

# UNITED IS THE WAY.

2024/2025  
Annual Report



UNITED WAY  
Greater Newark



# FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

## Overview of the 2 years

Dear Friends and Partners,

The past two years have been a period of both transformation and impact for United Way of Greater Newark. Together—with your support—we've navigated challenges, embraced new opportunities, and built the foundation for a stronger, more equitable future for our communities.

In 2023, we proudly celebrated our Centennial Anniversary—a remarkable milestone honoring 100 years of service and partnership. As part of this historic year, we presented the William M. Ashby Award to Dr. Denise Rodgers, Vice Chancellor, Rutgers Biomedical Health and Sciences, in recognition of her extraordinary leadership and commitment to improving the health and well-being of the Greater Newark community. That celebration was more than a look back; it was a moment to re-commit ourselves to the next 100 years of impact.

From launching our 2024 Strategic Plan to deepening our partnerships across Newark and our surrounding communities, these years have been marked by collaboration, innovation, and measurable results. We've expanded our reach in key areas like financial wellness, education, and volunteer engagement—ensuring that more families have access to the tools and opportunities they need to thrive.

We are deeply grateful to our corporate partners, individual donors, foundations, and volunteers. Your time, resources, and belief in our mission have fueled every milestone we've achieved. Whether preparing tax returns through VITA, reading to students during Celebrity Read, or investing in our initiatives, you've helped us create lasting change.



**Catherine P. Wilson,**  
**MSW**  
President & CEO

## Vision for the future

Our mission remains clear: to build strong, inclusive communities where everyone has the chance to thrive. Our vision—that every individual and family can live with dignity, security, and opportunity—guides every decision and every partnership.

Looking ahead, our strategic priorities are focused on:

- Expanding programs that close wealth and opportunity gaps.
- Strengthening nonprofit resilience and sustainability across the region.
- Leveraging data and partnerships to drive measurable, long-term impact.
- Engaging even more volunteers and partners in hands-on work that changes lives.

We are proud of what we've accomplished together—and even more excited about what's next. As we enter the next phase of our plan, we invite you to stay engaged: volunteer, attend our events, spread the word, and continue to invest in the future we're building together.

On behalf of our entire team and board, thank you for your trust, partnership, and unwavering commitment to our community. The road ahead is bright, and we're honored to walk it with you.

# GRATITUDE TO SUPPORTERS



**Mary Ann Jackson**  
Board Chair

# MISSION

Build strong, inclusive communities where everyone has the chance to thrive.

# VISION

We envision a future where every individual and family can live with dignity, security, and opportunity.

# VALUES

We believe in equity, collaboration, compassion, and accountability, working together to create inclusive opportunities and lasting change for every individual and family.

# IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS





**10,527**

**VITA Returns**

Total tax returns completed through VITA

**10**

**Schools participated  
in Celebrity Read**

Schools joined in the joy of reading

**4,474**

**VITA volunteer  
hours contributed**

Volunteers who generously shared  
their time and talent

**3,500**

**Students who participated  
in Celebrity Read**

Students inspired through the program

**\$865,588.00**

**Granted to partner  
organizations**

Support invested in strengthening local partners

**BY THE NUMBERS**

# Launching Our 2024 Strategic Plan: A Vision for Equity and Impact

In 2024, United Way of Greater Newark (UWGN) launched a bold and forward-thinking Strategic Plan to drive transformative change across our 14-municipality footprint. Centered on advancing equity and opportunity, this three-year roadmap reflects our deep commitment to supporting ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) individuals and families those who work hard yet struggle to meet basic needs.

The challenges faced by ALICE populations are complex and deeply rooted in systemic inequities. However, UWGN is committed to building a future where every individual and family in our community has the opportunity to thrive. By embracing a paradigm shift, focusing on collaboration, and implementing a multi-faceted approach guided by the *“Thriving Communities Framework”*, we are prepared to make a meaningful and lasting difference.

Our strategic priorities include:

- **Understanding ALICE Across UWGN’s Footprint:** Using data to guide community investments.
- **Expanding Leadership and Advocacy:** Elevating UWGN’s influence and championing ALICE.
- **Building Skills and Capacity:** Strengthening the capabilities of our staff, board, and partners.
- **Diversifying Revenue Streams:** Ensuring long-term sustainability to support ALICE households.

With clear goals such as increasing the financial resilience of 157,000 ALICE households by 2028, expanding our leadership and advocacy, and enhancing internal capacity, UWGN is investing in people, systems, and partnerships that foster thriving communities. Through ongoing evaluation and adaptation, we will continue to learn, grow, and work alongside our partners to create a more just and equitable future for all.

This Strategic Plan is more than a set of objectives; it’s our commitment to transformational change and to the people and communities who need it most.



“Ironbound Community Corporation is honored to partner with United Way of Greater Newark as UWGN take intentional steps to close the wealth gap in Black and Brown communities. Through this trusted partnership and by working closely with community organizations, UWGN is committed to bringing targeted resources and opportunities that foster asset building, financial stability, and generational wealth for families who have been historically underserved.”

