

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Since 1923, United Way of Greater Newark's mission has been to disrupt the cycle of poverty by convening, collaborating, and investing in strategies to improve outcomes for children and families in Essex and Hudson Counties. We serve Newark, Belleville, Bloomfield, East Orange, East Newark, Harrison, Irvington, Kearny, Maplewood, North Arlington, Nutley, Orange, South Orange, and West Orange.

## MISSION

*To Disrupt the Cycle of Poverty by Convening, Collaborating, and Investing in Strategies to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families.*

## WHAT WE DO

*United Way of Greater Newark empowers residents in our 14 municipalities (Essex and Hudson counties) to live healthier lives with access to quality education and opportunities for economic advancement through our three pillars of educational equity, health equity, and financial stability. Through our leadership and partnerships, we serve as a conduit for government, funders, and corporations to make positive impact. We purposefully partner, gain support, and leverage our relationships to invest back into our communities.*

# A LETTER FROM OUR CEO



Dear Supporters,

I am pleased to share United Way of Greater Newark's annual report celebrating our centennial anniversary, marking 100 years of dedicated service to the Greater Newark area. Our organization was founded in 1923 by William M. Ashby, N.J.'s first Black social worker, and for a century, we have continued to do the work that Mr. Ashby started. Our centennial anniversary provided us with an opportunity to pay homage to Mr. Ashby and those who followed in his footsteps. We celebrated the work that UWGN has done to create an impact in the community and disrupt the cycle of poverty by addressing the social determinants. With vital help from our partners, we connected residents within our footprint to programs and services in education, health, and financial stability. Our work would not be possible without our donors and supporters; we thank you.

Our centennial anniversary kicked off with an intimate breakfast event, followed by our 10th Annual Women's Leadership Breakfast. The Fireside Chat panel at the breakfast shared inspiring real-life experiences in public service and corporate leadership with our sold-out audience. The highlight of our milestone anniversary was our Centennial Gala. Over 200 supporters gathered at the Newark Museum to celebrate and commemorate a century of dedication, compassion, and impactful work in the Greater Newark area. The gala celebrated our past and acknowledged the work we are currently doing with an impassioned commitment to the future. We honored Dr. Denise V. Rodgers with our William M. Ashby Community Service

Award, marking the first time the prestigious award was given out since 2016.

Building on the momentum of our milestone centennial celebrations, we've continued our unwavering commitment to serving the Greater Newark community in the face of evolving challenges.

In the past year, our focus in the health pillar shifted towards addressing the lasting effects of COVID-19. Initiatives like Mental Health First Aid and wellness opportunities were implemented to support the community's mental well-being. Funding enabled our partners to expand services at trauma recovery and wellness centers. Our Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA) remained a cornerstone in our financial stability efforts, assisting over 4,000 individuals in filing their taxes and securing refunds crucial for housing, food, and basic needs. Within our education pillar, we proudly hosted events such as Black Men Read Day and Multilingual Literacy Day at Newark Public Schools, promoting literacy among students and parents. Our Celebrity Read program brought 100 dedicated volunteers to engage with students at eight Newark elementary schools. We also convened partners and stakeholders to discuss creating the Out of School Time Recreation Planning Council to increase OST programming in city and county parks. Excitingly, we relaunched our Young Professionals Network to engage and unite young professionals meaningfully.

We invite you to join us in supporting this work by advocating, volunteering, or donating. Your support is crucial in enabling UWGN to address the ongoing needs in the Greater Newark area.

Thank you for being a part of this special milestone year  
and for your continued support in helping us to  
**#LIVEUNITED.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Catherine P. Wilson". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a thin horizontal line.

**Catherine Wilson**  
President & CEO  
United Way of Greater Newark

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# CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF SERVICE



For 100 years, United Way of Greater Newark has committed to improving the lives of individuals, children, and families to strengthen our collective community. In 1923, a visionary named William M. Ashby, New Jersey's first black social worker, founded United Way of Greater Newark as the Newark Welfare Federation and Community Chest. His pioneering spirit and dedication set the stage for an organization that has since become a beacon of hope, transforming lives and communities across Newark and beyond.

During the past century, our organization evolved into what is now United Way of Greater Newark. Through this evolution, UWGN remained a steadfast advocate for the community, consistently assessing and reassessing the needs of those living in the Greater Newark area. From our humble beginnings, advocating for social change, to our present-day initiatives addressing critical health, education, and economic disparities, United Way of Greater Newark has stood firm in its mission to disrupt the cycle of poverty by convening, collaborating, and investing in strategies to improve outcomes for children and families.



# CENTENNIAL GALA

United Way of Greater Newark commemorated a century of service at its Centennial Gala held on Wednesday, Oct. 25, at the Newark Museum. The jubilant evening was filled with enchanting music, delectable cuisine, and, of course, esteemed guests! A captivating timeline in the entryway served as a focal point for our more than 200 attendees, offering a journey through the rich history of United Way of Greater Newark, tracing back to its inception in 1923.

In a noteworthy moment, UWGN presented the William M. Ashby Community Service Award for the first time since 2016. The deserving recipient of this esteemed accolade was Denise V. Rodgers, MD, FAAFP. Additionally, United Way of Greater Newark took the opportunity to honor two steadfast supporters, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield and Prudential Financial, as Centennial Stalwart Supporter Honorees. Horizon generously sponsored both UWGN's Women's Breakfast and the gala, while Prudential Financial demonstrated their unwavering commitment by sponsoring United Way's entire centennial year. As the event's presenting sponsor, Wells Fargo received the title of Centennial Champion in recognition of their steadfast dedication to uplifting communities and transforming lives.

The success of the Centennial Gala extended beyond celebration, with United Way of Greater Newark raising over \$300,000 through sponsorships, table and ticket sales, AD Journal Sales, Fund-The-Need pledges, and individual donations. This impressive achievement reflects the community's strong support and dedication to the mission of United Way of Greater Newark.



## Mental Health Stats

**10%** of youth are diagnosed with a substance use disorder in their lifetime.

**1 in 5** teens and young adults lives with a mental health condition.

**50%** of all mental illnesses begin by age 14

## Mental Health First Aid

Over a six-month period, UWGN partnered with the National Council for Mental Wellbeing to provide Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training to five organizations to ensure individuals from a diverse cohort of selected organizations learned the risk factors and warning signs of mental health and addiction concerns and learned to create strategies to assist persons in crisis and non-crisis situations. One grantee, the Gem Project, has continued their work in MHFA training and offers virtual, hybrid and in-person MHFA certification classes for teachers, parents, OST staff and anyone working with youth. The certifications last for three years.



## Newark Community Street Team

UWGN provided the Newark Community Street Team with \$250,000 to expand services at its Trauma Recovery Center and provide wellness opportunities for staff. Through the year-long initiative, staff engaged in Trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy, Dialectical behavioral therapy, and intensive Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) training to increase the effectiveness of NCST's services.

*"Newark Community Street Team is honored to partner with United Way of Greater Newark to advance our shared vision of wellness and health. Thanks to the United Way, we've created various wellness and community-building activities for our team, crucial for staff exposed to trauma, including survivors of violence, through activities like mini golf, basketball, massage, yoga, journaling, art, and dance classes."*

**Jennifer Garnet,**

Newark Community Street Team

## Paxlovid Initiative

Elderly residents in Newark faced significant challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, being particularly vulnerable to virus-related complications. United Way of Greater Newark, in collaboration with several organizations, led a campaign to assist seniors in combating COVID-19 through the use of Paxlovid, a highly effective treatment in reducing hospitalization and death, especially among vulnerable populations. As part of the initiative, United Way of Greater Newark invested \$127,000 in Rutgers Project Echo to provide training on COVID-19 antiviral treatment, aiming to improve symptom management, treatment access, and appropriate use of Paxlovid for older adults in the Greater Newark area.



## Working Together for a Better Newark

United Way of Greater Newark continued convening the Newark Asset Building Coalition. Clinton Hill Community Action, Greater Newark LISC, Ironbound Community Corporation, La Casa de Don Pedro, New Community Corporation, New Jersey Citizen Action, New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, Newark Alliance, United Community Corporation, and Urban League of Essex County joined United Way on the Newark Asset Building Coalition.

## Small Business Support

United Way of Greater Newark continued providing support to local small businesses. With generous funding from Santander Bank, UWGN collaborated with Greater Newark Enterprises Corporation to deliver three specialized training tracks for small businesses, focusing on Bookkeeping, Business Credit & Branding, and Website & Digital Marketing. This initiative aimed to address administrative challenges in the "back office," allowing businesses to shift their focus to selling products or services. This support not only contributed to stability but also facilitated business growth and an increase in net worth for the participating entrepreneurs.

## Banking for Independence

During fall of 2023, United Way of Greater Newark partnered with JPMorgan Chase to introduce Banking for Independence workshops. These sessions aimed to deliver financial empowerment classes to both youth and adults with disabilities. In partnership with Anchor Behavioral Solutions, Jespy House, and Nassan's Place, a total of five cohorts, each consisting of four workshops, were organized. These workshops successfully engaged 64 participants, providing them with essential financial knowledge ranging from budgeting to credit to cyber security.

## Financial Literacy Day

In May, United Way of Greater Newark collaborated with partners from local community-based organizations and financial institutions to organize a comprehensive Financial Literacy Day at Science Park High School in Newark. This day-long event, attended by 60 individuals, delved into a diverse range of topics aimed at enhancing financial awareness. The sessions covered crucial subjects such as Public Policies & Programs Empowering NJ Communities, Financial Aid, Strategies for Reducing Student Loan Debt, Insights into Life Insurance, Investment Planning, Homeownership, and Energy Bill Assistance. UWGN is committed to empowering the community through education and access to vital financial knowledge.



# Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA)

United Way of Greater Newark partnered with five Newark Asset Building Coalition partners to provide free tax assistance preparation to 4,385 individuals and families, which returned \$3.8 million directly back into the community. The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program has operated for over 50 years in partnership with the IRS and provides free tax services to families and individuals earning under \$73,000, persons with disabilities, and limited English-speaking taxpayers. The program, which is staffed by volunteers, helps taxpayers identify critical benefits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC) to increase their tax refunds and give families more security in housing, food, and basic needs.



4,385

# OF TAX RETURNS



\$3,833,467

TOTAL FEDERAL AND STATE REFUND AMOUNT



\$1,333,800

TOTAL EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT AMOUNT



450

TOTAL STATE EARNED INCOME CREDIT RECIPIENTS



589

EITC RECIPIENTS



\$1,337,425

DOLLARS SAVED ON FILING FEES

## VITA Volunteer Testimonials

*"Nothing has been more rewarding than working with the public, especially in underserved communities, and assisting them with one of the most stressful things that they need to do. To have someone tell you that getting a refund has made their day all thanks to you is very fulfilling."*

**Courtney Misura**  
VITA Volunteer

*"VITA has been a very rewarding experience and useful exercise in applying what I've learned in grad school. I do feel like I'm helping provide a service, while at the same time applying valuable concepts that I've learned in the classroom to real world tax work. I am so glad to have joined this program."*

**Eric Mollo**  
VITA Volunteer





# EDUCATION

## Black Men Read

The 2nd Annual Black Men Read event was once again held at Camden Street School in Newark. Community members, fathers and father figures joined in the celebration of reading to students in Pre-K to 6th grade. West Ward Councilman and United Way of Greater Newark Board member Dupre Kelly along with Newark Board of Education Superintendent Roger Leon shared their experiences around literacy and learning and the positive impact of programs like Black Men Read.



