

Frequently Asked Questions

What does United Way do?

In communities across America, United Ways are improving lives by mobilizing the caring power of their communities. More than fundraisers, United Ways are partners in change, working with a broad range of people and organizations to identify and resolve pressing community issues. United Ways have led the nonprofit sector in the call for transparent accountability and measurable results.

To achieve measurable, lasting change, United Ways identify and build on community strengths and assets, help individuals and groups with specific community interests find ways to contribute their time and talents, support direct-service programs and community-change efforts, and advocate for public policy changes.

All of this is done in collaboration with diverse partners. Depending on the issue and how the community chooses to address it, United Ways work with schools, government agencies, businesses, organized labor, financial institutions, community development corporations, voluntary and neighborhood associations, the faith community, and others.

Because of the unique conditions in diverse communities, the issues United Ways address are determined locally. Challenges ranging from graduation rates and domestic violence to hunger and employment are on the agenda for various United Ways.

Supporting local United Way efforts are several national programs that marshal the resources of the United Way system to address selected issues at the national level. These are Early Childhood, including the Born Learning campaign to support early learning; 2-1-1, the 3-digit phone number to give help and receive help; Assets for Family Success; Crisis Preparedness & Response; and Emergency Food & Shelter.

United Way of Greater Waterbury's focus areas reflect the priority concerns of our residents. We also believe that these three areas are the building blocks needed for any person to lead a better life:

- Education – Increasing opportunities for children and youth to succeed
- Income - Increasing financial stability through employment opportunities
- Basic Needs – Helping people become more self-sufficient in meeting their basic needs

How were these focus areas determined?

We have established an agenda for Greater Waterbury that reflects the values and concerns of our residents and provides direction for our funding priorities.

To do this, special volunteer committees looked at local needs assessment results, input from residents during United Way sponsored community conversations held with residents of all 10 towns, and reviewed detailed call data from our service area to Connecticut's 24-hour crisis and information hotline United Way CT 2-1-1. These sources helped us identify issues that consistently rank as top concerns and present ongoing struggles for our residents. Over 10,000 volunteer hours were invested in the process of identifying focus areas, objectives and community impact strategies.

How is United Way tackling community concerns?

United Way of Greater Waterbury assembles teams of volunteers, including town officials, residents, service providers, community leaders, and experts to focus on chronic community concerns that present ongoing challenges for our residents. Their recommendations shape our work and inform our funding priorities. To tackle these concerns effectively, we have to address the root causes and invest in long-term solutions that can improve community conditions and prevent problems from happening in the first place.

What does volunteer-driven mean?

Volunteers, including concerned residents, business and community leaders, human service providers, and educators, are involved in managing all aspects of the United Way of Greater Waterbury. Volunteers make up the board of directors, oversee United Way's work creating real, substantive changes in community conditions in our focus areas and lead the annual fundraising efforts. All funding decisions are recommended and approved by volunteers.

Is United Way of Greater Waterbury just a fundraiser?

United Way of Greater Waterbury does much more than just fundraising. United Way is a partner in change, working with a broad range of people and organizations to identify and resolve pressing community issues. Our fundraising efforts are one way that we bring about positive change in individual lives and community conditions because the campaign gives us the ability to fund needed services, programs and town-based initiatives. However, United Way also works to:

- Identify community needs and priorities
- Facilitate the efforts of those who can help bring about needed positive changes
- Ensure targeted results are achieved by requiring outcome data from funded partners
- Promote volunteerism throughout our region

Where does the money that United Way of Greater Waterbury raise go?

Your gift to United Way of Greater Waterbury stays local, unless you designate it elsewhere. United Way of Greater Waterbury is the largest non-governmental funder of local community programs, services and initiatives in Greater Waterbury. United Way dollars are targeted to meet critical community needs in the region and invested in long-term solutions to local social problems.

Who decides how to spend the dollars raised by United Way of Greater Waterbury's fundraising efforts?

