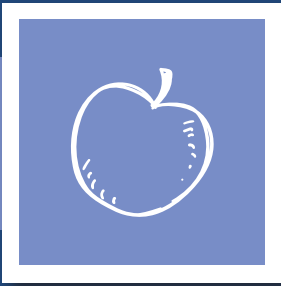
in social spending

41,000 CALLS AND TEXT MESSAGES TO PA 211

from residents in the Greater Lehigh Valley

Our Partners

Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley, Lehigh Valley Food Policy Council, Lehigh Valley Regional Homeless Advisory Board, United Way of PA



COMMUNITY STABILITY

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MENTAL HEALTH AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Institutions in the Lehigh Valley are aware of the impact of trauma and have implemented policies and practices to enable healing, prevention and resiliency.

According to estimates from a recent Department of Health study, half of all Pennsylvanians have had at least one Adverse Childhood Experience. Over 19% have experienced three or more. In addition, 38% of all Pennsylvanians have experienced either emotional or physical abuse as a child.

Research shows that childhood trauma can have lasting negative effects on brain development, physical and behavioral health unless buffered by positive and protective factors, like a safe and supportive adult relationship and trauma informed care and systems. The solution is to build resilient people, resilient neighborhoods and resilient service systems.

■ WE SUPPORT:

- Trauma-informed and culturally responsive care, practices and resources throughout the education, health, human services and criminal justice systems.
- Building awareness around mental health issues for youth, families and older adults.
- Advocacy for Congress to pass the Resilience Investment, Support and Expansion (RISE) from Trauma Act.
- #TakeOnTrauma advocacy campaign being led by the national Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy and Practice.

Our Partners

Age-Friendly Lehigh Valley, Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy and Practice, Resilient Lehigh Valley, Resilient PA/Heal PA

30,000

EDUCATORS, SOCIAL WORKERS, HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

and other professionals trained to recognize and respond to signs of trauma

■ **ESTIMATED TO IMPACT 90,000 PEOPLE**

574 STUDENTS

supported through Handle With Care communication between law enforcement and schools

■ **150% INCREASE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR**