

SUPPORTING ROCK RIVER VALLEY FOR OVER 100 YEARS

UNITED WAY ROCK RIVER VALLEY UNITES THE COLLECTIVE POWER OF OUR COMMUNITY TO IMPROVE LIVES.



See our mural in person!
It's at the northeast corner of
Fairview Blvd. and E. State St.

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- | | |
|---|--|
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THE NUMBERS
BEHIND THE MISSION

**A transparent
look at your
impact**



INSIDE

How pediatricians are
changing literacy one
well-child visit at a time.

**+
COMMUNITY
WINS**

The stories that
defined the year

2025-2026

GRATITUDE REPORT





A young reader shares a story with Hammy from the IceHogs after picking out a free book at United Way's table during the Rockford Public Library Summer Kick-Off.

LETTER FROM OUR LEADERS

Dear Friends,

Momentum is a powerful thing.

For years, our community has worked together to build a stronger foundation for children and families. This year, we began to see that work take hold in new and exciting ways. From helping more children discover the joy of reading to connecting neighbors with vital resources by calling 211 and creating more opportunities for people to serve through volunteerism, we're seeing meaningful progress because people like you continue to show up.

Our work in literacy is entering an exciting new chapter. As we continue to build the United for Literacy movement, we're also completing a strategic plan that will guide our next phase of growth. It's an investment not just in today's children, but in the future of our entire county.

This report shares stories of that progress. You'll meet the people behind the numbers, see the partnerships making a difference, and discover how every gift, every volunteer hour, and every act of generosity is creating lasting change.

This is our report of gratitude.

Thank you to our donors, volunteers, partners, advocates, and everyone who believes in the power of a community working together. Your support is creating momentum that reaches far beyond a single year.

We're proud of how far we've come, and even more excited about where we're headed next.

Happy reading!

Julie Bosma
Julie Bosma
Executive Director

Casey Lester
Casey Lester
Board Chair

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ON THE COVER

A young reader at Gomez Chapel peeks through the heart-shaped cutout of a new book to take home. This was one of hundreds of community events United Way attended throughout the year.



EVERYTHING YOU'RE ABOUT TO READ IS POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF PEOPLE LIKE YOU.

Every statistic in this report, every book delivered, every child who reached grade-level reading, started with a decision someone made to give. Sometimes that decision was made once. Sometimes it's been made every year for three generations. Either way, this work has never belonged to United Way Rock River Valley alone. It belongs to the people who fund it and the people who show up for it.

DONORS

GENEROSITY PERSONIFIED

Some donors give through a payroll deduction they set up years ago and it continues automatically each pay period. Others write a single check that changes what's possible for an entire program. And some have been giving so long that "donor" doesn't quite capture it, it's closer to being family.

Workplace donors make giving part of the everyday rhythm of a job. Across over a hundred local workplaces, employees choose, paycheck by paycheck, to invest in their own community. It's easy to overlook how powerful that is precisely because it's automatic. But multiplied across thousands of employees and hundreds of companies, it becomes one of the most reliable sources of support this work has.

Individual donors give for reasons as varied as they are. Some are longtime supporters who've watched this community change over decades. Among them are our legacy donors, families who have given to United Way for generations, some passing the habit from parent to child the way you'd pass down any other value worth keeping. Others make us part of their estate plan. Their consistency is its own kind of impact: it lets us plan for the long term, not just react to the moment.

At the top of that generosity sits the Tocqueville Society, donors who give \$10,000 or more annually. These are neighbors who could direct that kind of support almost anywhere. They choose Rock River Valley, year after year, because they believe a stronger community is worth investing in at scale.

Workplace gift or legacy gift, \$10 or \$10,000, every dollar in this report traces back to a person who decided their community was worth it.

COMMUNITY

IT TOOK A VILLAGE

The goal was simple: a used book drive to collect 2,000 books. Then Follett Content donated all 2,000 in a single gift, jump-starting the drive and pushing the team to double the original goal. Instead of declaring victory, the community kept going. By the time the campaign ended, more than 10,000 books had been collected.

