

United Way  
of Racine County

LIVE UNITED



# 2015-2016 COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS REPORT



The Harwood Institute, founded and led by Rich Harwood, has partnered with some of the world's largest nonprofit networks including United Way Worldwide, AARP, Goodwill Industries International, the American Library Association, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and others to spread its approach. United Ways around the world have integrated Rich Harwood's community engagement approach into their daily work. Since November 2013, United Way of Racine County has hosted a number of kitchen table-style discussions called **Community Conversations** based on Harwood's model.

Community Conversations are designed to provide a safe environment to share and collect feedback from community members of various ages, backgrounds, ethnicities, and experiences. In the 2015-16 Community Conversations cycle, United Way used different approaches to engage a total of 162 people in discussions about our community. Through these conversations, United Way gains public knowledge to inform decision making and ensures that its work is centered around improving the quality of life of Racine County residents. United Way will continue to Turn Outward through Community Conversations as it works to **build an educated workforce** and create opportunities for a better life for all.

United Way of Racine County shares the Community Conversations findings each year with community leaders and the public to engage, focus and align efforts with the needs and concerns of community members. The themes listed below emerged from six conversations held during the 2015-16 cycle that followed the same model. The themes are listed in order of frequency and include a comparison to previous years findings. Findings from conversations in 2015-16 using different approaches are also included in the following pages.

MAJOR THEMES	DESCRIPTION	YEAR-TO-YEAR COMPARISON:2013-15
<b>Employability of Workforce</b>	Participants identified a mismatch of skill sets to business needs as a barrier to sustainable jobs and economic growth for our community.	Employability and employment have been a consistent concern for participants. It was the top concern during the 2014-15 conversations—up from fourth place in 2013-14.
<b>Education</b>	Participants indicated the community has a solid education system that often received negative criticism. Increased parental engagement in schools was a main topic. They also listed a need for better post-secondary education opportunities that are more affordable.	Collaboration between families and schools has been listed in both previous years findings as well as graduation and post-high school attainment. Education has maintained a #2 or higher ranking since 2013-14.
<b>Leadership</b>	Participants were discouraged by community leadership including government, education and business leadership. They wished for more collaboration and accountability. They also recommended more engagement by community members and leadership development for our community's youth.	Leadership concerns did not appear on the list in 2014-15, but was ranked fifth in 2013-14. That year, participants expressed a need for leaders who are diverse, engaged and support change.
<b>Image/ Reputation of Community</b>	Participants were able to identify numerous natural resources and activities that are a positive aspect of Racine County. Despite this, participants agreed that there is a negative perception of the community by not only non-residents but also those who live here. Participants felt that the negative reputation is resulting in a pessimistic generational cycle, stunting growth across the board.	Despite being listed in the top themes this cycle, the reputation of the community was not in a top category in 2014-15. It was ranked as the fifth highest theme in 2013-14 where participants were concerned with the impact of a negative image on economic development.

Participants expressed concerns about community resources and a network of support for residents. They acknowledged that many community resources are available but there may be a lack of awareness. Transportation and diversity/inclusion concerns were also discussed.

## CHILD HARBOR LEARNING CENTER - YOUTH PROGRAMMING

In October 2015, United Way held a Community Conversation at the Child Harbor Learning Center to receive feedback on youth programming from individuals who work in the field. Seven participants indicated there were vast opportunities for activity in our community. However, the challenges presented by participants revolved around:

- Transportation - difficult for families to travel to programs
- Funding - not all families have the ability to afford extracurricular activities
- Programming - availability for all groups/ages, but especially middle school
- Investment in youth - not viewed as a priority by the community

Participants committed to spreading awareness of available programs and aspired to identify one umbrella organization to connect all programs.

