

2025-2026 ANNUAL REPORT



UNITED WAY
Henderson County



A COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

*Neighbors helping neighbors.
That's what we do.*

For more than 72 years, we've been a trusted partner and convener serving Henderson County. We bring people, nonprofits, businesses, and local leaders together to solve our community's greatest challenges.

But change doesn't happen alone. It happens when neighbors unite around a common purpose. It takes all of us, working together.

We have evolved into far more than a fundraising organization. Our Community Impact model focuses not only on meeting immediate needs, but also on addressing root causes and filling gaps where we can create lasting change. In addition to investing in local nonprofits through grants, volunteerism, and leading local collaborations, United Way develops and operates local programs that are free to our community, including Bikes 4 Kids, Born Learning Trails, the Disaster Recovery Partnership, EveryDay Strong, Girls EMpowered and Rising Leaders.

Through this local work we help build resilient youth, strengthen community leadership, support mental wellness, and connect neighbors with critical resources. Our united impact comes in many shapes and sizes, and you'll get to explore the multitude of ways we support our community throughout the pages of this report.



When needs arise, we don't simply ask who can help; we help bring the right people to the table. We listen, we collaborate, and we take action. Because every person in Henderson County deserves the opportunity to live a healthy, stable, and hopeful life.

Every gift, every volunteer hour, every partnership strengthens our ability to respond when our community needs us most. Together, we are building a Henderson County where everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

Thank you to each of you who help to make our work possible. Because of you, we are able to respond to the growing needs of today while creating the partnerships and support to build a stronger tomorrow.

With gratitude and dedication,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kat Carlton". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Kat Carlton
Executive Director

OUR MISSION:

To organize and mobilize community resources to improve lives of Henderson County residents.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Chair: Amy Lynn Holt
Immediate Past Chair: Kevin Todd
Vice Chair: Debi Gould
Treasurer: Michelle Tracz
Secretary: Michelle Reynolds
Strategic Planning Chair: Kyle Bartley

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Lowry Hobbs

Marilyn Jentzen
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Claire Neal
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Brenda Wilkerson

OUR STAFF



Bird Bartlett
Marketing & Events
Manager



Caroline Berlin
DRP Program Manager



Kat Carlton
Executive Director



Katy Gash
GEM Manager



John Hughes
DRP Senior Director



Kira Isaksen
Grants & Data Manager



Mary Ellen Kustin
Director of
Community Impact



Robin Morgan
Director of Finance



Diana Piñero
Bilingual Disaster
Case Manager



Zholi Roe
Director of Disaster
Case Management



Malisia Shipp
Operations Manager



Jessica Sigmon
Philanthropic
Engagement Manager

WHY UNITED WAY OF HENDERSON COUNTY

COMMUNITY FOCUSED. IMPACT DRIVEN.



OUR COMMUNITY IMPACT

This past year, United Way of Henderson County's overall impact to the community is valued at over

\$3.2M

Disaster Recovery Partnership
& Helene Recovery

\$1.4M

funding to support Helene
Recovery efforts

Gift in Kind & Noncash

\$348,000

includes food drive, volunteer hours,
and other GIK donations

Programs & Initiatives

\$903,000

includes Bikes 4 Kids, EveryDay
Strong, Girls EMpowered, Rising
Leaders and more

Community Investment
Fund Grants

\$352,000

support for 42 programs at
25 local nonprofits

Other Grants & Designations

\$273,000

includes funding for food pantries,
mental health support, 211, and
donor designations

OUR LOCAL IMPACT IN ACTION

United Way of Henderson County is an impactful local funder of nonprofits serving Henderson County

54

agencies received donor designated funding

5

agencies received Helene Recovery Grants to fund Disaster Case Managers

FOOD PANTRY PARTNERS

- Amazing Grace Ministries Pantry
- Back On Track Addiction Ministries
- Caja Solidaria
- Calvary Episcopal Church Food Pantry, Inc.
- Children & Family Resource Center
- Community Food Pantry
- East Flat Rock Baptist Church
- Hola Carolina Food Pantry
- Hope United Methodist Church
- Interfaith Assistance Ministry
- Love's Kitchen - First Baptist Church Hendersonville
- Mills River Presbyterian Church Pantry
- Pan De Vida
- The Salvation Army of Hendersonville, NC
- The Storehouse
- True Ridge

42 programs at 25 funded partners

supported through our Community Investment Grants

16

grants to support local food pantries

Funding for Mental Health support provided to the **Henderson County Rescue Squad** and **HCPS Sources of Strength** program

"We absolutely could not continue to serve our community without the generosity of organizations like United Way helping us to help others and we are grateful for all your help and support. We hope to continue to serve for many more years to come and hopefully in a new building in the future."