Among them: 556 books collected single-handedly by Henry, a sixth grader who decided this was a cause worth leading. State Representatives Maurice West and Dave Vella opened their district offices as collection sites. Mel Welch and Alpine Kiwanis showed up as they always do. Collection points from Maze Books to Ida Public Library to City Hall welcomed neighbors dropping off one book, or a hundred.

During the five-hour Free Community Book Fair, 6,297 books and 740 magazines found new homes with local families. The books that remained didn't sit on a shelf. They were bundled and delivered directly to Rockford Public School classrooms, where they'll keep working long after the fair ended.

None of this happens without people choosing to act. The success of this community book drive belongs to everyone who donated books or helped us spread the word, and to every location that served as a collection site. It was a true group effort!



VOLUNTEERS

THE HEART OF THE WORK

Behind nearly every United Way initiative is a volunteer. This year, that added up to 1,486.5 hours, work valued at \$51,717, given by people ranging in age from 12 to 90. They sorted and stickered books, preserved our archives, read alongside students as Reading Buddies, and showed up whenever the community needed an extra set of hands.

That spirit was on full display during our annual Day of Caring. On a single Friday morning last fall, more than 115 corporate volunteers fanned out across 16 community projects. These were coworkers who chose to spend a workday getting their hands dirty for a cause instead of a paycheck.

"It's an amazing experience," said Casey Lester, Board Chair of United Way Rock River Valley. "You get to see that there's a lot of other people that really care about our community, and are willing to get their hands dirty to make it happen."

THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF OUR WORK IN THE COMMUNITY. TURN THE PAGE, AND SEE WHAT YOUR GENEROSITY BUILT.

THE CHECKUP THAT CHANGES MORE THAN HEALTH

At a well-child visit, Crusader Community Health provider Jen Benters, APN, hands a child a new book to take home through Reach Out & Read, a program funded by United Way Rock River Valley.

THE FIRST THING A CHILD NOTICES ISN'T THE STETHOSCOPE. IT'S THE BOOK.

Maybe it's a board book with bright animals. Maybe it's a story about trucks or bedtime or counting to ten. Whatever the title, it leaves the exam room tucked under a small arm, headed home to be read again and again.

That's the quiet genius of Reach Out & Read.

The program makes literacy part of pediatric care, placing a brand-new, age-appropriate book into the hands of every child during routine well-child visits from infancy through age five. Parents receive something just as valuable: encouragement from a trusted healthcare provider that reading aloud—even for a few minutes a day—is one of the most important things they can do for their child's development.

Last year, that simple interaction became much more common across Winnebago County.

With support from United Way Rock River Valley, Reach Out & Read expanded to every Crusader Community Health clinic in the county. **This past year alone, 18,086 books have found their way into children's homes through 20 participating medical clinics,** transforming exam rooms into unexpected gateways to literacy.

The decision to place books in doctor's offices isn't accidental. During a child's first five years, families often visit pediatric providers more than a dozen times. Those appointments create a rare opportunity to not only monitor physical growth, but to nurture language, curiosity, and the bond that forms when a caregiver and child share a story.

Providers themselves have embraced the shift. In conversations with two Reach Out & Read providers, both shared the same feedback: adding the program didn't add time to already packed visits, a common fear before implementation. Instead, the book became a helpful diagnostic tool, offering a natural way to observe develop-

mental markers, and a reliable icebreaker. Starting each visit with the book helps open up both the child and the caregiver, turning a routine checkup into a moment of genuine connection before the exam even begins.

The momentum continues to build. Reach Out & Read is also active in UW Health, Mercyhealth, and OSF St. Anthony Medical Center, extending the reach of a simple idea with remarkable staying power: that the path to reading doesn't begin on the first day of kindergarten. It begins much earlier, on a parent's lap, with a book in an exam room.

As Illinois has embraced Reach Out & Read statewide, research continues to affirm what pediatricians and educators have long observed: children who grow up with books, conversation, and daily reading routines arrive at school better prepared to learn.

In clinics across Rock River Valley this interaction plays out daily. A nurse hands over a book. A parent starts reading. A child asks to hear the story again.

Progress, it turns out, can begin with prescribed reading from a trusted provider.