## WADEWITZ ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

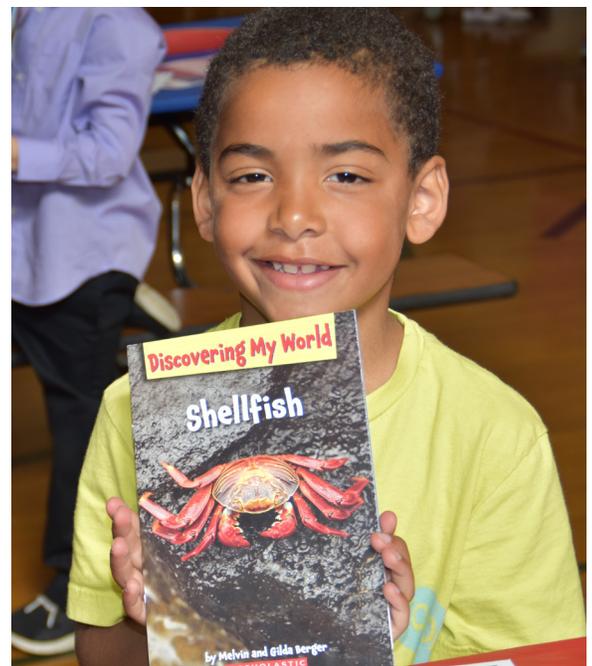
In November 2015, Wadewitz Elementary School hosted four simultaneous Community Conversations with their staff to hear about their insights on the strengths and challenges in the school. More than 40 employees answered questions that were specifically formatted for Wadewitz Elementary School.

### Strengths

- School administration and support staff
- Title 1 designation and funding access
- Student of the Week program
- Special Education department
- Bilingual program

### Challenges

- Parent involvement
- Poverty (children with unmet basic needs leading to behavior problems)
- Quantity of new initiatives and short implementation timelines



Based on this conversation, staff listed potential changes to improve their workday. Some of those suggestions include: restructuring breakfast period and recess, increased staff training on new initiatives, less time required for students on computers and more time spent on soft skills.

## NAMI RACINE - MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health was ranked as the fifth highest theme during the 2014-15 Conversations. In February 2016, United Way partnered with NAMI Racine to host a Conversation specifically on mental health issues in our community. Ten of NAMI's clients participated in the Conversation and shared their thoughts. They outlined the positive aspects of our community, specifically NAMI and other mental health agencies, the County Executive's engagement in mental health issues, mental health training received by law enforcement, and *Bridging the Gaps*, an anti-stigma initiative led by United Way, NAMI and Infinite Potential Central. They listed the biggest challenges the community faces in mental health as the inadequate number of medical prescribers (case loads are too large) and difficulties with public transportation (routes cut).

## TURN OUTWARD TALKS

United Way employed Rich Harwood's "ask exercise" to implement *Turn Outward Talks* in the spring of 2016. *Turn Outward Talks* allow United Way to hear from a diverse group of community members in a short period of time. The model includes a simple 3-10 minute conversation where participants are asked only four questions:

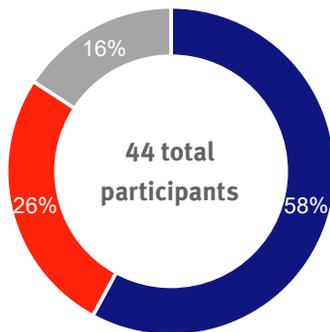
1. If you could create the perfect community, what would it look like?
2. What are the strengths of your community?
3. What are some challenges facing our community?
4. In your opinion, what are some things that need to happen to address these challenges?

### 2016 Participants/Locations:

- United Way employees
- YWCA: Dress For Success
- Piggly Wiggly – Union Grove
- Attendees of the Imagination Library Expansion Event at Regency Mall

### Top Themes:

**Safety:** Participants expressed the desire to live in safe, quiet neighborhoods with low crime, less violence and neighbors who care about and watch out for each other. Some described a safe community as a having a "small town" feeling, where everyone knows each other and members are supportive.



■ Safety ■ Community Events ■ Education

**Community Events:** Participants would like to see more community events, all agreeing the events should be family centered, with a high prioritization on activities for youth. Some participants were concerned that there are little to no activities for youth seven years and younger.

**Education:** People interviewed indicated there needed to be more focus on education in the community. Participants were concerned about unemployment due to unmatched skill sets.