All United Way funding decisions are made by volunteers. All services, programs and initiatives currently funded by United Way are reviewed by volunteers who make up the Community Impact Cabinet and its Councils, who are experienced in analyzing budgets, program efficiency and effectiveness. Organizations seeking funding present written proposals to United Way and its volunteer teams. Funding decisions are based on dollars available, community need and on the ability of the applicant to meet that need and produce results.

How is United Way of Greater Waterbury different from other United Ways?

The United Way system includes nearly 1,800 community-based United Way organizations in the United States and around the world. Each is independent, separately incorporated and governed by a local, volunteer Board of Directors.

Because of the unique conditions in diverse communities, the issues United Ways address are determined locally. United Way of Greater Waterbury is unique in that it is dedicated to addressing the most pressing community needs and issues facing the towns of Bethlehem, Cheshire, Middlebury, Prospect, Southbury, Thomaston, Waterbury, Watertown, Wolcott and Woodbury.

Does United Way of Greater Waterbury have its financial condition audited?

Yes, each year an independent accounting firm audits the financial records and provides an audit to United Way's Board of Directors.

How big is the United Way of Greater Waterbury staff and what do they do?

There are ten staff at United Way of Greater Waterbury, including both full time and part time. The staff is responsible for fulfilling United Way of Greater Waterbury's mission: to maximize community resources to help people in need in the ten-town Greater Waterbury area. Working with volunteer leadership, United Way staff:

- Coordinate United Way's efforts tackling chronic community problems, like the need for affordable housing for working families, increasing educational opportunities for local youth and addressing local hunger issues. To accomplish this work, staff coordinate the efforts of a diverse group of partners, including concerned residents, town officials, schools, services providers, and community leaders.
- Participate in various community collaborations aimed at addressing critical community needs and improving the provision of health and human services, including the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness, Continuum of Care, Food Resource Committee, Prevention Policy Board, Bridge to Success and more.
- Secure the necessary resources, including more than \$3.3 million annually, to support needed community programs, services and town-based projects that meet resident's basic needs and address pressing community issues.
- Ensure strong financial management and governance at the highest level of accountability and transparency in United Way's operations

How does an agency or organization become a United Way funded partner?

United Way works with traditional and non-traditional partners that provide health and human services to the people of Greater Waterbury and align with United Way's focus area strategies. Agencies seeking funding must submit detailed financial statements, a certified audit, as well as information on programs and services to be provided. Volunteers review all applicants and make decisions about funding. For more information about applying, contact Joann Reynolds Balanda, Vice President of Community Impact at 203-757-9855 x16 or jrbalanda@unitedwaygw.org.

How much money actually goes to community services, programs and initiatives?

Approximately 91 cents of every dollar donated to United Way of Greater Waterbury supports service, programs and initiatives that meet basic needs, improve community conditions and help get to the root causes of some of our most pressing problems. United Way of Greater Waterbury's low overhead cost of 9 cents on the dollar is well below the benchmark of 35 cents recommended for charities by the Better Business Bureau.

What is United Way of Greater Waterbury's relationship with United Way WorldWide?

United Way WorldWide is the organization dedicated to leading the United Way movement in making a measurable impact in each community. United Way of Greater Waterbury pays dues of less than 1% of money raised. The value of benefits received from United Way WorldWide, such as national government relations, free marketing and advertising support, trainings, support to national companies running campaigns and setting Standards of Excellence allows local United Way's to respond to local and

national impact area priorities is always far more than is paid in dues and helps keep our local costs down.

Why should I give to United Way? Why not just donate directly to an agency?

There are many valuable non-profit organizations in the area you may care about. United Way provides an opportunity for your one gift to support a variety of local needs such as literacy and job training, affordable housing for working families and individuals, and emergency food and shelter. Through one gift to United Way, you can accomplish more than any one gift to a single agency could.

You can also be assured that your gift to United Way of Greater Waterbury goes to fund programs that help people most in need. United Way conducts periodic needs assessments to ensure donor dollars are addressing the most pressing community needs. We also require annual outcome data of funded programs and initiatives to make sure they are efficiently and effectively improving people's lives and making a positive impact. United Way of Greater Waterbury volunteers ensure that contributions are doing the most good in the community.