“THIS PROGRAM HAS BEEN INVALUABLE FOR OUR PATIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES BY HELPING PROVIDE THEM WITH BOOKS AND TALKING THROUGH HOW WE CAN SUPPORT THEM ON THEIR READING JOURNEY.” - Jen Benters, APN



THIS DATA BACKS UP WHAT THE RESEARCH TELLS US: KIDS LEARN BEST IN SMALL GROUP SETTINGS.

At the Boys & Girls Club, a tutor sits with a small group, worksheet in hand, walking through a question together. One girl leans in, already reaching for a pencil before the question is finished. Every 20 minutes, the group rotates to a new station: letters, vocabulary, math, computer work, science. It's this instinct to jump in, to want to know the answer, that United Way's investment in the Boys & Girls Club is really funding.

The Boys & Girls Club of Rockford serves more than 8,000 youth annually across five locations, and funding from United Way powers a tutoring program built around small groups of 3-4 kids working side by side with dedicated staff. Groups of three or four hit the sweet spot, where every child gets seen without losing the energy of learning alongside peers.

The result: **683 children served**, with over **25,000 minutes spent in high-impact reading** (read-alouds and independent reading) over the summer alone.

The numbers show early, measurable movement: **the percentage of kids reading at grade level rose from 17% in September to 22% by May**. It's a modest climb on paper, but it reflects something harder to quantify: the small group tutoring sessions are making a positive impact.

Books followed the kids home, too. 500 were distributed at five family literacy events and to club members, plus 200 more stocked the shelves of a brand-new library at First Covenant, the Club's newest site.

This work turns classroom curiosity into confidence, and confidence into a future kids can picture for themselves. Thanks to United Way donors, that connection is starting earlier and reaching further than ever before.



A tutor at the Boys & Girls Club Blackhawk unit works with two young girls during summer tutoring to prevent “summer slide” and advance literacy skills.

TUTORING SESSIONS THAT TEACH MORE THAN READING



GROWTH, FOR US, HAS NEVER BEEN MEASURED IN NUMBERS ALONE. IT HAS BEEN MEASURED IN THE CHILDREN WHO NOW OWN BOOKS THEY CAN CALL THEIR OWN, AND IN THE COMMUNITIES THAT CONTINUE TO TRUST US TO SHOW UP FOR THEM.

READING BUDDIES AT JACKSON CHARTER SCHOOLS IS CONTRIBUTING TO STRONG OUTCOMES

Last fall, United Way launched a new pilot program at Jackson Charter School, pairing first graders with volunteer Reading Buddies from the community and through a partnership with YouthBuild. The original plan called for the UFLI curriculum (a structured phonics curriculum from the University of Florida Literacy Institute) but early testing showed students were struggling most with rhyming, so the team made a quick call to shift focus there instead.

Twice a week, Reading Buddies met with small groups of students during regular literacy periods. Each week brought a new, age-appropriate rhyming book, one copy for the student to keep and read at home, another for the classroom. It didn't take long for kids to start looking forward to it. Teachers noticed students growing attached to their volunteers, and to the books themselves.

The results followed. **First graders showed 53rd percentile growth in reading skills over the course of the year, climbing from the 36th percentile in winter testing to the 44th percentile by spring.**

It's a reminder that reading gains rarely come from one big intervention. They come from showing up, one small group, one rhyme, and one book at a time.

YMCA IS BUILDING READERS, ONE RELATIONSHIP AT A TIME

With support from United Way Rock River Valley, YMCA's Kids' Time Before & After School program reached over **300 students and families across five sites this year**. Five literacy instructors delivered weekly support to roughly 90% of participating students, while eight family literacy nights engaged more than 100 families.

The impact goes beyond the numbers. At Brookview, older students launched a peer-led book club. At Good Shepherd, kids asked for read-alouds over winter break, unprompted. By pairing literacy with social-emotional learning, and partnering with an on-site mental health clinician to inform book selection, YMCA is helping kids feel safe enough to engage, and confident enough to keep reading.



ROCKFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE BUILDING STRONGER BONDS WITH DAD

There's a dad in Rockford who now knows all the words to his daughter's favorite nursery rhyme because she won't stop reciting it. That's the kind of ripple this program creates. **Dads and caregivers are showing up, reading with their kids, and sticking around to talk with each other.** Kids are making friends, families are connecting, and slowly the dads are turning this into something of their own. A space built by them, for them, where showing up for story time also means showing up for each other.



BRIGHTPOINT DELIVERS COMPASSION AND BOOKS IN THE MIDDLE OF INSTABILITY

For a family in crisis, a book might seem like a small thing. It isn't. This year, **Brightpoint's crisis nursery reached 137 children and 102 parents, handing out 864 books along the way**, at family events, during emergency supply pickups, in quiet moments that mattered most. For a child living through instability, a book offers something rare: a few calm minutes, a familiar rhythm, a reason to feel safe. Sometimes healing starts with a story.

EASTERSEALS EXCEL AT TEACHING FAMILIES ABOUT LEARNING TO READ, TOGETHER

One young mom shared that reading was never part of her childhood. No bedtime stories, no routine. Through EasterSeals' Teen Family Support program, she learned to build that routine herself, one book, one song, one nursery rhyme at a time. Parents left the program more confident reading with their kids and weaving literacy into everyday life. Bilingual books opened the door for parents who felt shut out by English-only shelves. And music, it turns out, might be one of the best teachers of all.

ALIGNMENT ROCKFORD FOCUSES ON "THE BASICS", AND IT'S ADDING UP

A hug. A conversation about feelings. Counting blocks out loud. Reading a book on the living room floor. These small, everyday moments are exactly what Alignment Rockford's Basics texting program is helping parents do more often, and **the data shows it's working**. Simple reminders are turning into real habits, and those habits are shaping how kids grow, feel, and learn.



BROOKE ROAD COMMUNITY CENTER SERVES AS A PLACE TO GATHER AND READ

Every Wednesday morning past summer, kids at Brooke Road Community Center had a new reason to show up: Pages & Popsicles. It was story time with a twist, read-alouds, activities, new friends, and a popsicle to beat the heat, turning reading into something kids actually looked forward to all week. **Attendance at literacy events kept climbing, and so did parents' interest in helping their kids grow as readers.** It was proof that when you build a welcoming space, and add a little fun, people show up, and keep showing up.



YWCA FOCUSES ON TRAINING THE TRAINERS

This year, **YWCA certified 104 childcare providers in early literacy**, meaning the impact of this program doesn't stop with one classroom or one family. It multiplies. Every provider, who walks away trained, carries that knowledge into every child they care for, every day, for years to come. It's a quiet kind of impact, but a lasting one: teaching the teachers so that literacy becomes part of how an entire community raises its kids.

OUR FIRST EARTH DAY CLEANUP EXCEEDED OUR WILDEST EXPECTATIONS.

When United Way partnered with the City of Rockford and Winnebago County for the first Citywide Earth Day Cleanup, no one knew what to expect. The goal was to promote “Celebrating Through Service” as part of the city’s America 250 celebration.

Would a few dozen people sign up? Would businesses participate? Would neighbors spend part of their day cleaning streets and parks they’d never visited before?

The answer arrived one registration at a time. Families. Coworkers. Friends. Service clubs. Students. Hundreds of people raised their hands—not because they had to, but because they wanted to make their community a little better. Volunteers chose neighborhoods where they lived, worked, or simply wanted to help, filling bags with litter and leaving behind something less visible: pride.

The cleanup became more than an Earth Day event. It became proof that people are looking for meaningful ways to contribute when the opportunity is simple, welcoming, and connected to a shared purpose. **Registration exceeded expectations (950+)**, revealing something that’s easy to overlook: people don’t just want to live in a healthy community, they want to help create one.

That sense of purpose matters. Research consistently shows that volunteering strengthens social connections, reduces isolation, and improves well-being—not just for the people receiving help, but for the people giving it. Every volunteer strengthened of our community.

Sometimes the biggest thing people are looking for isn’t just a way to help. It’s a reason to belong.



Members of the Goodwill Pre-Apprenticeship Program place litter into a collection bag during United Way Rock River Valley’s Citywide Earth Day Cleanup, joining hundreds of volunteers who came together to care for their community.