### Turn Outward Talk Comments

- "People have a hard time finding a good paying jobs due to lack of skills or education."
- "Community members need to come together and take action to create the community they want to see."
- "People aren't working together. They'd rather stay negative because it's easier."
- "We need to invest in preparing for the future in our high schools."
- "Our community comes together in a crisis, but not on a day-to-day basis."
- "Our community has so many resources, but nobody knows how to access them."
- "Areas of our community need more growth—retail outlets and restaurants—to make people want to stay."
- "The Community Policing program is the best thing going for our city right now."
- "Everyone needs to come together, be open-minded and united."
- "Public needs to be invited to and have better access to community meetings. We'd be more engaged if we were part of the process."
- "City needs to be marketed better, advertising the good things."
- "Parents need to be more involved with their children and their education."

# WHO WE'VE HEARD FROM

2015-16 CYCLE

During the 2015-16 Community Conversation sessions, 118 participants shared their perspectives on Racine County. In addition, 44 people participated in the Turn Outward Talks. The participant demographics shown on this page represent those who completed the optional survey. The majority of responses were from White female Millennials with a four-year degree who work in the city of Racine.

## 2015-16 PARTICIPANTS

Eleven conversations were hosted from October 2015 to April 2016. United Way engaged with 118 participants representing the following groups:

- Individuals involved with youth programming
- Western Racine County community members
- Female business owners
- Leadership Racine participants
- NAMI Racine
- Greening Greater Racine
- Hispanic community members
- Wadewitz Elementary School staff (4)



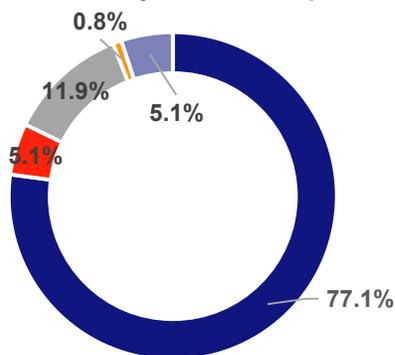
67% FEMALE



27% MALE

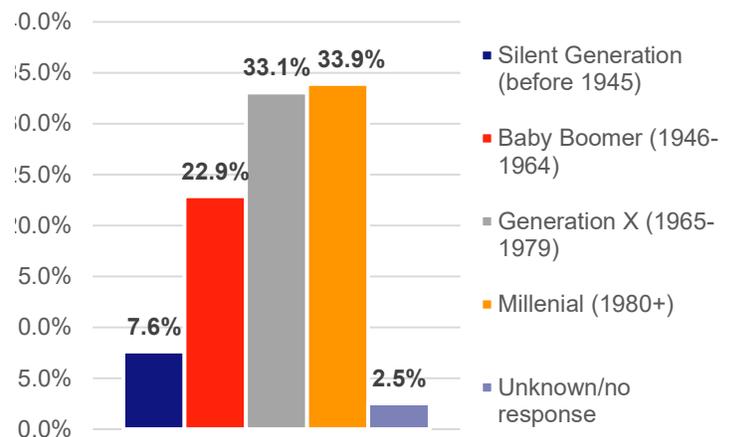
Please note: 6% of participant gender was unknown.

### Race/Ethnicity-118 Responses

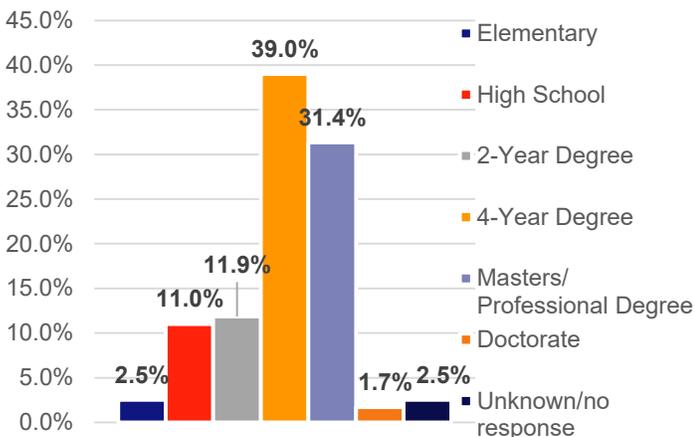


- White/Caucasian
- Black/African American
- Hispanic/Latino
- Indian/Alaskan
- Other/Unknown/no response