— Pan De Vida

FUNDED PARTNERS

BASIC NEEDS

14 programs at 12 agencies

- Calvary Episcopal Church Food Pantry
- Children & Family Resource Center
- Henderson County Rescue Squad
- Interfaith Assistance Ministry
- MANNA FoodBank
- Medical Loan Closet
- Mountain Aging Partners
- Pisgah Legal Services
- Safelight
- The Free Clinics
- The Mediation Center
- Thrive

FINANCIAL STABILITY

11 programs at 8 agencies

- Habitat for Humanity
- Housing Assistance Corporation
- Literacy Connection
- OnTrack Financial Education and Counseling
- Pisgah Legal Services
- Safelight
- Thrive
- WNC Source

OUR SUPPORT PLAYS A CRUCIAL ROLE IN DELIVERING ESSENTIAL SERVICES TO FAMILIES THROUGHOUT HENDERSON COUNTY

20,181

services to improve health and nutrition

6,112

services to prepare children to start and succeed in school

2,067

211 calls made in Henderson County

746

individuals helped with affordable housing and financial literacy programs

286,000

pounds of food distributed through 16 local food pantries

19,613

basic needs & crisis support services

2x

mental health support for Henderson County Rescue Squad

771

neighbors received disaster case management, resource referrals, and financial assistance for Helene recovery

Prepared 8 home sites and constructed 9 home foundations for homes damaged or destroyed in Hurricane Helene

Together we helped to provide over

50,000

local services to Henderson County residents

80

households impacted by Hurricane Helene assisted with rent, mortgage, and/or utility payments

HEALTH

11 programs at 10 agencies

- Aspire Youth & Family, Inc.
- Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of WNC
- Boys & Girls Club of Henderson County
- Children & Family Resource Center
- Crossnore Communities for Children
- Hope Coalition
- MANNA FoodBank
- St. Gerard Center for Autism
- The Free Clinics

EDUCATION

6 programs at 4 agencies

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of WNC
- Boys & Girls Club of Henderson County
- Children & Family Resource Center
- Smart Start Partnership for Children

***Impact numbers are based on data reported from partner agency's mid-year reports.*

ADVOCATING FOR WORKING FAMILIES

Over the decades, United Way of Henderson County (UWHC) has invited neighbors to come together around a simple idea: we can accomplish more when we work together. Over time, that purpose has evolved into a countywide network of programs and partnerships that help provide more than 50,000 services each year. This work supports health, education, financial stability, and basic needs for local families.

A core part of United Way of Henderson County's work is helping **ALICE**—Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed—neighbors who work hard but still struggle to afford the basics. United Way helps ALICE families build long-term stability by linking them to the resources, partnerships, and support systems that make daily life more manageable and future planning more possible. By addressing immediate needs while also investing in education, health, and household resilience, United Way helps create a stronger foundation for lasting financial security.