OUR LOCAL
COMMUNITY
SHOWED UP

UNITED WAY MEETS FAMILIES AT EVERY STAGE OF A CHILD’S READING JOURNEY.

It starts in the pediatrician’s office. Through Reach Out & Read, families at 20 health sites across UW Health, OSF, Mercy Health, and Crusader Community Health, along with WIC families through the Winnebago County Health Department, leave checkups with a book in hand and a doctor’s encouragement to read it together.

At home, trained Parents as Teachers home visitors deliver books to children from birth to age three through Tiny Turners, reaching families through partners like Easter Seals, Rockford Head Start, Brightpoint, and Winning Start Winnebago. And families who sign up for Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library receive a new book directly to their door every month, from birth through their fifth birthday, no strings attached.

As children approach kindergarten, Page Turners puts books in the hands of 3- to 5-year-olds across eight area school districts and the Catholic Diocese of Rockford, building the home libraries that research shows matter most in the years before school starts.

And beyond the classroom, United Way meets families wherever they already gather. Farm books at Edwards Apple Orchard. Bilingual books at Brooke Road’s Baby Banks. Books about dogs for kids visiting therapy dog programs. This past year alone, that meant **21,912 books distributed through more than 100 community events**, each one chosen to match the families it reached.

No single program can solve literacy on its own. But together, they’re building a community where more children start school ready to read, and more families discover that every great story begins with someone opening the first page.



UNITED WAY SUPPLIES BOOKS FOR THESE PROGRAMS:

Reach Out & Read: Books and early literacy support delivered during pediatric checkups
UWHealthSystem·OSFHealthSystem·MercyHealth Family·Crusader Community Health·Winnebago County Health Department (WIC families)

Page Turners: Books for children ages 3–5
Harlem School District Early Childhood·Rockford Public Schools Early Childhood·Winnebago School District Early Childhood·Kinnikinnick School District Early Childhood·South Beloit School District Early Childhood·Durand School District Early Childhood·Rockton School District Early Childhood·Catholic Diocese of Rockford Early Childhood

Tiny Turners: Books for children birth to age 3, delivered by trained home visitors
Harlem School District Prevention Initiative·Rockford School District Home Visiting·Easter Seals·Trinity Day Care·La Voz Latina·Rockford Head Start·Brightpoint·Winning Start Winnebago·High Risk Home Visiting (Winnebago County Health Department)·UW Health NICU

Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library: Free monthly books mailed to children from birth to age 5
United Way Rock River Valley serves as the Winnebago County affiliate and funds this program for our community.



DOLLY PARTON’S IMAGINATION LIBRARY

5,092 children graduated *(as of 6/30/2026)*
5,595 children currently enrolled, building home libraries one story at a time



WHAT LISTENING TO A COMMUNITY TELLS US

A year’s worth of phone calls can tell you a lot about a place. From July 2025 to June 2026, thousands of people dialed 211 looking for answers. Most weren’t experiencing dramatic emergencies. They were facing the quieter crises of everyday life: rent that had become impossible to afford, an overdue utility bill, a refrigerator that needed filling, uncertainty about what to do next.

THOSE CALLS ADDED UP TO:

- 3,833 conversations
- 5,821 identified needs
- 7,114 referrals to community resources

Housing and shelter remained the most common concern, followed closely by utilities, food, and transportation.

Nearly all of this happened by phone. Of those contacts, 3,581 were calls and just 225 were texts, a reminder that for many families, picking up the phone and talking to a real person is still how help gets found.

Those calls came from across the community, with **Rockford’s 61101, 61103, and 61104 zip codes generating the highest volume**, evidence that 211 is reaching the neighborhoods where need is greatest.

Of the 5,821 needs identified this year, 1,012 went unmet, revealing two distinct gaps: services like rent assistance and transportation assistance that simply don’t exist locally (96% and 93% of unmet cases), and services like shelter and utility assistance that exist but strain under demand, with providers at capacity in 39% and 44% of unmet cases.

That’s a real reminder that 211 isn’t just a resource line. It’s one of the clearest indicators of where our community is thriving, and where more work remains to be done, whether that means building services that don’t yet exist, or strengthening the ones already stretched thin.

