

LIVE UNITED

United Way



United Way of Portage County
uwportage.org

The Hand-Raiser Quarterly

E-NEWS FROM YOUR LOCAL UNITED WAY

Our Vision: A Portage County where no resident is without food, no child is without tools to learn, and no one is without access to care

February 2024 United Way of Portage County First Quarter Updates

Celebrating United Way 2-1-1 on Feb. 11

211 IS FOR ANYONE

211 CAN HELP WITH COMPLEX CHALLENGES, WHATEVER THEY MAY BE.

211 CONNECTS PEOPLE TO RESOURCES SUCH AS:

FOOD HOUSING UTILITIES EMERGENCY SHELTER CLOTHING CHILD CARE	LEGAL AID LITERACY TRANSPORTATION TAX PREPARATION SUBSTANCE ABUSE	SENIOR ISSUES VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITES DISABILITY INFORMATION MENTAL HEALTH HEALTH CARE
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CALL
2-1-1 or
330-297-4636

TEXT
your zip code
to 898-211

VISIT
211portage.org

2-1-1
Get Connected. Get Help.™
United Way
United Way of Portage County

Get Help Where You Need It. Critical Needs. Support. Local Services.
Call or Text 2-1-1 Today

Give.

You can direct your contribution to one of the action areas — Youth Education, Critical Needs, and Public Health — or choose all three.



Ways to Give

Advocate.

You can make change happen. United Way needs people who are passionate about youth education, critical needs and public health to stand up and make a difference.



Advocacy Information

Volunteer.

Spotlight on 2-1-1 Information Line

Dial 2-1-1 on any phone, call 330-297-4636, text your zip code to 898-211, or go online to 211portage.org

What is 2-1-1?

2-1-1 is a 24/7 confidential, free resource that can connect you with a wide range of social services and resources, including food, housing, utility payment assistance, health care, transportation, child care, employment opportunities, mental health crises, disaster information and assistance, and more.

By dialing 2-1-1 from any phone you will be connected with a highly trained specialist who will provide expert, caring help that addresses not only the presenting issue, but underlying challenges people are facing as well.

In Portage County, 2-1-1 operators have access to more than 6,000 available programs and services. In our county in 2023, more than 15,000 requests for help were made, with the top needs being food, income assistance, housing, and utility assistance.

Want to learn more about 2-1-1 here in Portage County? Check out our website at uwportage.org.

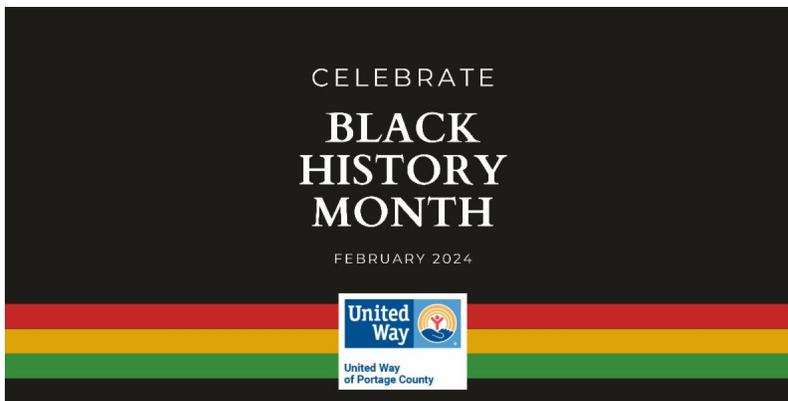
If you want to help us continue this much-needed service, you can make a donation on our website, or by clicking [here](#).

If you are a service provider and need to update information on your agency or services, please email 211database@uwsummit.org.

Access Portage County's 2-1-1
Resources

News from the CEO, Bill Childers:

billc@uwportage.org - 330.297.1424 x5



February is Black History Month!

Black History Month is an annual celebration of achievements by Black Americans and a time for recognizing the central role of African-Americans in history.

Historian Carter G. Woodson launched Black History Week in 1926 to recognize the contributions of African Americans during the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln (Feb. 12) and abolitionist/writer Frederick Douglass (Feb. 14). Congress expanded it to National Black History Month 50 years later during the nation's bicentennial celebration at which time then-President Gerald Ford urged the country to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history." (Information from Census.gov)

United Way works with volunteers and local nonprofits to develop the best opportunities for youth, working adults and seniors.



Volunteer Opportunities

United Way Calendar of Events

2/11/24

United Way 2-1-1 Day: Help us celebrate our 2-1-1 service that provides free, confidential assistance through more than 6,000 programs and services.

3/21/24

NCAA March Madness Watch Party. Join us Thursday from noon to 5 p.m. at Ray's Place Upstairs for food, fun, and prizes. More information about this United Way fundraiser to come.

4/18/24

United Way Reverse Raffle: Mark your calendars for the evening of Thursday, April 18 at the Ravenna Elks Club for this annual United Way fundraiser.

Upcoming Partner Events

2/19/24

Skeels Senior Citizens Black History Program & Soul Food Luncheon. To be held at noon on Monday, Feb. 19 at the Skeels-Mathews Community Center, 4378 Skeels St., Ravenna.

3/2/24

The Kidney Foundation of Ohio's Annual Gala

Kent State University will be hosting various events to celebrate Black History Month throughout February. Visit the university's [website](#) for more details.

Skeels Senior Citizens Annual Black History Program & Soul Food Luncheon will be at noon Monday, Feb.19. This event is open to the public and held at Skeels-Mathews Community Center, 4378 Skeels St., Ravenna.

at the Cleveland Marriott Downtown.

4/27/24

[Children's Advocacy Center](#) will host Bowl Against Abuse starting at 11 a.m. at Kent Lanes.