Hazel N. Applewhite  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Ironbound Community Corporation



“The partnership between BRICK Education Network and United Way of Greater Newark is a model of mission alignment, innovation, and shared impact. Together, we are united in our commitment to supporting ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) individuals and advancing upward mobility through bold, community-driven strategies. From launching free Tax VITA sites to building innovative capital stacks to ensuring residents have a voice in investment decisions and policy briefings, our collaboration is rooted in action and results. This relationship is more than a partnership—it’s a shared vision for breaking down barriers, creating opportunity, and reimagining what’s possible for the communities we serve.”

Dominique Lee  
CEO, BRICK Education Network

# BY THE NUMBERS

The Newark Asset Building Coalition (NABC) works to strengthen financial stability for Newark residents through education, resources, and trusted partnerships. One of our key initiatives, the Newark Free Tax Prep Program (VITA), provides free, high-quality tax services for hardworking families, helping them save money, claim valuable tax credits, and build a stronger financial future.

## VITA



10,527

# of Tax Returns



\$ 115,588.00

\$ Granted to Partner Orgs



85

# of Volunteers



4,024

# of Volunteer Hours

## NEWARK ASSET BUILDING COALITION



\$ 750,000.00

\$ Granted to Partner Orgs

## CELEBRITY READ



375

# of Volunteers



750

# of Volunteer Hours

## TOTALS (FY24 - FY25)



\$ 865,588.00

\$ Granted to Partner Orgs



310

# of Volunteers



4,474

# of Volunteer Hours



10,527

# of Tax Returns

# PROJECT SPOTLIGHTS



# OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS



## Newark Asset Building Coalition (NABC)

The NABC works to promote financial independence and stability for Newark residents through financial education, access to wealth-building programs, and comprehensive personal finance services. Our Steering Committee includes key Newark-based stakeholders: United Way of Greater Newark, Counsel of New Jersey Grant Makers (City of Newark?), Ironbound Community Corporation, BRICK, La Casa De Don Pedro, Urban League of Essex County, New Community Corporation, NJ Citizen Action, Jumpstart Newark, NICRI, Braven, Clinton Hill Community Action, Newark Street Team, SWEA, Programs for Parents, Newark Emergency Services for Families, and others.



## Greater Newark Free Tax Prep Program (VITA)

Newark Free Tax Prep is an initiative under the Newark Asset Building Coalition (NABC) that provides vital tax preparation services through the IRS-sponsored Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA). With nearly half of our neighbors living as ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) households and struggling to make ends meet, our program offers free tax help to people with \$80,000 or less in taxable income. Since 2018, we've helped prepare over 38,600 returns and saved our community more than \$9.8 million in filing fees.

The Newark Free Tax Prep Program is crucial in helping hardworking families access all eligible tax credits, including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Child Tax Credit (CTC), and education credits. These credits can make a significant difference for ALICE households facing difficult choices between basic necessities like housing, childcare, and healthcare.

Our tax returns are prepared by dedicated volunteers who undergo rigorous training and certification through the IRS. Each volunteer completes at least 20 hours of training and must pass an IRS-specified exam before preparing returns. We maintain the highest standards of confidentiality, quality, and customer service, ensuring your tax information is used solely for return preparation.



## SPOTLIGHT ON ANUSHA RANGANATH KANCHI (TY2024 VITA VOLUNTEER)

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program is fortunate to have welcomed 49 certified tax volunteer preparers this past season, who collectively contributed almost 3,500 hours of service to the local community in 2025. One such student, Anusha Ranganath Kanchi of Seton Hall University, stands out among her peers. From day 1, Anusha brought bright energy and professionalism to her work. By the end of the season, she had helped to prepare 35 taxes, all while juggling rigorous academic studies in her graduate accounting program.

Ms. Kanchi is an international student and was attracted to this program initially to gain a practical application to her studies. In a discussion with Anusha about what brought her to VITA, Anusha immediately shared “I am really passionate about volunteering... This was a great way to get involved and to help me understand not only how to do taxes but to also meet amazing people along the way.” Her fellow volunteers were experienced and helped guide her learning, allowing her the opportunity to shadow them when complicated scenarios arose. Through the process, Anusha shared that she not only gained a more robust knowledge of taxes but also deepened her skills in customer service and time management.

Aside from the cash clients received from their refunds, Anusha shared that one of the most important aspects of the program was taxpayer education. For the clients who owed, Anusha was able to go through their W2 line-by-line to explain to them how they can better estimate for next year so that they might not owe in TY25. In her words, “[the clients] were there throughout the preparation process, so they were able to see what I was doing and the significance of each document... Their anxiety reduced because then they understood how it is done.”

When asked what inspires her about this work, Anusha shared that she was impressed by the number of senior citizens that utilize the service. One of her clients was well into her nineties and had just retired from teaching, and she was still focused on ensuring that she had completed her taxes properly in this trusted setting.