WHEN ‘WHERE DO I TURN FOR HELP?’ HAS AN ANSWER

A parent runs out of diapers on a Tuesday night. No public program provides them to those in need. There’s nowhere obvious to turn, until someone thinks to call 211.

That’s the quiet power of United Way’s 211 Information line for Winnebago County: it doesn’t just field a call, it knows what help is available in our community, and it connects people to the right door – hopefully on the first try.

This year, that list of agencies got a little more complete. The Baby Bank, a local nonprofit founded in 2018 to fill this gap was added to the local Winnebago County 211 database. **In April, the organization handed out its one millionth diaper**, a milestone built on steady, growing need. The Baby Bank now supports roughly 400 families a month, and demand has climbed 34% in the past year alone.

“It’s a powerful message to what people can do in their kindness and helping others,” said Carolyn Kloss, a Baby Bank board member. “Clearly, there was a need. When the Baby Bank was founded in 2018, there was clearly an iden-

tified need. And it’s only grown and grown.”

Brooke Road, a United Way funded partner, is one of two places where families pick up those diapers. Now, when a family calls 211 asking for baby supplies, there’s a direct answer waiting: a real organization, a real location, a real appointment.



That’s what makes 211 more than an info line. It’s the connective tissue between a family in need and a community already equipped to help, they just need to be pointed in the right direction. As demand keeps growing, so does the importance of making sure no one has to search for help alone.

Last year, we added 14 organizations to our local 211 Information Line database, of over 230 resources:

1. Legal Aid Society
2. Life Decisions
3. Christian Union Pantry
4. The Baby Bank
5. Marshmallow’s Hope
6. Kendel Sherman Foundation
7. Pregnancy Care Center
8. Tommy Corral Memorial Foundation
9. My Sista’s House Ministries
10. Champions Benchmark
11. Covenant Outreach Center (The Cove)
12. A Place of Prayer Community Outreach
13. Barbell
14. Healing Hearts 815



In April 2026, our team hosted a community listening session, facilitated by Richard LaPratt of 211 Metro Chicago, to help ensure the tool is meeting community needs and identify where there’s still work to do.

2025-26 FUNDED PARTNERS

\$308,433 INVESTED IN AGENCY SERVICES AND BOOK GRANTS

SERVICE GRANTS

BOYS & GIRLS CLUB OF ROCKFORD

Expanding book clubs, story times, and independent reading. Staff facilitate gathering data on children’s progression.

BRIGHTPOINT

Supporting literacy work and events within the Crisis Nursery.

EASTERSEALS

Onsite Literacy Specialist to work with parents as well as provide literacy kits.

HARLEM SCHOOL DISTRICT

- 1. Preschool for All: Partner with families and community members to foster academic and social-emotional learning success in preschoolers
- 2. Prenatal to 3 Prevention Initiative: In-home support for families before their children enter school

REGIONAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Science of Reading training for K-3rd grade teachers.

ROCKFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY

Provide training for other partners, parents, and volunteers for United for Literacy programming.

ROCKFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS (RPS 205)

Literacy events through RPS’s Prevention Initiative program to involve dads in literacy.

YMCA OF ROCK RIVER VALLEY

Five-site pilot revising Kids Care after school program to include intentional reading instruction from certified teachers.

YWCA OF NORTHWESTERN ILLINOIS

Supporting 86 childcare facilities with interactive reading modeling, books, and literacy kits for over 1,000 kids monthly.



BOOK DISTRIBUTION GRANTS

ALIGNMENT ROCKFORD

- 1. Newborn Basics Kits: given to new moms and incorporates Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library
- 2. Ready to Learn Book Spaces: books to sustain current spaces

BROOKE ROAD UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Books to continue Reader’s Night In and Reader’s Weekend (family) at Brooke Road Community Center.

DURAND CHARM

Incorporating literacy into numerous community events, supporting classrooms with books.

JUNIOR LEAGUE OF ROCKFORD

Books for existing vending machines and community family literacy nights.

SEVERSON DELLS

Books to supplement year-round STEM & science programs.

