



## **Your gift to Heart of West Michigan United Way helps solve real problems in our community!**

*Heart of West Michigan United Way advances the common good, creating opportunities for a good life by focusing on education, income and health. The programs we fund don't just address the symptoms; they get to the causes, with a goal of making permanent, lasting change that prevents problems from happening in the first place. The programs we fund in education, income and health are getting results and they're changing lives, here are just a few examples:*

### **Education**

*The problem:*

- More than 1/3 of 4<sup>th</sup> graders in the Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS) did not meet state standards in reading as measured by the MEAP test.

*What United Way is doing about it:*

- Schools of Hope (SOH), a partnership with the GRPS, was created with a goal to improve reading skills early enough to make a real difference.

*The outcome:*

- At one of the of GRPS schools 47% of the SOH students made greater than the expected one year's progress in reading.

*The problem:*

- The GRPS has a drop out rate of nearly 30 percent.

*What United Way is doing about it:*

- Three after-school literacy programs were established for children who need more intensive help than our in-school program provides. Programs are based on the **Youth Education for Tomorrow (YET)**, a national model with proven results.

*The outcome:*

- In one school where results have been compiled, students made average gains of 1.55 years, which was significantly higher than the one-year expected gain.

### **Income**

*The problem:*

- An unprecedented number of foreclosures, particularly in low income families, has created a crisis in our community.

*What United Way is doing about it:*

- United Way helps fund an excellent financial counseling program run by Home Repair Services, a local organization that works with low income home owners.

*The outcome:*

- In 2008, Home Repair Services financial counselors helped nearly 300 people avoid foreclosure.

*The problem:*

- Many low-to-moderate income individuals are unaware of Earned Income Tax Credits because they don't have help filing their taxes.

*What United Way is doing about it:*

- In 2006, the Kent County Tax Credit Coalition became a direct service program with United Way to provide free tax-filing services and lets people know about state and federal tax credits.

*The outcome:*

- In 2009, more than 7,000 tax forms were prepared for people in Kent County, resulting in an estimated total of in refunds and credits of \$8.5 million dollars, of which, more than \$2 million was for Earned Income Tax Credit.

## **Health**

*The problem:*

- The number of Kent County children who rely on Medicaid for their healthcare coverage is now approximately one in three.
- Access to care is very limited, so these children have higher hospitalization rates, more severe illnesses and make more visits to the emergency room.

*What United Way is doing about it:*

- United Way, along with other partners in the community, helps support a First Steps initiative called the Children's Healthcare Access Program (CHAP), which takes a comprehensive approach to improving access to quality healthcare.

*The outcome:*

\* Although long-term goals will take years to achieve, there are already many positive outcomes:

- Families with a history of missing check-ups are now getting preventive care.
- Children with asthma are getting additional support to manage their disease.
- Healthcare providers are offering more access to evening hours and same-day visits for sick children.
- Services such as free transportation and translation are being provided to remove barriers for families.

*The problem:*

- Low income families often lack reliable transportation, which results in missed doctors' appointments. This, in turn, leads to termination of services by physicians' offices, leaving people with few, if any, options for quality health care, particularly when it comes to preventative care.

*What United Way is doing about it:*

- United Way helps fund the Baxter Community Clinic, which serves people in their surrounding geographic area who are uninsured or underinsured and have limited access to quality health care services.

*The outcome:*

- From July 2008 to July 2009, Baxter Community Clinic served 1686 people, of which nearly 700 were children ranging in age from newborns to 19 years old.