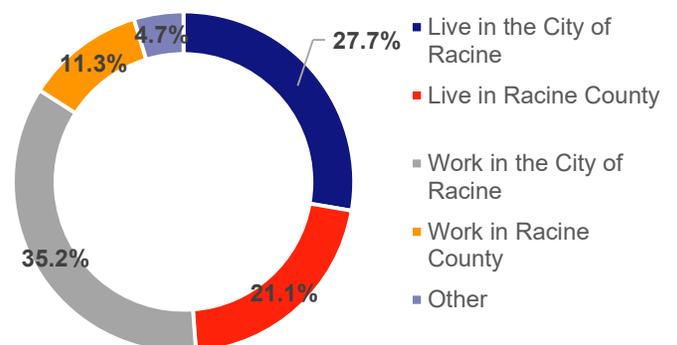
### Age-118 Responses



### Education Level-118 Responses



### Work/Residence-213 Responses

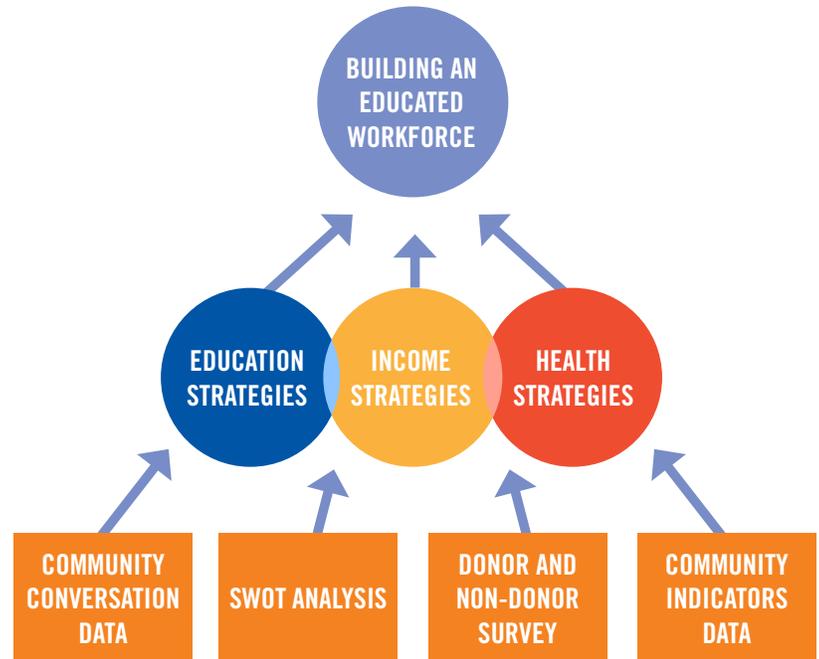


Please note: participants may have chosen more than one option.

# WHAT WE'VE DONE

As Rich Harwood states, “Only when you gain a deep and authentic understanding of the nature of the community and people’s lives can you understand the conditions you must create for change to come about.” By Turning Outward and making more intentional judgments and choices in creating change, individuals and organizations will produce greater impact and relevance in a community. That’s why Community Conversations have been a vital part of United Way’s strategic planning process over the last three years.

The data collected through the conversations confirmed that United Way’s focus on **building an educated workforce** is appropriate. The findings also helped United Way determine the impact goals for Racine County in education, income and health and the numerous strategies to achieve them.