SOUTH BELOIT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Books to support early childhood and elementary classrooms.

TRINITY DAY CARE

- 1. Books and activities
- 2. Books for all to build home libraries
- 3. Preschool to age 8 family literacy nights
- 4. Toddler to 2 family literacy nights

JACKSON CHARTER SCHOOL

Books for supporting classrooms.

YMCA OF ROCK RIVER VALLEY

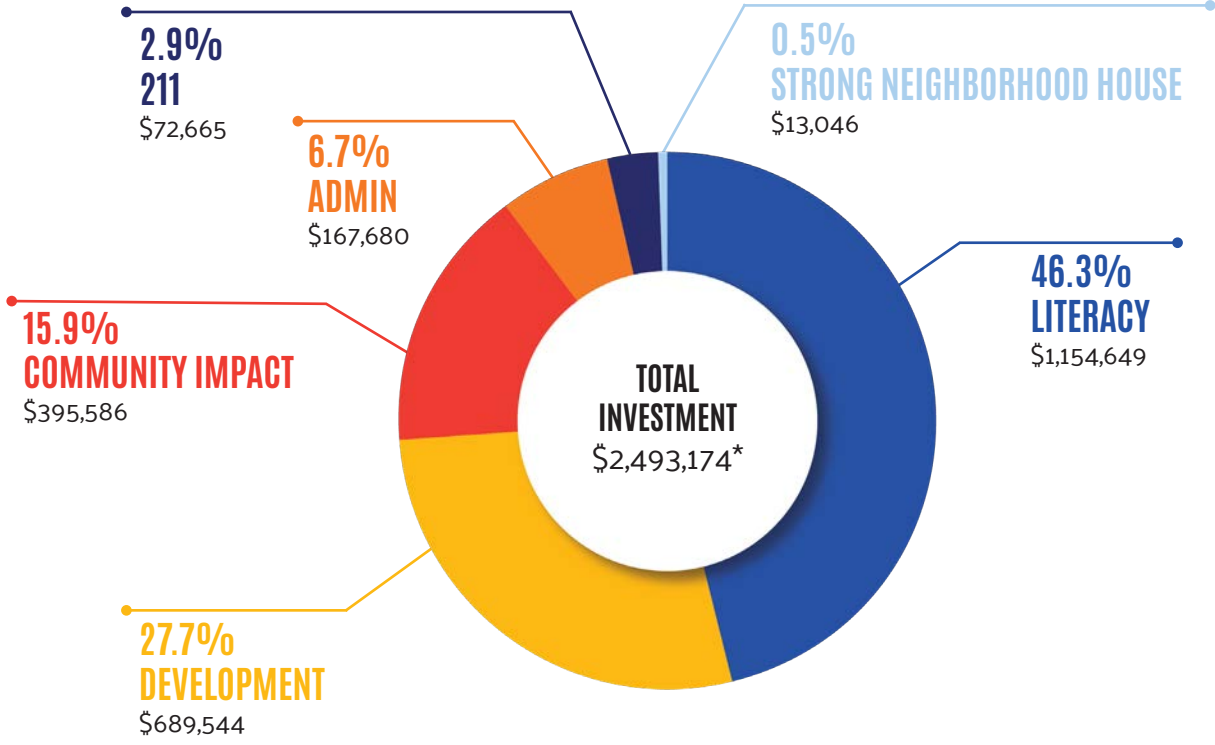
Books for Childrens’ Learning Center classrooms.

FY2026

JUNE 2025 - JULY 2026

THE INVESTMENT BEHIND THE IMPACT

BECAUSE MEANINGFUL CHANGE STARTS WITH TRUST, TRANSPARENCY, AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT.



DONATIONS AND OTHER INCOME

Workplace	\$1,091,606
State Grants & Grants	\$525,961
Board Trust/Endowments 5% withdrawal	\$359,564
Other (Interest, Cy Pres Award, Strong Neighborhood House Sale)	\$348,368
Individual	\$263,092
Program/Event Sponsorships	\$21,600
Total	\$2,610,191
*In the bank	\$117,015



FROM JULY 2025 TO JUNE 2026
175,474 BOOKS DISTRIBUTED

- 63,358 • Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library
- 32,551 • Funded Partners
- 21,912 • Community Engagement
- 20,283 • Page Turners
- 18,086 • Reach Out & Read
- 12,064 • Tiny Turners
- 7,220 • Winnebago County Health Department



NEW PILOT PROGRAM FOR 2026-27

STABLE FAMILIES HELP CHILDREN THRIVE

Meeting basic needs helps children show up ready to learn and succeed.