## Multilingual Reading Day

In May 2023, United Way of Greater Newark collaborated with East Ward Elementary School in Newark to host Multilingual Literacy Day. Claudia Gouveia, a graduate of East Side High School and a local author, read her popular children's book, *Ellie Fairy Meets Cordelia*, to students in both English and Portuguese. Additionally, students, staff, and parents celebrated multilingualism through dance performances and poetry recitations, showcasing the beauty of different cultures and languages spoken at East Ward Elementary School. Guest readers visited the classroom to share their favorite multilingual books with students.



## Celebrity Read

One hundred volunteers from over ten organizations read to elementary school students at eight Newark Public Schools in March 2023 as part of United Way of Greater Newark's Celebrity Read program. The 32-year-old program, established in 1991, serves as a community-building initiative to engage United Way's volunteer base while inspiring elementary school children to read, dream, and set and accomplish goals.

## Newark Thrives Internship

Thanks to support from the Arman Roy Foundation, United Way of Greater Newark hired three Newark High School students as interns to help re-imagine, re-build, and re-brand our Newark Thrives! Youth Program Locator navigation tool and website. The internship, which started in the summer and extended through the school year, taught the interns a range of activities from connecting to existing partners, engaging new partners, attending weekly meetings with UWGN's website development team, revamping the website's look and feel, and developing social media plans and templates to promote the YPL. The YPL interns were Gateway Academy's Jabree Christopher and Teniola Awonorin, and Donald M Payne Sr. Tech's William Navarro.

## OST Partners

Newark Thrives hosted seven partner meetings working towards building a city-wide Out-Of-School-Time system among the partners in the city. The focus of this new OST system is to move away from a patchwork of programs and shift into operating as a system of opportunities based on student experiences and community engagement. Partners identified goals to improve access to OST programming, increase funding, raise awareness, strengthen a pipeline of students, and build trust.



# Newark Thrives Recreation Planning Council

During the winter of 2023, UWGN introduced the Out of School Time Recreation Planning Council as a strategic measure to increase Out of School Time (OST) programming within city and county parks. Spearheaded by UWGN, this initiative is designed to institute organized activities, volunteer opportunities, and civic engagement. Initially concentrating efforts on Military Park, the project has the intention to replicate successful models in other city and county parks. This endeavor specifically addresses the OST enrollment gap in Newark’s public schools, emphasizing the pivotal role of parks in enhancing educational and social outcomes for students.

The project hosted its inaugural event, “Cookies & Carols” in December at Military Park. This holiday-themed gathering showcased performances by local youth bands, dance groups, and various other talented local youth. Attendees enjoyed the entertainment and were treated to complimentary hot chocolate, cookies, books, and winter coats, adding a festive and community-oriented touch to the initiative. This marked the beginning of a comprehensive project aimed at fostering positive development and bridging educational disparities in the community.



# RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

## 10th Annual Women's Leadership Breakfast

United Way of Greater Newark hosted its 10th Annual Women's Leadership Breakfast on May 24 at NJPAC, bringing together over 170 women and community leaders. The Fireside Chat panel featured Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield EVP Jennifer Velez, Prudential Financial VP Sarah Key, and Deputy Adjutant General for New Jersey Colonel Yvonne L. Mays. Moderated by UWGN Board Member and Deputy in Charge, U.S. District Court - District of New Jersey Andrea Lewis-Walker, the discussion explored public service and corporate leadership through real-life examples.

This special event was made possible by the generous support of sponsors Apex Solutions Group, Arman Roy Foundation, Columbia Bank, Covanta, Deloitte, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield, MCJ Amelior Foundation, NASCO, New Jersey Children's Foundation, Panasonic, Peapack-Gladstone Bank, PNC Bank, PSEG, Prudential Financial, SAX LLP, ShopRite of Newark, and WellCare of New Jersey. United Way of Greater Newark extends heartfelt thanks to all sponsors for their commitment to fostering leadership and community engagement.

