



# Success Stories: HEALTH



United Way  
of Racine County

## Health Care Network

Joel had been a patient of Health Care Network since 2014. Joel is a monolingual, Spanish-speaking, uninsured immigrant of limited literacy from Oaxaca, Mexico. He was seeking solutions to his inexplicable, constant thirst and urination, sudden loss of more than 20 pounds, and relentless fatigue.

The diagnosis of diabetes came as a surprise to him. He had heard the term before, but he had no idea it would play such a large role in his life. Health Care Network was quick to turn Joel's unanswered questions into a better understanding of his condition. Thanks to the care and coordination of volunteer doctors, nutritionists, and bilingual medical assistants, Joel learned how to use a glucose meter, monitor his blood sugar, administer insulin, read nutritional labels, and manage his weight through limited carbohydrates and daily exercise. Joel was able to attain a fasting blood sugar under 100H and won his diabetes support group's title of "Most Improved."

Thanks to Health care Network's intervention, Joel is today a healthy, active husband and father of two.

Health Care Network provides low-income Racine County residents who have no health insurance with access to health and dental care services. From 2016-17, Health care Network served more than 2,000 clients, offering appointments, prescriptions, and healthcare resources.

## Family Service of Racine

One year ago, Ashley began having panic attacks while trying to get to school. Every time she thought about going to school, she felt physically ill and would begin crying uncontrollably. She needed help, so she began attending weekly therapy sessions at Family Service of Racine.

Ashley learned that she was experiencing panic attacks and began recognizing triggers for her anxiety. Many things made her feel anxious, but she especially feared learning to drive and thinking about her future. Ashley began practicing coping skills to soothe her anxiety and seeking role models, such as her favorite musicians, who had been through similar mental health problems.

Ashley now has her license and drives daily without anxiety. She is attending highschool online and making plans to attend a local college when she graduates. Because she has discovered a passion to help others understand themselves and cope with mental illness, Ashley is considering a degree in psychology. Ashley shared, "Not only did Family Service of Racine change my life directly, they also inspired me to take the necessary steps to change my own life. I am forever grateful."

Family Service of Racine's Counseling and Psychotherapy Program provides counseling to Racine County residents. From 2016-17, it served nearly 900 clients.





# Success Stories: EDUCATION



## Knapp Elementary: Chiquita

Chiquita is a single mother who was worn out by her daily commute from Waukegan to Racine. She needed a job near her home and family—which she found at Knapp Elementary, the community school her two children attend.

Knapp, as a community school designed with the LIFT model, transformed Chiquita's role into more than just a job. Chiquita discovered a new quality of life through Knapp's amazing programs, provided in partnership with United Way. Through Knapp activities such as the FAST program, she and her family began to enjoy weekly dinners, parenting support, homework help, and quality time together. When her children attended student-specific programs on their own, Chiquita's shortened commute gave her enough time to participate in evening classes to gain additional certifications.

Chiquita was empowered by the chance to build a stronger family and a stronger education. She now supports other local parents as a lead for a school parent group. Through this group she engages families and empowers them to advocate for their children's education. She embodies the LIVE UNITED philosophy: United We Fight, United We Win.

Last year, 52 percent of Knapp Elementary students participated in various afterschool programs offering meals, mental health services, tutoring, and more. Of these students, 85 percent had zero office discipline referrals.

## Imagination Library

Heather Martinez and her family are strong believers in Imagination Library's ability to prepare children for school, but they didn't realize that Imagination Library would become more than an educational opportunity in their lives.

Heather was drawn in the program's free resources, which she saw as a means to supplement Marcus' daycare learning opportunities. However, she later discovered Imagination Library was more than an educational resource; it provided her son with fulfillment and her family with a new bonding ritual.

Marcus Martinez, Heather's son, is her second child to participate in Imagination Library. "[Marcus] is so excited when a new book arrives in the mail," Heather shares. "We always read the new story that night and continue to read on other nights as well. It's become a bedtime ritual for him to pick out a book and read it together with my other children."

After seeing the benefits this United Way program has brought to her home, Heather has been inspired to share the impact United Way has for the whole community. "I am not only a volunteer and donor, but a huge advocate, and will continue to be. [ . . . ] I am a strong believer in educating our children to encourage them to be ready for school and have a better future."

Imagination Library provides Racine County children under the age of five with one free, age-appropriate book each month in the mail. Since its inception, Imagination Library has served more than 7,000 children and provided more than 120,000 books.