41% of North Carolina families are below the ALICE threshold



43% of Henderson County families are below the ALICE threshold



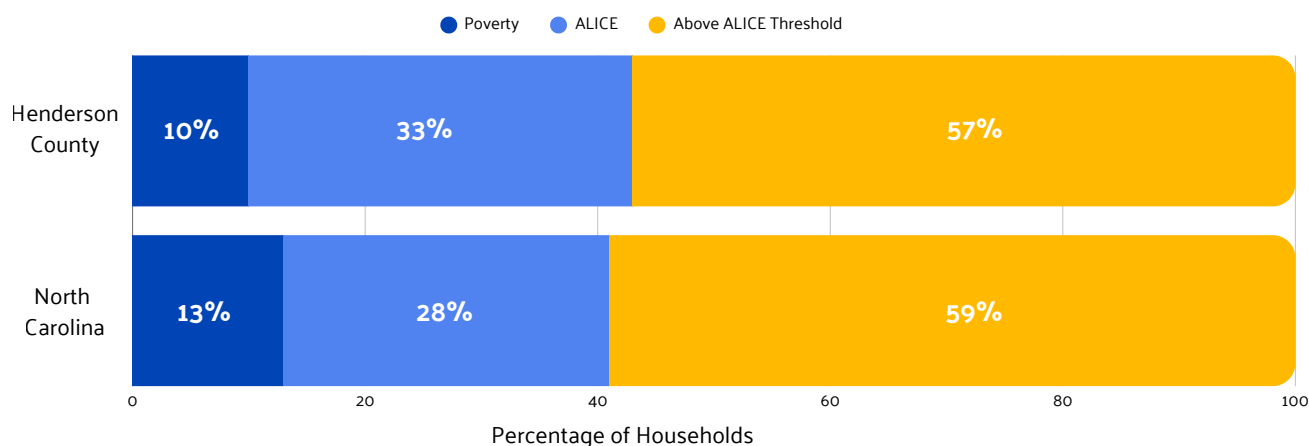
ALICE

Whether the need is helping a child thrive, supporting a family through hardship, or coordinating recovery after disaster, UWHC works to simplify access and strengthen collective action. In every season of need, United Way remains a place where generosity, collaboration, and local leadership come together to serve our hardworking ALICE families in Henderson County.

Learn more:



A higher percentage of people in Henderson County are at or below the ALICE Threshold than the percentage of North Carolinians or Americans as a whole.



**MORE THAN 4 IN 10
HENDERSON COUNTY HOUSEHOLDS
ARE BELOW THE ALICE THRESHOLD**

**More households are
living paycheck to
paycheck in Henderson
County than in NC
proportionally.**



PROGRAMS

Rising Leaders

United Way of Henderson County created the Rising Leaders program 15 years ago to help volunteer leaders in Henderson County develop critical skills to effectively serve on nonprofit boards.

After monthly sessions on topics that included nonprofit board basics and governance, legal and financial oversight, and fundraising, eighteen Rising Leaders graduated from the program this year. Graduates ended their time together with a “speed-matching” event that provided a networking opportunity with representatives from 20 local nonprofits. We have graduated more than 300 participants since we began the Rising Leaders program.



"Through connections made during my Rising Leaders journey, I have joined two community boards."

- 2025 Rising Leaders graduate

EveryDay Strong

We are on a mission to build resilient kids and stronger communities. As anxiety and depression among young people continues to rise, research shows that one of the most important factors in a child's ability to thrive is having a caring, supportive adult in their life. EveryDay Strong promotes a simple, research-based framework that any caring adult can use to help build a sense of safety, connection, and confidence in young people

UWHC brought EveryDay Strong to Henderson County in 2024 by providing 1-hour community trainings as well as half-day train-the-trainer classes. UWHC trained presenters to lead 13 EveryDay Strong trainings in 2025, including to Big Brothers Big Sisters of WNC mentors, YMCA of WNC employees, and leadership at the Henderson County Education Foundation. Through these presentations, more than 90 people have participated in the community trainings.



Girls EMpowered (GEM)

GEM is a weekly after-school program designed to increase confidence and school success for girls in fifth and eighth grades. GEM began in Upward Elementary School in 2017 and quickly expanded to Hillandale Elementary School and Hendersonville Middle School. Throughout the 2025-2026 school year and summer break, GEM served 116 girls across 5 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, and the Boys & Girls Club of Henderson County. Our ambitious 3-year expansion will put this impactful local program in 12 locations by Fall of 2026!

Women United members and other women in our community serve as guest speakers. The GEM girls learn from a variety of women professionals, enjoy women's leadership tours, and receive backpacks filled with school supplies.

Participating students reported an average 90% improvement in how they viewed their future goals and demonstrated perseverance. One teacher shared, "Communicating to the girls that they are assets promotes their belief in their own self-worth," while a parent said, "Thank you for investing in my daughter... You made a difference." Girls describe GEM as "a confidence booster" and "the reason I can be myself and not be scared."

500+
girls empowered
since 2017



"It is such a healthy, fun and impactful program that I would love to see continue for years to come!"

— Middle School Counselor

Learn more about
our Programs
& Initiatives:



PROGRAMS

Disaster Recovery Partnership

The Henderson County Disaster Recovery Partnership (DRP) is a collaborative, county-wide initiative helping residents rebuild their lives after Hurricane Helene. While emergency response has passed, many families in our community remain in the long and complex process of recovery—facing financial gaps, housing instability, and ongoing hardship.



