

THERESA'S STORY

Too many of our neighbors are one unfortunate event away from crisis; especially without a safety net or support. After facing the loss of employment, Theresa, a 57-year-old resident of New Haven, was facing issues affording rent, food, and other basic needs.

Theresa had supplemental income with social security payments and food benefits, however after the loss of her job, she experienced a reduction in food benefits. Her car was also vandalized and she was unable to afford repairs.

A friend of Theresa's recommended she reach out to United Way, and for the first time in her life, she reached out for help with financial services. A United Way Community Navigator was able to help Theresa with funds to catch up on her rent, as well as helping her with a bus pass and gift cards to buy groceries.

Through the intervention from a Community Navigator, Theresa will be caught up on her rent and able to purchase basic needs for her home. In the future, Theresa is looking forward to being able to move to a new apartment and purchase a new car.



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“I felt like I was at my bottom. There was no one to help.”

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“I am so grateful she helped me. I can go grocery shopping again!”



UNITED WAY
Greater New Haven

ACTION & ADVOCACY

Uplifting Our Neighbors Voices

What does advocacy look like? For some it looks like speaking up on behalf of others. At United Way, it's empowering families to use their voices to speak up for themselves and their neighbors.

Jacqueline's journey as an advocate started in her teenage years when she first had to use her voice to advocate for her safety and wellbeing growing up in foster care.

As she got older, Jacqueline's passion for criminal justice and social work grew as she continued to pursue her education. As a parent, Jacqueline pursued United Way's Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI). Learning how to effectively advocate for children's well-being, Jacqueline is interested leading and engaging others in building better communities where kids can thrive.

After graduating from PLTI, Jacqueline continued to advocate for policies that can make a difference in the lives of families just like hers.



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“As a kid I didn't really have a voice except for mine. I didn't have anyone to advocate for me.”

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“The process of making a speech and standing up at the state capitol has been empowering. United Way has been a stepping stone in this process. United Way as a whole is a community that is so strong.”



UNITED WAY
Greater New Haven

SHOWING UP FOR FAMILIES

A Multi-Generational Approach

While raising her daughter Aitana, Bella pushed forward with a clear vision for her future. She graduated from high school and joined United Way's first cohort of the Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI). Through PLTI Bella's skills grew in communication, public speaking, and advocacy while learning about how policies impact children.

Bella also made sure Aitana had the best possible start by enrolling her in United Way's Early Head Start program. Early Head Start provides quality, affordable infant and toddler care which greatly benefits low-income families. Through Early Head Start, Aitana had the support to grow, explore, and build a strong foundation. As Aitana graduated into preschool, she's thriving - curious, confident, and ready for her next adventure.

Bella and Aitana's success are a reminder of the powerful impact that is possible when people are given the tools and support they need to thrive.



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“I was one of the youngest PLTI members as a high school student. I gained a lot from this experience, through my community project. Many ideas came to me, and I also learned about resources that helped me guide and support my community project.”

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“Early Head Start helped my daughter a lot in her development. She has grown in her learning and confidence.”



UNITED WAY
Greater New Haven

A STORY OF RESILIENCE

How Community Navigators Make A Difference

What does it look like to fight for your dream? Emily, a single mother of two, worked full-time while putting herself through nursing school. Passionate about health, Emily worked hard for years and advocated for herself and was accepted into the nursing program at Southern Connecticut State University.

When Emily needed financial assistance to pay for the nursing exam, she reached out to a United Way Community Navigator. United Way was able to help her pay to take the exam. However, after the sudden death of her sister shortly before the exam, Emily's grief and overwhelm meant that she did not pass the exam the first time.

Even after several setbacks, Emily did not give up on herself or her dream to become a nurse. She reached out again to her Community Navigator, and United Way was able to help her retake the exam. This time, Emily passed and finally fulfilled her dream of becoming a fully qualified nurse. Thanks to her perseverance and hard work through a difficult time in her life, and a little help from United Way to overcome the obstacles in her path, Emily is now working at a rehab facility as a nurse in Niantic.



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“We talked and the Community Navigator heard all of my needs, and she expressed that United Way could assist me for the second time. The Community Navigator was very understanding, patient, and helpful.”



UNITED WAY
Greater New Haven

Dear Jennifer, United Way President & CEO

I am writing to you today with a heart full of profound gratitude, eager to share the immense impact United Way has had on my life during an incredibly challenging period.

My journey to New Haven was marked by significant hardship. After losing my job, I exhausted my life savings trying to stay afloat in hotels, a situation that became untenable. Having relocated from Chicago, I found myself in a state of growing desperation, eventually moving from a shelter to the crushing reality of sleeping outdoors. It was a time when hope felt incredibly distant, and the basic human need for safety and shelter seemed an insurmountable challenge.

It was during this dark hour that United Way stepped in, offering not just assistance, but a lifeline. The crucial support you provided in securing my security deposit and first month's rent was nothing short of transformative. Without this vital intervention, I simply would not have a home today. This assistance didn't just give me a roof over my head; it restored my dignity and provided the essential foundation for rebuilding my life.

Beyond the financial aid, I was incredibly fortunate to be paired with Yazmin Benitez, a navigator whose exceptional dedication and compassionate spirit truly illuminated my path forward. Yazmin was far more than a resource; she was a beacon of support. Her professionalism was consistently outstanding, yet it was her genuine warmth, friendliness, and personable approach that made an extraordinary difference during a time when I felt utterly vulnerable.

She tirelessly guided me through available resources, ensuring I was aware of everything from essentials for furnishing my new apartment to securing much-needed bus passes. Her commitment went above and beyond any expectation, and I am eternally grateful for her unwavering support.

I arrived in my new apartment with absolutely nothing – no furniture, no appliances, just the clothes on my back and a glimmer of hope. The \$150 in Walmart gift cards and the 31-day bus pass provided by United Way were not small gestures; they were absolute game-changers. These resources allowed me to begin purchasing essential items for my home and provided reliable transportation, enabling me to manage daily needs and look for work. My studio apartment, though modest in size, feels like a palatial sanctuary to me. To have a warm, safe place to rest my head at night is a luxury I will never take for granted.

Every day, as I look around my small but secure haven, I am reminded of the immense generosity and critical support I received from United Way and the tireless efforts of individuals like Yazmin. Your organization doesn't just provide aid; it restores lives, instills hope, and empowers individuals to stand on their own two feet again.

Please accept my deepest thanks for everything.

With profound gratitude,

LaVina S.

