

Racine Vocational Ministry Success Story

Endel, a simple and straightforward man, had goals that were like those of many others. He wanted to take care of his mother, to take care of his kids, and get a living wage job in the trades, hopefully as a carpenter. He knew his criminal background was going to be a challenge but he forged ahead anyway.

Here in Racine County, with a seven percent unemployment rate, many families find themselves barely getting by, only dreaming of a day when they can start saving for things like a home, college funds or retirement.

United Way is working to transform these dreams into reality. By funding agencies like Racine Vocational Ministry and working in partnership with Racine County Human Services Department and the Workforce Development Center, we're helping more families like Endel's move toward long-term self-sufficiency.

Endel found Racine Vocational Ministry (RVM) in April of 2003. With their help he applied to numerous jobs. While Endel was pounding the pavement, RVM worked with Express Personnel to identify a company that was willing to overlook his past and give him a chance. With the help of RVM, after 11 months with a moving company Endel was placed in an electrical workers apprenticeship program. While working days, Endel spent his weekends and evenings studying construction math, the basics of electronics, getting his CDL and preparing for his union testing.

In July, 2004, Endel passed the apprenticeship program with flying colors and soon found a well-paying job. Today Endel is a home owner, and he is able to spend time giving back to the Racine community. He is working on developing the Mayor's Summer Jobs Program and continues to mentor others. Endel currently makes \$18 an hour, but more importantly has a transformed life!

Endel is just one of the individuals benefiting from this United Way program. Last year Racine Vocational Ministry helped 253 people achieve gainful employment. Of these, 177 people found jobs where they have been employed for six months or more.

When you give to United Way, it's an investment in your community ... and in hard working people like Endel.

Women's Resource Center Success Story

Sarah was a young woman who was doing her best to support herself and two children. She found herself in a situation that she had never imagined. She filed a restraining order against her abusive husband, Anthony, to try to get her life on track. Unfortunately, with no family support Sarah resorted to violating the restraining order so that her husband could watch the children while she worked a late evening job. While Anthony continued his abusive behavior, the cycle of violence perpetuated resulting in more police calls, frustration on the part of law enforcement, and Sarah feeling hopeless.

Here in Racine County Sarah's story is not as rare as one may hope. Each year there are hundreds of domestic abuse incidents. Most recent statistics list 170 violations of domestic orders, and 161 counts of criminal damage to property and 102 felony cases involving battery. Children are often witnesses to these incidents.

United Way of Racine County is working to transform these stories of fear and desperation into strength, accomplishment and renewal. By funding programs like Women's Resource Center, an emergency shelter for victims of abuse, and Bethany Apartments, a transitional living center for women who are putting their lives back together, we are able to offer hope.

Through Women's Resource Center in Burlington, Sarah received the guidance she needed to get out of this abusive situation. Many organizations pulled together to make sure that her children received proper child care services, while Sarah secured financial assistance. Because of the safety net of these collaborative services, Sarah was able to obtain employment and attend Gateway Technical College becoming the first person in her family to receive a high school diploma. "For the first time, I'm in control," said Sarah. "I'm determined to succeed for both myself and my children."

Sarah's family is just one of the families benefiting from United Way. When you give to United Way, it's an investment in your community ... and in families like Sarah's.

SAFE Haven Youth Shelter Success Story

David, a fourteen year old, had been listed as a runaway for two months and had not been attending school. David was brought to the SAFE Haven Youth Shelter late one night, and the staff on duty knew that he was in dire need of assistance. David appeared scared, tired and hungry.

At a very young age David's mother had abandoned his family due to alleged alcohol and other drug problems. His father never remarried and had been raising David alone for more than five years. Things took a turn for the worst when David's father began drinking and was having a hard time holding down a job. The stability that David needed in his life began to crumble around him as his father lost virtually everything and was unable to take care of him.

There are many children in the Racine community who are suffering from the issues that David faced. Last year 206 children were served by the SAFE Haven Youth Shelter, as they dealt with problems ranging from emotional and/or physical abuse, sexual abuse, pregnancy, HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases, and possibly other issues related to alcohol or other drug abuse. Many of these youth also typically experience problems such as poor academic performance, tardiness, absenteeism, truancy, and suspensions, which lead them down a dangerous life path.

United Way of Racine County is focused on giving all children the chance to reach their full potential. By partnering with agencies and organizations like SAFE Haven Youth Shelter, the Racine County Family Violence Community Coalition, the Racine Youth Community Coalition, the Homeless Assistance Coalition of Racine, and local YMCA and YWCAs in the area, your United Way is trying to create a continuum of services that ensure that youth in Racine can receive help and guidance, no matter what kinds of issues they are dealing with in their lives.

And it works. David entered the SAFE Haven Youth Shelter and finally got a good night's rest. After going through individual counseling sessions, it was found that the he would not be able to find much needed stability back at home with his father. By working with Racine County Human Services a foster home was identified where David felt comfortable. Today he has a new home and has been successfully reinstated in school hopeful that his life will continue to improve.

David is just one of the children benefiting from United Way partner providers. Each year thousands of children and their parents receive helping hands to improve their lives.

When you give to United Way of Racine County, it is an investment in your community... and young people like David.

Racine Family Literacy Success Story

Maria, a young mother of two, was struggling because of her inability to read or write and to do things that many consider everyday activities. Having only completed a 2nd grade education in Mexico, Maria was shy and very nervous when spoken to in English.