# Success Stories: EDUCATION



## Schools of Hope

Tina C., a North Park Elementary School tutor, shared, “My third grader could not comprehend anything she was reading. She knew words very well but didn’t know what she was reading. I explained to her that reading could be more enjoyable if she made pictures in her head of what was going on in the story. This made an impact, and she began to understand more of what she was reading. By the end of our last session she was recalling much of what she had read. Such a great feeling to know that such a small amount of committed time can have such a huge impact on a young one’s learning.”



Laura Francart, a teacher at North Park Elementary School, shared, “Of my three students working with Schools of Hope, two now read above grade level, and their comprehension has strengthened. My third student is reading at grade level and has improved comprehension. I have enjoyed watching the progress being made and the excitement on my students’ faces to work with their tutors.” Schools of Hope provides young children with tutors on a regular basis to increase reading achievement in the early grades. During the 2017-18 school year, more than 200 volunteers completed nearly 6,500 tutoring sessions with 135 students.

## Big Brothers Big Sisters of Racine and Kenosha Counties

11-year-old Trenten didn’t have a great relationship with his father. To help Trenten find a positive male role model, Trenten’s mom signed him up for a “big brother” through Outcome-Based One-to-One Mentoring, and Tom and Trenten were matched.

Tom quickly became a father figure for Trenten—helping him with homework, taking him out to eat, and helping him discover his greater potential. Trenten discovered his charitable side through Tom’s influence, and they began volunteering together at community events. When Trenten turned 16, he started his first job at McDonald’s thanks to Tom’s help.

While Trenten is not so little anymore, his relationship with Tom has only grown. In June of 2017, Trenten graduated high school and prepared to pursue a degree in sports management at Gateway College. Although Tom’s mentorship of Trenten was only required to last one year, they still meet regularly, seven years later.

“From day one, he has made an impact in my life,” Trenten said. “He has a big heart and looks for nothing in return for his kindness. There aren’t many people in the world that compare to Tom, and that’s what makes him even more special. Tom has not only become a close friend of mine, but more importantly, he became my dad.”

Through the Outcome-Based One-to-One Mentoring program run by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Racine and Kenosha Counties, volunteer mentors devote a year of meeting with an assigned Little—a six- to 18-year-old child facing adversity. From 2016-17, this program served matched nearly 90 Littles with mentors.



# Success Stories: FINANCIAL STABILITY



## VITA

David is a veteran who works for Veteran's Outreach of Wisconsin, which is committed to assisting homeless and at-risk veterans in returning to a life of normalcy. It hosts a tiny home village and provides food, clothing, shelter, and other basic needs to help veterans acclimate back into their community. During the 2017 tax season, David had his taxes filed with the help of United Way's VITA—Volunteer Income Tax Assistance. His participation in VITA sparked a conversation between United Way and Veteran's Outreach, which partnered to bring financial literacy classes and a VITA site to the residents of Veteran's Outreach. These financial stability resources became available to veterans starting in 2018.

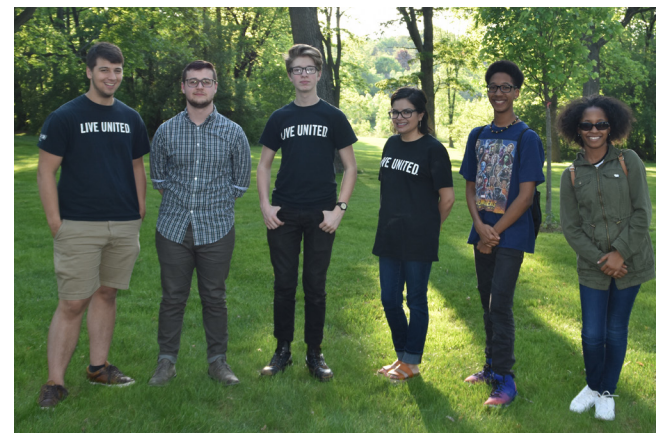


Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) is a national program staffed by local volunteers to provide free preparation and electronic filing of federal and state tax returns for any individual who earns less than \$54,000 annually. In the last two years since its return to Racine County, VITA has returned more than \$1.6 million to local taxpayers.

## Youth As Resources

Youth as Resources empowers young people to make a positive difference in Racine County through grant making and community service. Its grants fund youth-designed, youth-led community service and service learning projects. All funded projects feature youth under age 24 as planners and volunteers who creatively address specific community needs.

Shane Smiley, YAR board member, shared, "The best part of being part of the YAR board is seeing the enthusiastic youth who want to implement community service through a creative and insightful



project. This has helped me see just how truly our youth want to make a change in our community."

