

Live United

United Way allocates \$1,040,000 to help ensure healthier life for all

In greater Battle Creek, it is evident that there are large pockets of the population that are struggling to provide a healthy environment for themselves and their families. As more people have experienced layoffs, reduced work hours or job loss in general, they are faced with the difficult decisions of how to ensure that their loved ones are receiving the care necessary to lead a long & healthy life.

The number of individuals without health insurance continues to climb. In 2007, more than 16% of people in Calhoun County were uninsured, a number that is sure to have risen in the past two years. That's an estimated 41,000 people with no health care coverage whatsoever. Most of these people live in poverty and for them lack of coverage means lack of access.

People in the community continue

to make choices between paying for food, paying medical bills or getting necessary prescriptions. Access to food continues to be the top request of individuals who call the 211 Call Center for assistance. Sixty-one percent of the households that receive food through the Food Bank of South Central Michigan's network receive food stamps, but say that on average they only last 2 weeks, leaving them to find alternative sources of help.

Families should not have to send children to bed hungry or suffering from chronic dental pain because they can't afford food or the care they need. As a community we can pool the resources necessary to ensure that this isn't the case by investing in programs that are designed to effectively fill these gaps.

The above are just a few of the statistics that were taken into consideration when the United Way Health

Vision Council set out to develop the new Health Investment Area.

United Way understands the goal of building a foundation of a healthier life for all cannot be accomplished in isolation. Assistance was sought in the form of local physicians, leaders in the health care community, members of Regional Health Alliance, and health care service providers. All were brought together to identify the most critical health related needs and challenges for the people of this community.

As a result of this process it was determined that in order to improve the overall health in greater Battle Creek investments needed to be made in four areas each with an intended result.

1) Access to Health Care - all individuals have access to health care services

2) Maternal and Infant Health - all babies are born healthy and thrive

3) Healthy Lifestyles - increased quality and years of life

4) Basic Needs - filling health services' gaps

Local organizations were then invited to apply for program funding under one of the action areas. Trained volunteers spent countless hours reviewing each of the applications, interviewing program providers and in the end, determining which of the programs could provide the most impact for the community.

Health is the first of the three pillars to be funded under UWGBC's strategic focus of Advancing the Common Good. It will be followed by Education and Income, respectively, over the next two years. Each is a building block for a good life - a quality education that leads to a stable job,

enough income to support a family, and good health. Each is connected and interdependent and by creating change in each of these areas, we can make greater Battle Creek a community of hope and opportunity for a better tomorrow for all.

On the following pages you will find a brief description of each of the programs that have been approved for funding under the Health Investment Area. Thanks to the generosity of United Way donors these programs will receive funding for a three-year period totaling \$1,040,000 a year. This total represents roughly 42% of the estimated \$2.44 million United Way allocates to programs each year. Additionally, United Way invests more than \$800,000 in special initiatives and funding for emergency basic needs.

Program Name: Blood Services

Agency Name: American Red Cross, Calhoun County Chapter

Since establishing the first civilian blood service program after World War II, the American Red Cross has been a leader in blood collection, safety, development and delivery.

The safety and availability of blood is one of our highest priorities. There is no substitute for human blood as a therapeutic product. The limited shelf life of its components (42 days for red blood cells, 5 days for platelets) requires a regular, stable supply. Every two seconds, someone in the US receives a blood product transfusion. In Michigan, about 2,000 units are transfused daily.

Battle Creek Health System and its premiere cancer center utilize about 8,000 blood products annually. All of the blood supplied to BCHS and the surrounding hospitals comes from voluntary donations through the American Red Cross. Ideally, there would be a 7 day supply of blood on hand, however, most often there is no more than a 5 day supply and the inventory has been only a one day's supply for certain blood types.

Program Name: Child Advocacy

Agency Name: Sexual Assault Services of Calhoun County

A Children's Advocacy Center is woven and tied together by community agencies and professionals. The team works together to reduce the trauma victims experience and enhance the ability to respond to child maltreatment. CACs provide hope and healing to victims and their families. CACs utilize a joint investigative approach, where information can flow seamlessly among the professionals who need it. CACs assist families, helping them understand

the system, and refer to needed resources and services. CACs help children cope with the trauma of sexual abuse and move toward healing. When children disclose sexual abuse or when sexual abuse is discovered, a CAC can provide many benefits to victims, families and the community as a whole. The CAC multidisciplinary approach can offer: consistent, prompt follow-up to abuse reports, consistent and compassionate support for the child and family, referrals to professionals with expertise in specialized fields and dramatically fewer victim interviews.

Program Name: (The) Counseling Center

Agency Name: Family & Children Services

The Counseling Center supports Calhoun County's capacity to serve low-income, non-insured, non-mental health funded clients who could not otherwise afford counseling from community private practitioners.

The goal of counseling services is to positively impact client ability to cope with life stressors such as current or past trauma; multiple losses due to death, divorce and job elimination; family and community violence; acute or chronic medical problems for self or family members; and school performance and behavioral issues. Counseling helps clients regain their optimal level of functioning. For children, that means improved performance at school and in the community. For parents, that means improved ability to nurture and guide their children. For couples, that means improved relationship stability resulting in decreased relationship break-ups or violence. For adults, that means improved job function and improved mental health allowing them to secure employment.

Program Name: Dentists' Partnership

Agency Name: Community Healthcare Connections

Through the Dentists' Partnership community dentists engage in the care of the uninsured making a significant difference in the life of someone who is suffering from dental pain and infection.



In turn, the dentists' gift to the patient is multiplied in the community as the patient "pays it forward" by volunteering at local nonprofit agencies. The program enables urgent dental care to be available to community members with limited income

and no insurance and will decrease the utilization of the emergency department for dental pain and jaw disease.

Program Name: Domestic Violence

Agency Name: S.A.F.E. Place

Domestic violence is described as the most unreported crime. It is the leading cause of injury to women and the number one reason women and children are homeless. It is also the reason that 63% of young men ages 11-20 are in prison for homicide - for killing their mother's abuser. Unfortunately there is a stigma surrounding domestic violence. Many well intentioned people believe that leaving an assailant is an easy thing to do and blame the victim for staying. If a victim decides to leave, she is often the one left homeless and without emotional or financial support in order to keep herself safe. In addition, a victim is at the greatest risk when she leaves her assailant - lethality increases by 75%! A secure and undisclosed shelter can mean the difference between safety and death. United Way