There are many hard working families in the Racine community who are struggling with issues of literacy and English language skills. United Way is committed to providing families opportunities to succeed. By working in partnership with programs like Racine Family Literacy, Catholic Charities Hispanic Outreach, and Racine Literacy Council, United Way helps families get the skills and resources they need.

Starting with learning letters and sounds in English, Maria has worked hard and her Basic English Skills Test score has gone from 4 to 31 (up 2 ESL levels). She is proud to be making doctor's appointments for herself and was able to apply for a job for the first time in her life. Maria hopes to one day help others the way that she was helped by working for Racine Family Literacy.

More than \$160,000 is invested in outreach and literacy programs each year by the United Way, and nearly 4,000 people directly benefit from literacy programs throughout Racine County. When you contribute to United Way, we all benefit from families who are able to contribute productively to our community.

Next Generation Now Success Story

Sarah is a single parent of four children. In addition to caring for her children she is also caring for two small brothers, a sister and a niece, as her other family members could not care for them. The ages of these eight kids ranges from seven months to fourteen years. Although she is struggling to make ends meet, Sarah says, "There is no way that I can allow these children to fall into the hands of the system." When things got really tough for Sarah the Racine County Human Services department referred Sarah to a United Way partner provider organization, Next Generation Now.

Each year, hundreds of Racine families face crisis situations. Because of a variety of circumstances impacting low income families, children are not able to receive support that they require in their most vulnerable years. The effects are long-reaching even into adulthood.

Next Generation Now (NGN) was developed in partnership with numerous community groups and with strong support from United Way of Racine County. NGN is a child development and family support center that helps parents take responsibility for their children. When families are in crisis, NGN makes sure that their emergency needs are met and children experience a safe and nurturing environment.

It works. When NGN workers visited Sarah's house for the first time, they found holes in the walls and broken windows. The eight children and Sarah were sharing three bedrooms. It had been years since the children had been to a doctor. Over time, with NGN's help, all of the children received needed immunizations. It was also discovered that one child had to have her tonsils removed and another had a tumor in her stomach. Both problems were addressed quickly, and the children are now healthy.

Sarah was also able to find a bigger apartment that provided the space for her family. Today Sarah works at a Navy base in Illinois while the children are **at** school. **The** family gets to enjoy being together in the evenings.

Sarah and her family are only one of the many families benefiting from this United Way program. Last year nearly 700 individuals, parents and children in Racine County, benefited from NGN programming.

When you give to United Way, you are giving children like Sarah's the chance to grow up healthy, and the opportunity to look towards their future with hope.

Children's Service Society Success Story

Stephen, a 60 year old man, was doing his best to support two children, ages eight and ten as a single parent. John, the younger of the children, began therapy through Children's Service Society when he was admitted for behavior problems at school. Lauren, the older child, began therapy due to "running the house" and anger control problems. Stephen felt helpless. He had to deal with feelings of guilt over the children not having a mother and anxiety regarding feelings that "the kids won't love me if I set limits."

In Racine County and across the nation, families are dealing with a range of emotional issues that are affecting their ability to communicate and live healthy and safe lives.

United Way of Racine County is working to provide families and their children with opportunities for professional therapy regardless of their ability to pay. By funding programs like Children's Service Society of Southeastern Wisconsin, we are taking the next steps to nurture and assist families who are struggling.

Children's Service Society provided family therapy for Stephen, John and Lauren. After sessions of family therapy along with meeting with a therapist on his own, Stephen began to develop as a parent. The children's behavior began to improve dramatically. John, diagnosed with ADHD, is now involved in sports teams, something that was not possible when he was acting out in school. Lauren has improved her school grades, has been more respectful of authoritative figures, and has decreased her tendency to act as a parent within the household.

"For the first time, I feel like a good father," said Stephen. "I have great kids and I want to give them the best of everything. This program is helping us do that."

Families across Racine are benefiting from the work of Children's Service Society. Last year 360 individuals were assisted by their Child and Family Therapy Program.

When you give to United Way, you are giving people like John a chance to be the best parent possible.

Bray Center Success Story

Brian, a middle child of three, was not a particularly gifted athlete, but that never stopped him from going to the George Bray Neighborhood Center to join in a game of basketball. His mother died when he was just nine years old, and Brian continued to utilize the Bray Center for support through his grieving process. He was placed in one of the basketball teams that got to play in front of a crowd and also began participating in Bray Life Skills that included study tables and pre-college program activities.

Brian was interested in business from a young age. “When my senior year in high school started to approach, I had no one to guide me through the process of applying for colleges,” says Brian. “I am thankful that through the Bray Center I was exposed to everything from college tours to career guidance. I think it’s by the grace of God I had the mind to go to college.”

According to *Racine County Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors*, in 2006, only 39 percent of Racine County students reported feeling like they have control over the things that happen to them. Fifty-six percent reported having a sense of purpose to their lives.

Caring for Kids Priority programs, those United Way funded programs that prepare children and youth for productive adulthood, recognize the individual struggles and assets that today’s youth carry with them. Focusing on what these children are capable of and building their self-esteem sometimes allows them to see things that they never dreamed were possible.

Today Brian is twenty-two years old and holds a bachelor’s degree from University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point with a double major in French and International Business. He is currently working on his MBA at Cardinal Stritch College.

When you give to United Way, you give children the chance to dream of a bright future.