"The best part of my project, 'Donate Food and Spread the Love Award,' was seeing the joy on the faces of the residents at Bethany. Seeing them so happy made it all worth it," shared Marissa Polzin, YAR grant recipient.





# Success Stories: FINANCIAL STABILITY



## Bethany Apartments

After 20 years of abuse from her husband, M fled her home in Illinois to start a new life. M was in her 60s, disabled, and had left all her documents behind. She needed all the support she could get—so in June 2015, she came to Bethany Apartments. Here M began working to regain her independence.

Her first step was the challenging process of applying for food share and Medicaid. She needed to close her case in Illinois before she could collect Wisconsin benefits, but this was no easy task with no documents in her possession. Through diligent work, she eventually gathered her paperwork and started receiving benefits.

This was just the first in a series of victories. Soon after, M filed for divorce. She enrolled with Aurora Health Care to address her diabetes and high blood pressure. She researched job opportunities, attained work assistance, and began employment with American Greetings. Finally, M overcame a low credit score and moved into an apartment of her own. Bethany Apartments' support, and M's hard work, gained her a healthier, more independent life—which Bethany Apartments sees as just the start to the great things she will accomplish.

Bethany Apartments provides women and children escaping domestic violence with transitional housing and services to help them gain independence. Clients can receive financial stability education, support for substance abuse and physical and mental health conditions, and access to transportation, childcare, clothing, and other resources required for working. From 2016-17, nearly 40 Racine County residents received Bethany Apartments' services.

## The Veteran Village

The Veteran Village houses 21 homeless veterans, providing them with community and support to reintegrate into their lives. This support includes volunteer coach matches and financial workshops to increase veterans' mastery of budgets, credit, taxes, and more, hosted by United Way.

One resident, Alex, lived with a substance-use disorder. As a result, he came to the Village without income and separated from his wife. At first, he wondered how the village's workshops could help him when he had no money to manage. However, a facilitator encouraged him to keep learning so that he would have a strong financial management foundation in place in time for his next job. Alex continued to attend, and the money management workshops quickly enabled him to gain a job and an apartment. He is no longer using drugs and has since reunited with his wife.





# Success Stories: BASIC NEEDS



## Camp Kinder

Will Anderson is an 11-year-old boy diagnosed with Congenital Cerebellar Hypoplasia, or “small cerebellum.” This causes motor skill and cognitive delays. While Will is non-verbal, he can answer “yes” and “no” questions and uses some sign language, through which he can convey his wants and needs.

For three years, Will has attended Camp Kinder, a youth summer camp organized through RADD that provides activities for disabled youth. When Will’s mom, Julie, asks him about his experience with Camp Kinder, he has nothing but positive experiences to report. He enjoys participating in field trips to downtown Racine and finds the atmosphere fun and inclusive.

“Will, what do you think of your camp during the summer?” Julie asks.

“Yes,” says Will.

“When you go out on field trips in public with your camp, do you get nervous or scared?”

“No,” says Will.

“Does being out in the city make you want to help other people?”

“Yes, yes, yes.”

“When you get older, would you want a job in downtown Racine?”

Will pauses to think, then replies, “Yes, yes, yes.”

UWRC funds RADD to support programs like Camp Kinder, which gives disabled people chances to build skills in daily living, health/wellness, socializing, independence, and community integration.

## SAFE Haven

Unable to manage stressful household dynamics on her own, Caitlyn was a chronic runaway by the time she turned 16. This placed her at risk for human trafficking—so she came to SAFE Haven for support.

The staff learned Caitlyn had been running away to escape a communication breakdown and poor relationship with her mom, so they helped her set goals to improve this relationship.

Her mother initially attended weekly family sessions with her; however, she became impatient with the slow process of change and refused to continue participating. Despite her mother’s lack of support, Caitlyn continued to independently attend sessions.

Caitlyn was eventually diagnosed with bipolar disorder. By working with SAFE Haven to understand this diagnosis and find resources to treat it, she learned how to manage her condition. With time, SAFE Haven helped her overcome many of her barriers and live a safer, happier life.

As of 2017, Caitlyn graduated high school, found a job, and enrolled in Gateway Technical College’s cosmetology program. Thanks to SAFE Haven’s support, she grew into a resilient woman and is optimistic about her future.

Caitlyn is just one of more than 350 youth SAFE Haven helped from 2016-17. SAFE Haven of Racine Youth Shelter and Outreach Programs provides free support to homeless and runaway youth from 10 to 17 years old. With the help of staff—and parents, when possible—youth establish goals and plans to overcome challenges and become more successful.