Anusha is a volunteer who truly went above and beyond, even volunteering past the April 15th cutoff to prepare back taxes, which likewise exceeded expectations for her course requirements. We are so grateful for talented volunteers who help to fuel this program and would like to thank her and others again for giving back to their local community.

# TOGETHER, WE THRIVE!

# DONATIONS & SPONSORSHIP

## Individual Donations

Donations made during the fiscal year 2024 - 2025.

# 2024

### \$5,000 - \$9,999

Thomas Tobin

### \$1,000 - \$4,999

Valerie Block  
Mark Hartigan  
Jeffrey Plaut  
Sallyanne Floria  
J Adamczyk  
Mary Ann Jackson  
Cynthia Aureli  
Laura Barakat  
Lonnie and Bette Hanauer

### \$500 - \$999

Levin & Risa Agin Levin  
Irene Muldowney  
Martin Barber  
Robert and Kathryn Clark  
Denise Rodgers

### Up to \$499

Ceilia Hicks  
Michael Bischak  
Diana Galer Jaffe  
David Greene  
John MacKay  
Leonard Levin  
Joan Walsh  
Robert Foster  
Carol Jenkins  
Nicole Butler  
Brenda Smith  
Jessica Zorola  
John Buschman  
John Antonacos  
Sheri Ferguson  
Farhana Rahman  
Khalif Miller  
Janice Frazier  
Londela Yvette Bryant  
Ryan Horn

# 2025

## \$10,000+

Thomas Tobin  
Sallyanne Floria

## \$5,000 - \$9,999

Mary Ann Jackson  
Ivy Wu

## \$1,000 - \$4,999

J Adamczyk  
George Alvites  
Jeffrey Plaut  
Laura Barakat  
Irene Muldowney

## \$500 - \$999

Levin & Risa Agin Levin  
Lonnie and Bette Hanauer  
Martin Barber  
Robert and Kathryn Clark  
Ceilia Hicks  
Denise Rodgers

## Up to \$499

Leonard Epstein  
John and Carol Jordano  
Diana Galer Jaffe  
Michiko Schwab  
David Greene  
Michael Brenner  
Aurelio La Rotta  
John Buschman  
Joan Walsh  
Khaatim Sherrer El  
Alice Horton Mays  
Leonard Levin  
Jeanette Marable  
Tint Tint Yap  
Robert Foster  
Janice Frazier  
Tim Van Wie  
Denise Williams  
Jenise Grice Reedus  
Ro Gela Washington  
Cori Corum Abdus-Sabur

# WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM

This year, we had the distinct honor of hosting a special event that brought together national and local leadership in an inspiring celebration of community and progress. United Way of Greater Newark welcomed the President and CEO of United Way Worldwide as part of our Women's Leadership Symposium, a powerful gathering focused on elevating women's voices, advancing equity, and strengthening our collective impact. The event served as a unique opportunity to engage with thought leaders, highlight the vital role of women in shaping our communities, and reinforce our shared mission across the United Way network.



# LOOKING AHEAD



# Advancing ALICE Empowerment Through Innovation and Leadership

As we move into the next phase of our three-year strategic plan, United Way of Greater Newark remains focused on deepening our impact and advancing equity for ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) households. In the coming year, we are laying the groundwork for a bold expansion in three critical areas:

- **Policy Leadership for ALICE Empowerment:** We are beginning to explore a more active role in policy leadership, working to influence systems and structures that directly affect ALICE families. Our goal is to be a catalyst for change, amplifying community voices and advocating for sustainable solutions.
- **Diversifying Funding Through Leadership Giving:** To strengthen and sustain our mission, we are establishing new leadership giving groups aimed at cultivating deeper donor engagement and expanding our funding base. These groups will offer opportunities for community leaders and supporters to invest more intentionally in long-term change.
- **Innovative Collaborations for Asset Building:** We are actively exploring new partnerships and collaborative models to help ALICE households build financial stability and long-term assets. This includes initiatives focused on upskilling, employer-sponsored emergency savings, Collective Investment Trusts (CIT), and shared housing models, all designed to empower working families and create pathways to economic mobility.

Through strategic innovation, cross-sector collaboration, and a continued focus on equity, United Way of Greater Newark is poised to lead with purpose and deliver lasting impact.



## Be the Change in Greater Newark

Ready to create a lasting impact in our community? United Way of Greater Newark offers powerful ways for you to get involved. Join a dedicated network of community leaders in Women United, lend your unique skills and passion as a hands-on volunteer, or make a donation to directly support vital programs in education, health, and financial stability.

Every contribution of your time, talent, or resources helps build a stronger, more equitable community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. Visit our [website](#) today to explore these opportunities and find the one that's right for you.



## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Mary Ann Jackson**  
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**Tint Tint Yap**  
Vice Chair / Chair RD Committee

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