MAJOR THEMES	HOW UNITED WAY IS ADDRESSING THE THEMES
<b>Employability of Workforce</b>	Employability of the workforce is a major concern for United Way, and the strategic plan focuses on building an educated workforce for today and tomorrow. United Way will employ education, income and health strategies to address the issue.
<b>Education</b>	Education is a focus for United Way. Our goal is for students to graduate high school with the knowledge, skills and motivation to succeed in college, vocational training or career. In partnership with Racine Unified, United Way is implementing Racine County’s first Community School at Knapp Elementary. A community school’s integrated focus on academics, services, supports, and opportunities leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities.
<b>Leadership</b>	United Way has the unique ability to bring people together to find solutions to our community’s most pressing issues. We will continue to share public knowledge and act as a leader in convening and mobilizing individuals and organizations to take action.
<b>Image/Reputation of Community</b>	There are many individuals and organizations that are making a positive impact. By providing findings of the Community Conversations to community leaders and the public on an annual basis, United Way is working to keep individuals informed on the progress of community issues and address misconceptions.

## RICH HARWOOD VISITS RACINE COUNTY

On October 20, 2015, Rich Harwood, founder and president of Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, visited Racine County as the keynote speaker at the 2015 Nonprofit Leadership Conference at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside Student Center.

Harwood's transformational work has spread to thousands of communities nationally and worldwide - from small towns to large cities - through concrete methods he has created and honed for more than 25 years. At the conference, Harwood discussed his involvement in Newtown, Connecticut's decision making process on the future of Sandy Hook Elementary School after the tragic shooting of 20 children and six adults in December 2012. As the facilitator of the process, he dealt with many high emotions and differing opinions, but ultimately helped the community come to a unanimous decision to build a new school on the existing site. In his office today he still has a sign from Newton that reads, "Our collective strength and resiliency will serve as an example for the rest of the world." He urged the audience to continue to choose the path of possibility and hope.



Following the conference, Harwood continued to share his message at the **"Reclaiming Main Street Community Leader Luncheon"** for Racine County business, civic, education, and nonprofit leaders, as well as at an afternoon session entitled, **"Putting Community into Collective Impact,"** which acknowledges the idea that a collective impact approach holds enormous promise for bringing about meaningful change – but only if such action is taken with communities, not apart from them.

Rich Harwood's talks, coaching techniques and practical guides have provided the hope and inspiration for individuals and groups to improve their public and private lives. His visit to Racine County was made possible through the support of CCB Technologies, Racine County, Racine Community Foundation, United Way of Racine County, Lakeside Curative, UW-Parkside, Racine Public Library, and Careers Industries.

# PERCEPTION VS. REALITY

No matter the model used or group convened, there was a consistent negative perception of the progress of the community in a number of areas that did not always match the reality. The following pages show examples from local organizations of work being done currently to impact Racine County residents' lives.



Dr. Lolli Haws, Superintendent  
Racine Unified School District

## EDUCATION: RACINE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

RUSD is making great strides towards improving mental health supports for Racine students. New Beginnings mental health clinics were launched at Wadewitz and S.C. Johnson Elementary schools in fall 2015. The New Beginnings therapists are addressing students' social and emotional needs, leading to better classroom behavior, improved achievement and ultimately a more positive learning environment for all students. Next fall, a third clinic will open at the new Knapp Community Elementary School in partnership with the United Way. RUSD is poised to launch the Academies of Racine at Case, Horlick and Park High Schools this fall with support and partnership from Racine-area businesses, post-secondary institutions and many other community partners. The Academies will provide high school students with rigorous, hands-on, project based learning opportunities that reflect real-world learning.



Brian Albrecht, President  
Gateway Technical College

## EDUCATION: GATEWAY PROMISE

In 2014, the WTCS reports that 91 percent of Gateway graduates live and work in Wisconsin and 75 percent stay in Racine County, Kenosha County and Walworth County, adding to the trained workforce of the region. Racine County was the biggest benefactor of Gateway this year serving 8,520 of the over 22,000 students served. To build a talent pipeline and workforce of the future, Gateway Technical College announced the Gateway Promise in February 2016—a commitment to support families and their students with an affordable pathway to college. The Gateway Promise represents a bright future for our community and workforce as it provides the necessary funding to inspire and support hundreds of young people to stay in our community and pursue their college careers in partnership with local employers.