The DRP ensures that survivors do not face this journey alone. Through coordinated, holistic disaster case management, local nonprofits work together to connect households with the resources, guidance, and support needed to move from crisis toward stability.

The Disaster Recovery Partnership brings together nonprofit organizations through a coordinated case management model designed to address the complex realities of disaster recovery. Local disaster case managers work directly with survivors to assess needs, develop personalized recovery plans, and connect families to a wide range of community resources. This holistic approach addresses multiple challenges at once, including housing, transportation, financial assistance, utilities, and basic needs.

Key Statistics

36% of households include a Veteran

Since launching recovery work in October 2024 and formalizing the county-wide DRP in Fall 2025 we have already made significant progress supporting local families.

Key program outcomes as of June 2026 include:



- 200+ applicant households served
- 770+ individuals supported
- \$825,000+ leveraged in additional financial assistance for survivors
- 8 nonprofit organizations collaborating to provide comprehensive disaster case management
- 12 disaster case managers (7 FTEs) providing ongoing support
- 40% of clients are children or seniors
- 36% of households include a veteran

In addition to financial assistance, many clients have received support for home repairs and rebuilding, temporary housing, transportation solutions, and essential household items needed to reestablish stable living conditions.



Born Learning Trails

The Born Learning Trail is a series of 10 interactive signs that offer fun, active learning for young children. United Way has created two Born Learning Trails in Henderson County, and they are open all year for children and their parents and caregivers to enjoy. Both trails have colorful signs that are printed in both English and Spanish. You can find our two Born Learning Trails at Mills River Park and along the Oklawaha Greenway in Hendersonville.

"I'm a mom of two active boys who are always on the move, but they also love learning and reading. The Born Learning Trails are a natural way to bring those together. When we're at the park, they turn playtime into moments of curiosity, conversation, and imagination, without ever feeling like a lesson. I love that United Way continues to offer these trails as a way for parents and children to engage with one another."

—Summer Stipe, local parent

Bikes 4 Kids NC

Emerging from a partnership with local bike club Tempo Cyclisme, Bikes 4 Kids has evolved into a memorable and impactful community initiative.

Since its inception in 2023, Bikes 4 Kids has gifted 437 bicycles and helmets to local children in need during the holidays through The Storehouse's Blessings in Boxes program. This heartwarming effort involves buying, assembling, and gifting a fleet of bikes to hundreds of kids in our community. With generous support from local partners and businesses, Bikes 4 Kids has transformed into a lasting movement focused on ensuring that every child gets to experience one of life's simple joys: riding a bike.

Learn more at www.Bikes4KidsNC.org.



EVENTS

Days of Caring

Days of Caring is a two-day community service event held each year in Henderson County, beginning on the Friday of the second weekend in May. On May 8, 2026, volunteers came together to support 19 local nonprofits through 23 service projects designed to strengthen facilities, enhance programs, and expand community impact.

The event concluded with the National Association of Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive, a community-wide effort that helps stock local food pantries to support families experiencing food insecurity. In just two days, 257 volunteers contributed a total of 1,109 hours of service.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate the power of collaboration, bringing volunteers, nonprofits, businesses, and community partners together to address local needs and create lasting impact throughout Henderson County.

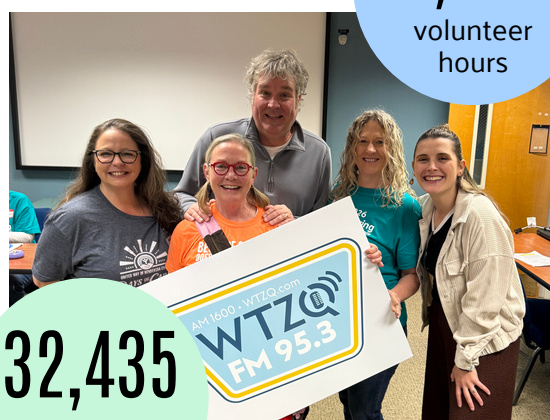
23

volunteer
projects



1,109

volunteer
hours



32,435

pounds of food
collected

Kimberly-Clark Golf Tournament



The 28th Annual Kimberly-Clark Golf Tournament was held in July 2025 at Etowah Valley Golf & Country Club and was a rousing success. The day was full of sunshine as 108 golfers took to the links in support of United Way.