ALICE STANDS FOR:

ASSET LIMITED

Little to no savings to fall back on when something goes wrong.

INCOME CONSTRAINED

Earning above the Federal Poverty Level, but below the true cost of living.

EMPLOYED

Working, and often in the jobs that keep our community running.

Across Winnebago County, 41% of households fall below the ALICE threshold and struggle to afford the basics. When parents are forced to choose between paying the electric bill, repairing a vehicle, or buying groceries, that pressure doesn't stay contained. It shows up at home, in school attendance, and in the quiet moments when families could otherwise be reading together.

BASIC NEEDS AND LITERACY AREN'T TWO PROBLEMS. THEY'RE TWO SYMPTOMS OF THE SAME INSTABILITY.

That's why, with a founding investment from Nicor, United Way is launching a new ALICE pilot: a program to help working families meet the basic needs gaps our 211 data uncovered.

Our goal hasn't changed. We remain committed to raising third-grade reading proficiency. This pilot complements and clears a path for that work. When a family can keep the lights on and the car running, reading practice at home has a chance to happen.

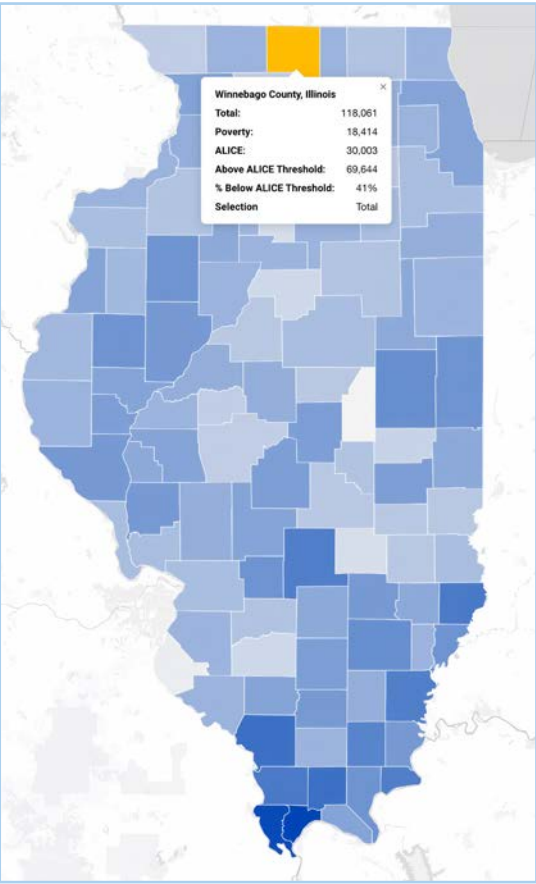
The ALICE pilot aims to remove the barriers that can keep children from reaching their full potential. When families are more stable, children are better positioned to learn.

When children learn to read, our community grows stronger.

UNITED FOR LITERACY, 211, AND ALICE ALL WORK TOGETHER.

When a family calls 211, we learn what help they need. The ALICE program helps families meet basic needs so children can come to school ready to learn. Our literacy work gives kids the reading skills they need to succeed in school and build a more stable future.

When you give to United Way, your gift supports all of this. One donation helps families today while creating brighter futures for tomorrow.



Sources: ALICE Threshold, 2024; American Community Survey, 2024

41% OF WINNEBAGO COUNTY HOUSEHOLDS CAN'T AFFORD THE BASICS	
Total Households	118,061
Households in Poverty	18,414 (15.6%)
ALICE Households	30,003 (25.4%)
Households above the ALICE Threshold	69,644 (59%)



OUR STORY
CONTINUES
BECAUSE OF YOU.
THANK YOU!