Jeff Neubauer, Executive Director  
Higher Expectations

## EDUCATION: HIGHER EXPECTATIONS

Higher Expectations has been working with stakeholders – including educators, nonprofits, business partners and civic leaders – to evaluate, modify, build capacity and improve outcomes. In education, they developed a Kindergarten Readiness Checklist, which families and community partners can use to ensure children enter Kindergarten prepared to succeed. They launched a 4K study, which will analyze the impact of half-day and full-day 4K in Racine and AIM Now, a child care program providing full-day 4K to families. They have also piloted strategies at University of Wisconsin-Parkside aimed at improving retention and graduation rates, particularly for students of color. Higher Expectations partnered with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development to launch the Workforce Skills Gap Survey in February 2016. Data from the survey will be used to align educational pipelines with high demand careers, and the education and skills needed to be successful in these careers.



Rodney Prunty, President  
United Way of Racine County

## **INCOME: UNITED WAY-VITA**

In the fall of 2016, United Way will begin work to provide free tax assistance for all Racine County residents through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. The program will assist eligible low-to-moderate wage earning individuals and families to claim tax credits, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), and to encourage them to deposit tax refunds into savings accounts. United Way will provide clients with access to quality financial education programs and financial mentoring by leveraging its multitude of organizational partnerships throughout Racine County. Through collective efforts, United Way aims to increase the number of individuals and families that achieve self-sufficiency and financial stability.



Dan Taivalkoski, Executive Director  
Racine County Food Bank

## **BASIC NEEDS: RACINE COUNTY FOOD BANK**

The Racine County Food Bank efficiently and effectively obtains resources to facilitate the equitable distribution of nutritious food to qualified direct service providers consisting of pantries, shelters, community meal programs and social service agencies located throughout Racine County based on their service numbers. The Food Bank provides these organizations a stable supply of healthy, nutritiously sound food, at no cost, in quantities appropriate for the number of clients that they serve based on dietary guidelines established by the USDA. The Food Bank distributes 1 Million pounds of food each year to these organizations and with our help, they in turn provide over 800,000 meals. The Food Bank works closely with Impact 2-1-1 to manage client traffic to the emergency food pantries. Care is taken to avoid duplication of service and families in crisis can often be directed to other resources that may be helpful.



John Hyatt, President  
IMPACT, Inc.

## **BASIC NEEDS: IMPACT 2-1-1**

Since 2009, IMPACT 2-1-1 has been Racine County's central access point for connection to family, health, and human services. Individuals and families dial the three digit phone number 24 hours per day and talk to a trained Community Resources Specialist who will help them find the most appropriate resource. Calls to 2-1-1 have increased by 130% in the last twelve months culminating in a record of 1,671 calls in May 2016. In order to bring structure, efficiency and fairness to the process of distributing a limited resource, in the fall of 2014, IMPACT began working with United Way and the Racine County Food Bank as the gateway to those seeking emergency food in Racine County. 2-1-1 determines which food pantry is most appropriate based on the customer's location, access to transportation, their availability and other factors. Calls have increased from about 300 calls per month at program start up, to more than 1,100 per month in the first five months of 2016. In addition to emergency food screening, 2-1-1 will also work to understand any underlying issues and make the appropriate referrals.

# PERCEPTION VS. REALITY



Jonathan Delagrave, Executive  
Racine County

## LEADERSHIP: RACINE COUNTY

Racine County has lead many community improvements in education, income, health and safety. Racine County offers Workforce Solutions for residents at all area public libraries which provides free, instructor-led online courses, access to job training resources, a customer tracking system, increased outreach efforts, and “fast-track” GED attainment. The also offer robust “soft skills” curriculum integrated into the menu of services available to job seekers and businesses. They are committed to providing access to mental health services resulting in nearly 8 percent of residents obtaining vital services from their Behavioral Health Clinic. Over the past three years, as a result of their efforts, there has been a 67 percent reduction in the use of mental health Emergency Detentions. Lastly, Racine County is the first county to authorize body cams for their Sheriff Office patrol deputies and jail personnel.