Last year, the golf tournament raised over \$36,000 to support the health, education, financial stability, and basic needs of all Henderson County residents.

We are grateful for our long-time partnership with Kimberly-Clark and all they do to support our community.

Power of the Purse (PoP)

On May 21, 2026, UWHC's Women United hosted our first Power of the Purse event to raise funds for programs that support the mental health of women and children in Henderson County. Women United members nominated and voted on the grant recipients: Henderson County Public Schools' Sources of Strength program and United Way of Henderson County's Girls EMpowered (GEM) program.

The evening featured a fabulous silent auction with lovely handbags filled with items and gift certificates for experiences and dining around town. The proceeds resulted in two grants totaling \$12,000 that were awarded to our Girls EMpowered program and Sources of Strength through Henderson County Public Schools.

Thank You to our Sponsors:

GOLD



SILVER



POP the CORK

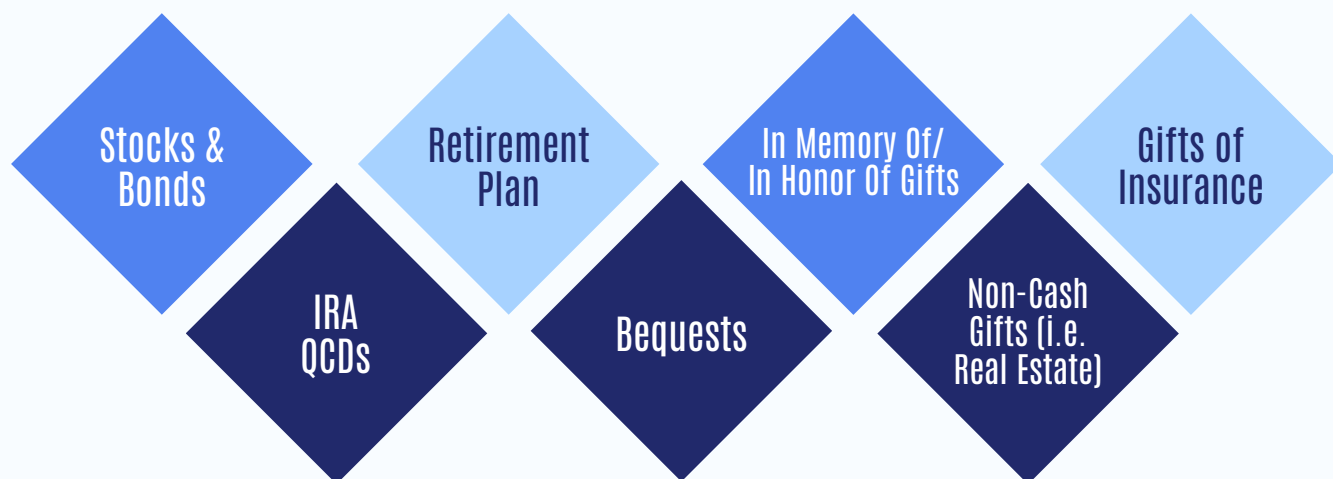


BRONZE

Blue Ridge Community College
The Chipriano Family
Cooper Construction
SELEE
Self-Help Credit Union
United Community



WAYS TO GIVE



PLANNED GIVING

Making a planned gift to United Way is a rewarding way to make a lasting impact, and your legacy gift will improve lives and community conditions far into the future.

By including United Way of Henderson County in your legacy giving, you become a member of our esteemed Legacy Circle, a group of forward-thinking supporters who have made a lasting commitment to United Way's work of changing lives for the better in every corner of Henderson County and beyond.

Thinking about your will? You can now make or update it for free! United Way had teamed up with FreeWill to offer you an easy way to create your will at no cost. Visit partner.freewill.com/unitedway to learn more.

For more information on ways to give, visit liveunitedhc.org/waystogive or contact Kat Carlton, Executive Director, at 828-692-1636, x 1104. We encourage you to speak with your professional advisor about these and other options, and we welcome the opportunity to talk with you about your goals.