How can I give?

United Way accepts cash, checks, stocks and planned gifts throughout the year. Individuals may give by mailing donations to 100 North Elm Street, 2nd Floor, Waterbury CT 06702-1512.

United Way also offers the convenience of payroll deduction through the support of local employers, allowing employees to give a substantial annual gift through small weekly contributions. Employers not currently participating in the annual campaign are encouraged to United Way at 203-757-9855 to learn about the benefits of partnering with the United Way of Greater Waterbury.

What is a leadership gift?

Leadership givers are United Way of Greater Waterbury's most generous supporters. Through leadership gifts of \$1,000 or more, these individual philanthropists set an example for others and make a measurable difference in our community. Please see the Leavenworth and Tocqueville Society information for more details on the levels of leadership giving.

What is Leavenworth Society?

The Leavenworth Society of United Way of Greater Waterbury bestows recognition upon those individuals who make especially generous contributions of \$1,000 or more. The Society was founded by

United Way in honor of Elisha Leavenworth (1814-1911), a prominent citizen of our local community who believed that human caring is the key to a healthy society.

For additional details on the Leavenworth Society please click 'Leavenworth Society' on the left menu of this website or contact United Way at (203) 757-9855 for additional details.

What is the Tocqueville Society?

The Tocqueville Society Major Gifts and Recognition Program, nationally initiated in March of 1984, is designed to deepen and strengthen the understanding, commitment and support of high wealth individuals to their local United Ways. The Society represents French historian Alexis de Tocqueville's admiration for our country's spirit of voluntary effort for the common good as well as recognizes this resolute commitment to service on both local and national levels. Membership in the Society is granted to individuals who contribute at least \$10,000 annually to the United Way.

For additional details on the Tocqueville Society including leadership giving levels, please click 'Leavenworth Society' on the left menu of this website or contact United Way at (203) 757-9855

Can I include United Way of Greater Waterbury in my will or estate plan?

By naming United Way of Greater Waterbury in your will or estate plans, you become a member of the 1942 Society, named in recognition of our founding year.

There are many ways to make a planned gift and you can select a gift plan best suited to your personal circumstances and wishes:

- Bequest by Will
- Life Insurance Gift
- Charitable Remainder Trust
- Charitable Lead Trust
- Securities, Real Estate and Personal Property
- IRA, Keogh and other pension gift
- Memorial Gifts
- Outright Gift to Endowment
- Living Trust
- Charitable Gift Annuity

For additional details on the 1942 Society please click '1942 Society' on the left menu of this website or contact United Way at (203) 757-9855

Is my contribution to United Way tax-deductible?

Yes, according to I.R.S. guidelines.

Can I volunteer for United Way?

Yes. Call the United Way of Greater Waterbury at 203-757-9855 or dial 2-1-1 toll free to learn about available volunteer opportunities near you.

How can United Way afford expensive advertising such as the National Football League commercials?

The newspapers and electronic media are great supporters of the United Way mission and they help by airing these spots free of charge.

I give to United Way but still get solicitations from its funding partners. Why?

United Way of Greater Waterbury support provides only part of the operational expenses of our funded partners. In other words, United Way dollars fund specific programs and initiatives of funded partners. United Way does not fund the entire agency.

All funded partners agree not to solicit through payroll deductions at the workplace and not to solicit corporate gifts during the United Way campaign. If you are already supporting the United Way campaign, you know you are already making a significant contribution to the community and assisting that agency's mission.

How long has the United Way of Greater Waterbury served the local community?

The United Way of Greater Waterbury was founded in 1942 as the 'Waterbury Community Chest' and ran its first payroll deduction pledge drive in 1943 raising \$419,722.

United Way of Greater Waterbury is now a leader in facilitating the identification of regional needs and supporting solutions.

We are working to advance the common good by focusing on the building blocks for a good life - a quality education that leads to a stable job, enough income to support a family through retirement, and ensuring our most basic needs are met.