*"I'm honored to have had the opportunity to sit as a panelist for the Fireside Chat of this year's Women's Leadership Breakfast. The thought-provoking questions from the attendees coupled with the genuine candor of each panelist fostered a climate for an intimate uplifting conversation among friends. I received more than I gave and sincerely feel that I am better for having been a part of such a powerful event."*

**Colonel Yvonne L. Mays, Deputy Adjutant General for New Jersey**

(Panelist at Women's Leadership Breakfast)

*"The Women's Leadership Breakfast was a great experience of community and motivation. I enjoyed hearing from the speakers and appreciated their candidness. I loved hearing about their journeys to leadership and left with great lessons to consider for the future."*

**Jessica McKenzie, Manager and Program Officer, Panasonic North America**

(Attendee of Women's Leadership Breakfast)



## Young Professionals Network

United Way of Greater Newark relaunched its Young Professionals Network with an inaugural mixer at the Ironside Building in downtown Newark. The Young Professionals Network held 3 events and reached 80 members. It aims to unite young professionals in Greater Newark through in-person YPN events that offer a meaningful way for professionals to connect, build networks, and engage in philanthropy. UWGN raised \$5,200 through the YPN.

*"United Way of Greater Newark's Young Professionals Network events are a great way to meet new people and expand your professional resources. Not only can you make valuable connections, but you can also learn from others in your industry and gain new insights. Attending these events can also help you stay up-to-date on the latest trends in your field. Overall, these events are a great investment in your career!"*

**Tom Wiedmann**, Assistant Director of Community Engagement at United Community Corporation

## Giving Tuesday

For the second straight year, United Way of Greater Newark reached its goal of raising \$5,000 for Giving Tuesday. Thank you to all for supporting UWGN during our November campaign!





# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## Donation from NY Jets Player

Michael Carter II is not only a NY Jets player, he is also a philanthropist who made the holiday season extra special for a Newark resident and her daughter who lost everything when their apartment exploded last summer. Michael provided new home furnishings, toys, and electronics during a surprise visit coordinated by United Way of Greater Newark.



## Food Drive

United Way of Greater Newark staff partnered with Turning Point Community Services to host a Thanksgiving Food Drive at the Shoprite of Brookdale in Bloomfield. Staff members shared flyers and met with customers who graciously donated hundreds of dollars worth of food for women and children who reside in TPCS housing.



## Shoebox Project

To celebrate United Way Day of Action 2023, United Way of Greater Newark organized the Shoebox Project donation drive. In partnership with Covanta, Colosseum Gym, and the Federal Reserve System Office of Employee Benefits, United Way of Greater Newark donated 50 individually-packed shoeboxes filled with essentials and gifts to youth and adults through Bridges Outreach and CASA for Children of Essex County.





## Catherine P. Wilson

**President & CEO**  
Board Secretary

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# DONORS & SPONSORS

## CENTENNIAL YEAR-LONG SPONSORS: \$80,000

Prudential Financial: \$50,000  
Citi: \$15,000  
Arman Roy Foundation: \$10,000  
New Jersey Children's Foundation: \$5,000

## 2023 WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP BREAKFAST: \$67,250

NASCO: \$10,000  
Deloitte: \$5,000  
Horizon Blue Cross / Blue Shield: \$5,000  
Panasonic: \$5,000  
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## 2023 CENTENNIAL GALA (\$302,606.29)

Wells Fargo: \$100,000  
Mars Wrigley: \$50,000  
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“Giving back is a responsibility we should all take as community members, specifically to help those that are more vulnerable.”

**Layla Andrade**

Vice President / Relationship Manager - M&T Bank



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THANK  
YOU