LEGACY GIVERS

- Anonymous (2)
- Ruth Birge
- Gay Burgess and Joy D. Blazey
- James H. Bryson*
- John and Judy Hansen
- William and Donna Hastie
- Henderson County Cancer Services
- Vicky Lieber
- Normac Humanitarian Fund
- Chester W. and Virginia G. Phillips*
- Barbara and Yorke Pharr
- Patsy Reeves Estate
- Norm Rogers
- Vina and Richard Sauer*
- Everett and Ellen Stone*
- Allan and Jean Amanda* Thomas
- Elizabeth Warrick*

IN MEMORY OF

Cam Boyd*
Earle Haire*
Don Jennings*
Erskine and Gay Love*

*Deceased

TOCQUEVILLE SOCIETY

We want to express our heartfelt gratitude to the Tocqueville Society members of United Way of Henderson County. These philanthropic leaders are making a lasting impact on the community through generous annual contributions of \$10,000 or more.



- William C. Beck
- Beverly Dillon
- Lowry and Anne Hobbs
- Marilyn Jentzen
- John and Doreen McTigue
- Darrell Menscer and Faith Baker
- Nick and Merrie Carol Weedman

UNITED WAY HENDERSON COUNTY WOMEN UNITED®

Women United is a group of dynamic, passionate, and community-minded women who work together to make a significant impact for good! Women United members enjoy social and networking events, as well as opportunities to volunteer and give back to the community in a variety of ways.



This past year, our members gave back by donating baby formula to Children & Family Resource Center, collecting “HUGS” – Hats, Undies, Gloves, and Socks – for local elementary school children, and gathering holiday gifts for 30 children through The Storehouse’s Blessings in Boxes Program.

To learn more visit liveunitedhc.org/women-united

UNITED WAY HENDERSON COUNTY SMALL BUSINESS LEAGUE

SMALL BUSINESS. BIG IMPACT.

The Small Business League (SBL) is made up of locally owned businesses who believe in supporting the needs of Henderson County neighbors. Participation as an SBL contributor enables business owners to make a greater connection with nonprofit service providers, establish a philanthropic business model, and partner with like-minded local business owners.

League members also vote on a funding award to a local nonprofit. Funding recipients have included the school backpack program, local food pantries, Hendersonville Rescue Mission, Apple Country Transit, Children and Family Resource Center, Safelight, and Meals on Wheels.

To learn more visit liveunitedhc.org/SBL

AWARDS

Community Champion

celebrating the highest impact in our community through United Way

Kimberly-Clark

Premier Cornerstone

in recognition of the highest overall employee contributions

Wilsonart

Power of Partnership

in recognition of outstanding corporate and employee contributions

Cummins

Positive Momentum

in recognition of transformational community impact through Bikes 4 Kids

Greg & Michelle Reynolds

Edward C. Brisley Jr. Award

in recognition of outstanding volunteer service to United Way of Henderson County

Michelle Tracz

Rob and Ginger Cranford Community Service Award

in recognition of outstanding contributions to the people of Henderson County

Anthony & Kimbela McMinn

THANK YOU TO OUR 2025 PLATINUM SPONSORS



THANK YOU TO OUR 2025 LIVE UNITED SPONSORS

GOLD



SILVER

***Kimberly-Clark**



BRONZE

Park National Bank

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Statement of Financial Position for FY Ending June 30, 2025

ASSETS

Cash and cash equivalents	1,358,455
Account receivable	116,072
Grants receivable	319,495
Pledge receivable, net	320,050
Prepaid expenses	7,591
Beneficial interest in assets held by others	564,492
Life insurance cash surrender value	64,776
Property and equipment, net	174,641
Operating lease right-of-use assets	13,128
Total Assets	\$ 2,938,700

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Liabilities:

Current portion of operating lease liabilities	5,673
Allocations and designations payable	1,171,345
Operating payables	9,344
Accrued expenses	25,470

Total Current Liabilities	\$ 1,211,832
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Long-term Liabilities:

Operating lease liabilities, net current portion	7,455
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Total Liabilities	\$ 1,219,287
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Net Assets:

Unrestricted net assets	
Unappropriated	1,116,516
Board appropriated	240,917
Total net assets	1,357,433
With donor restrictions	361,980

1,719,413

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$ 2,938,700
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Note: The summary above has been extracted from the FYE June 30, 2025 audited financial statements prepared by Prager Metis and primarily reflects the 2024 campaign activity. The accompanying notes are integral to the statements, and the Independent Auditors' Report should be taken in their entirety. The full audit statement along with the 990 are available at liveunitedhc.org.

neighbors helping neighbors. united we thrive.



Contact Us



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