

## UNITED WAY OF HENDERSON COUNTY

### A Statement from our Executive Director

Like many of you, for the past few months I have been worriedly watching as an unseen virus began killing thousands of women, men, and children in our nation and world. And then, the news turned to another kind of pandemic, the systemic racism that most recently erupted in the brutal killing of George Floyd. The outrage we feel at this senseless death and that of so many other victims of racial violence in America forces us to acknowledge that we have a long way to go in achieving a society where there is equal justice for all. Everyone deserves to live in a place where they feel safe, respected and valued.

For over 67 years, United Way of Henderson County has worked to bring positive change by fighting for the education, financial stability, and health of every person in our community. Equity and inclusion are at the heart of our efforts to reduce disparities and advance the common good.

I came to United Way five years ago because I believed in the ability of this organization to make our community stronger. I believe that United Way is a nonprofit built on hope and action, of bringing people together and moving our community forward. But now is the time to do even more. We should all reflect on the lessons of this moment, examine ourselves and the institutions in our community, and resolve to find ways to do more to combat the systemic racism that is the other pandemic sickening our society.

We do not have all the answers today. But now is the time for all of us to be actively anti-racist, to listen well, and to seek out allies and partners to do this hard work together. We pledge to take the steps internally to see how our own organization might better model equity and inclusion. We also stand ready to lead or assist with community conversations on what is needed to bring more justice and equity to our county and region. And, we will start now.

In the words of Brian Gallagher, United Way Worldwide CEO, "The time to wait is a luxury of privilege. Get involved."



Denise Cumbee Long