

United Way of Henderson County (UWHC) has served our community since 1953 and is committed to serving our Henderson County neighbors for decades to come. Our work to organize and mobilize community resources to improve the lives of Henderson County residents is making a lasting and transformational impact throughout our community.

On September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Tropical Storm Helene caused devastating damage throughout our community. Building upon decades of partnerships, trust, and experience mobilizing resources, UWHC stepped up to serve at an elevated capacity to help our community. Our team was on the ground the first week after the storm mobilizing volunteers and supplies, raising funds, driving emergency information routes for EMS, and creating the framework for our county's nonprofit response and recovery.

Our rapid and impactful response in the aftermath of Helene demonstrates our steadfast ability to build upon seventy years of partnerships and service to meet our communities' greatest needs. As you will read below, these monumental accomplishments occurred in tandem with the growing impact that we continue to create through our signature programming.

Our strategic direction is guided by our 2023-28 Strategic Plan. The plan focuses on 4 bold goals relating to community impact, resource development, community engagement and education, and organizational capacity, while ensuring that we build capacity and embed equity throughout our organization.

UWHC maintains rigorous standards of financial stewardship and public accountability. We undergo an annual independent audit conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. UWHC holds a Four-Star rating from Charity Navigator and a Platinum Transparency designation from Candid. Governed by a committed volunteer Board of Directors, UWHC ensures that all community investment funding decisions are made by panels of community volunteers who evaluate programs and outcomes. This community-driven approach ensures transparency, accountability, and alignment with local priorities.

UWHC works hard to leverage broad community support (financial, in-kind, volunteer) to ensure that our community receives the maximum benefit. We are proud that UWHC puts over a dollar of value back into the community for every dollar raised when accounting for cash and non-cash value of in-kind and volunteer hours. Our core mission support, covering our fundraising, management and general expenses, is 7%.

UWHC's cash investment to assist the community during the 2024-25 fiscal year was more than \$2.6 million. In total, UWHC awarded more than 75 grants to local nonprofit agencies FY25 and helped to provide more than 40,000 local services to Henderson County neighbors in need. Our 2024-25 Community Investment grant funding includes support for 42 programs across 25 local nonprofits supporting the health, education, financial stability and basic needs of Henderson County neighbors. We also provided pivotal funding for 13 local food pantries to increase access to healthy, nutritionally dense foods for families in need and awarded 30 local Helene Response and Recovery Grants to support our community as we continue to recover from Helene.

Our ability to organize and mobilize local volunteers and leverage gift-in-kind donations provided over 10,000 volunteer hours for a non-cash value of over \$470,000 in local support. In October 2024 alone, we connected more than 1,500 volunteers to serve 6,600 hours to support Helene response and recovery. Our Annual Days of Caring initiative mobilized 280 volunteers who contributed 1,293 hours in May 2025. Collectively, we completed 26 projects at 22 organizations in addition to providing essential

support for the National Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive that collected over 39,000 pounds of nonperishable food from residents to support local food pantries. Throughout the year, our Women United affinity group and local corporate partners held donation drives providing additional gift-in-kind support.

Bikes 4 Kids (B4K) is an annual fundraiser that provides bicycles and helmets to local families in need during the holiday season. In partnership with The Tempo Project and local bike club Tempo Cyclisme, B4K partners with local businesses, athletes, and volunteers to raise funds to purchase bikes and helmets for children in our community. During the 2024 holiday season, we donated more than 200 bikes and helmets to local children through The Storehouse's Blessings in Boxes program.

In addition to the impactful funding and volunteer support we provide, we also run five internal programs that are making a big impact in Henderson County. Our signature programs are Born Learning Trails, Girls EMpowered, Rising Leaders, Everyday Strong, and our newest program, the Disaster Recovery Partnership.

Our Born Learning Trails are a series of 10 interactive, bilingual signs that offer fun, active learning for children and their families as they walk along the trail. We host two trails in Henderson County, located at Mills River Park and on the Oklawaha Greenway. These educational trails promote learning in a fun and interactive way while boosting language, reading, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills.

Girls EMpowered (GEM), is a weekly after school program designed to increase self-esteem and school success for girls. GEM helps ensure that every girl in our Henderson County Public School system has the opportunity to thrive as they reach for their goals. The program is offered to both 5th graders and 8th graders, as these are pivotal years where students prepare to transition from elementary to middle school, and then from middle to high school. GEM has empowered more than 400 girls since 2017 and continues to grow each year.