Art Howell, Chief of Police  
City of Racine Police Department

## CRIME AND SAFETY: RACINE POLICE DEPARTMENT

The members of the Racine Police Department are committed to the organizational mission of creating a safe and secure environment where residents enjoy a high quality of life. In pursuit of this mission, under the community policing philosophy, a number of public safety initiatives, programs and services have been implemented. We are now at a 52-year low of Part I Crime in the City of Racine which can be attributed, most notably, to the formation of partnerships to address crime and disorder. For example, COP houses strategically placed in recovering neighborhoods, allow officers the opportunity to network with concerned citizens, identify problems and work together as problem-solving partners. The COP model has paved the way for local problem-solving partnerships built on trust and respect to flourish. In addition, formal partnerships with the FBI and DEA have resulted in organized drug and gang networks being identified and dismantled locally.



Mike Boticki, Executive Director  
NAMI Racine

## MENTAL HEALTH: NAMI RACINE

One in five individuals experiences a mental health diagnosis in a given year. NAMI and its partners are working to erase the shame and judgement involved with emotional struggles, making it more comfortable for people to take that first step towards receiving the help they may need. Over the last two and a half years, a series of events addressing mental health stigma entitled “Bridging the Gaps” has featured personal stories of recovery told by brave, courageous individuals who are living proof that mental health recovery is real. In addition, local leaders present the programs and initiatives that are put in place to promote recovery and transform the way our community approaches mental health.

# WHAT'S LEFT TO BE DONE

Facilitating Community Conversations on an ongoing basis allows United Way to stay in tune with our community's rhythms and the aspirations of Racine County residents. Community Conversations will continue to be a permanent, ongoing practice of United Way of Racine County. The findings will be used to help further engage the community, find new partners, develop strategies, and mobilize resources.

From August 2016 to April 2017, United Way will host its fourth phase of community conversations and seek to engage with an even broader segment of the population. United Way will continue to share public knowledge gained from Community Conversations on an annual basis with community leaders and key decision makers.



## GATHERING MORE FEEDBACK



Tom Buhler, Founder  
Visioning a Greater Racine

Visioning a Greater Racine began in the summer of 2013 when a collection of businessmen and community leaders wondered if there was a way to bolster Racine from her dispirited state. Led by Tom Buhler, Visioning a Greater Racine works to connect the community in a united effort to enrich the region. The organization is funded through grants from foundations, corporations, local colleges and local governments, including the City of Racine.

The next phase of their roadmap is to host community-wide “visioning sessions.” A visioning session is a meeting involving 50-100 persons from a mix of demographics which is broken into groups of 10-15 for brainstorming sessions on the future of the community. The guided sessions provide a voice for our rich, diverse community and continue to shape the growing web of interconnected relationships. The board of Visioning a Greater Racine has set the following timeline:

- June 21-22, 2016 Train 50 volunteers on how to conduct a visioning session
- June 22 - September 24, 2016 Conduct 20 visioning sessions
- September 24, 2016 Introduce Visioning a Greater Racine to the community at Party on the Pavement
- October 2016 - March 2017 Conduct 180 visioning sessions
- April 2017 Report results to the community

United Way and Visioning Greater Racine will collaborate by exchanging the feedback and findings from both Community Conversations and visioning sessions. In 2017, Visioning a Greater Racine will conclude the visioning sessions and move on to the next phase—implementation. The implementation process will shape ideas into goal statements and action steps. Visioning a Greater Racine will serve as the connection between the goals of the community and the available resources necessary to make those goals happen.

## GET INVOLVED

You can get involved in the next phase of Community Conversations by:

- Participating in an upcoming conversation.
- Hosting a conversation at your organization.
- Helping us spread the word.

For more information, please contact Julie Anderson at [janderson@unitedwayracine.org](mailto:janderson@unitedwayracine.org) or 262-456-6469.

# LIVE UNITED



United Way of Racine County  
2000 Domanik Drive, Racine, Wisconsin 53404  
262-898-2240 | [UnitedWayRacine.org](http://UnitedWayRacine.org)