Rising Leaders is a UWHC Program designed to develop the next generation of community leaders and board members for Henderson County non-profit organizations. In 2024-25, 16 Rising Leaders completed the 14<sup>th</sup> year of our Rising Leaders program. These graduates join more than 300 UWHC Rising Leaders graduates who are now ready and able to serve on local boards.

EveryDay Strong focuses on training trusted adults, peers, and professionals in evidence-based mental and behavioral health practices to support youth. In 2024, UWHC held its first community class in WNC, attended by 40 nonprofit staff from 15 organizations, with sessions offered in English and Spanish. In 2025, trained presenters shared Everyday Strong through more than 12 presentations including to WNC Big Brothers Big Sisters mentors, YMCA of WNC employees, and leadership at the Henderson County Education Foundation.

Another way UWHC strengthens the safety net woven through our community is by ensuring people know how to access resources through [nc211.org](https://nc211.org) or by calling 2-1-1. NC 211 is an information and referral service provided by United Way of North Carolina and powered by local United Ways like UWHC. We are proud to partner with this essential service to help connect residents in need to local resources.

UWHC plays a central role in strengthening and rebuilding Henderson County, from immediate disaster response to long-term recovery. Built on a strong foundation of collaboration, communication, and trust among nonprofit partners, UWHC leads coordinated community efforts during times of crisis.

Following Hurricane Helene, UWHC served as the nonprofit leader and convener for disaster response and recovery across Henderson County. In partnership with Henderson County Government, FEMA, the American Red Cross, and more than 70 local and regional organizations, UWHC mobilized critical funding, volunteers, and essential supplies. UWHC also maintained a continuous presence at the County's Disaster Recovery Center from opening to closure, ensuring residents were connected to vital nonprofit resources.

UWHC's proven track record of community engagement, accountability, and trusted leadership led the Henderson County Long-Term Recovery Steering Committee to select UWHC as the lead agency and fiscal sponsor of the newly established Disaster Recovery Partnership (DRP).

The DRP is dedicated to uniting and empowering Henderson County communities in the face of disaster. Its mission is to promote effective information sharing, streamline access to essential resources for individuals and families, and collaboratively address unmet recovery needs. The partnership envisions a resilient, connected community that is prepared to overcome adversity and respond to future challenges with confidence and solidarity.

Through this initiative, UWHC continues to fulfill its mission of organizing and mobilizing community resources by leveraging local, regional, and national networks to meet the ongoing recovery needs stemming from Helene.

Solutions are complicated. It takes all of us, working together, to make lasting and sustainable improvements. Our core infrastructure and stability have proven to be essential for our community nonprofit partners while also enabling us to collate and share accurate, up to date information for our neighbors in need. We provide leadership and support across multiple community coalitions, including the Early Childhood Taskforce, Emergency Food and Shelter Program, Partnership for Health, Henderson County ACEWs, Resilience & Trauma Collaborative (HART), and Nonprofit CEO and Staff Forums.

We are grateful for the nonprofit organizations, individuals, and businesses whose collective support makes our work possible. Loyal support from our Tocqueville, Ochlawaha, and residential donors help us make our community a better and brighter place for all. Women United, a leadership affinity group, connects and engages women who want to make a significant impact in our community. These dynamic, passionate, and community-minded women provide essential funding and volunteer support and were the driving force behind the creation of Girls EMpowered.

Our corporate partners provide essential funding through workplace giving, corporate gifts, sponsorships, and creative give-back opportunities. Small businesses play a critical role by contributing to Henderson County's growing economy, providing necessary services, and developing community connections. Our Small Business League connects philanthropically minded business owners with a way to make a big local impact.

UWHC is in the final year of Henderson County 2025 (HC2025), a ten-year plan created by, for, and with our community. The HC2025 Impact Goals are to: (1) increase kindergarten readiness and support school success for underserved children; (2) improve economic self-sufficiency and increase access to affordable housing; (3) improve physical activity and nutrition among residents and encourage healthy youth behaviors; and (4) provide basic needs and crisis services for neighbors in need. Through strategic investments and cross-sector collaboration, we are advancing solutions that lead to lasting change. In 2026, we are engaging residents and partners in developing HC30 Community Impact Strategies through inclusive listening sessions and a community survey. This process will identify emerging needs,

address service gaps, and co-create a forward-looking plan rooted in community voice and shared vision.