2023 Tax Information

Thank you to everyone who donated to United Way of Portage County in 2023! Donors who give through the payroll deduction process through their employer can find their total gift to UWPC on their final paycheck stub for 2023 that reports your year-to-date deductions.

For those who gave \$250 or more (the IRS required minimum) to United Way of Portage County by check or online in 2023, you were mailed a tax receipt on Jan. 31. If you have any questions or need assistance, please call Bill Childers at 330-297-1424, ext. 5.



Resource Development

Heather Rainone - hrrainone@uwportage.org - 330.297.1424 x3

The 2023-24 Campaign is Under Way!

The new campaign season launched on July 1! The United Way of Portage County workplace campaign unites employees in all offices and branches of a company and gives them the opportunity to easily donate through payroll deduction, volunteer for local agencies, and speak out for causes that matter to them. You can become a part of a larger mission and see the difference you make in the community. Our goal this campaign is to raise \$660,000 to continue helping our neighbors in Portage County. Money raised in Portage County stays in Portage County. To make a contribution, [visit our website](#).



Learn more about United Way of Portage County's [workplace campaigns](#).

If you are an existing business or a new local company who would like to get your workplace campaign started, please contact United Way of Portage County Director of Development Heather Rainone at hrrainone@uwportage.org or 330-297-1424 Ext. 3.

Thank you to these companies who have completed a workplace campaign for 2023-24!

Allen Aircraft
AMETEK
Children's Advocacy Center
Colonial Machine Co.
Davey Tree
Family & Community Services
Furukawa Rock Drill
Hometown Bank

Kent State University
Maplewood Career Center
Meijer
Portage Community Bank
Portage Learning Centers
Portage Metropolitan Housing Authority
Townhall II
UH Portage Medical Center

Ways to Give to United Way of Portage County



Visit our website
www.uwportage.org

UWPC Community Impact



Scan this QR code

Save the Date for these great fundraisers!

Thursday, March 21 — United Way of Portage County NCAA Watch Party. Join us from noon to 5 p.m. at Ray's Place Upstairs in Kent for basketball, raffles, delicious food and a chance to help raise funds for your United Way. Ray's Place donates a portion of food and beverage purchases to United Way of Portage County during this event.

Thursday, April 18 — United Way of Portage County Reverse Raffle at the Ravenna Elks Club. To win the grand prize, purchase a ticket and cross your fingers that your number is the last one to be drawn all while enjoying side boards, raffles, prizes and food.

For more information about United Way of Portage County events or sponsorships, please contact Heather Rainone at hrainone@uwportage.org or call 330.297.1424, x3

Community Impact

Maureen Gebhardt - maureeng@uwportage.org - 330.297.1424 x4



To review a list of our current Community Funded Partners, click [HERE](#).

Literacy Kits to Portage Learning Centers



United Way of Portage County's literacy programs help to encourage family engagement and early grade literacy.

Each year United Way of Portage County, in partnership with Kent State University's Community Engaged Learning students, provides 324 literacy kits to the children enrolled in the Portage County Learning Centers. The most recent kits delivered in December included the book, "Can a Cat Do That?" by Eric Carle with handmade characters to go along with the story. The kits are designed and made by the KSU students and staff volunteers.

If you would like to sponsor literacy kits, please see [the](#)

[sponsorship form](#) here.

Annual Grant Review is under way through Feb. 16

United Way of Portage County invests funds raised during its annual campaign through a volunteer-led review and recommendation process. Grant Review Volunteers engage in a process that matches community needs with evidence based best practices and program interventions. Volunteers review applications and make site visits. They meet to select the most effective programs and monitor the long-term outcomes and subsequent community impact. Program review and grant making is governed by a volunteer review team and approved by United Way's board of directors. All grant applications for Critical Need-focused programs must be submitted by Friday, Feb. 16, 2024. To apply, click [here](#).

Save the Date — Friday, June 21, 2024 — Day of Caring

Day of Caring is a one-day community-wide event where volunteers are paired with project needs to benefit the community. Local businesses, city/county government, social service agencies and residents from all corners of the community come together to make a positive lasting impact. Volunteers tackle meaningful projects addressing community and agency needs. Project submission will be during the month of April. Volunteer registration will be during the month of May. If you would like to sponsor this event, please see [the sponsorship form](#).



Our Community Funded Partner Programs

Maureen Gebhardt - maureeng@uwportage.org - 330.297.1424 x4



Townhall II

Townhall II promotes the health, wellness, and recovery of individuals and communities through prevention, education, advocacy, intervention, and treatment.

Townhall II is now enrolling new applicants into a statewide Problem Gambling Treatment Group. The group is open to all Ohio residents at no cost to participate. The program will cover the difference between gambling and substance addictions, triggers and cravings, expressing feelings, codependency and gambling, recovery tools, relapse prevention, and more.

For more information about the program, contact Bill Newberry at billn@townhall2.com or 330-678-3006.

Follow Townhall II on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#), or visit their [website](#).

Hope Town Ohio

In 2022, Hope Town Ohio launched the Hope on Wheels program, which has been crucial in addressing transportation challenges for Ohio residents, especially in

accessing vital medical appointments. Hope on Wheels aims to alleviate this challenge by offering dependable Medicaid rides ensuring the community's continued access to essential healthcare services. In 2023, the program completed 8,631 rides and covered 354,300 miles in 2023.



Hope Town is focused on fostering hope and fueling recovery for individuals dealing with substance use and co-occurring mental health disorders. Their work encompasses recovery housing, peer support networks, employment initiatives, essential transportation services, jail support, and social enterprises. By creating an integrated system, Hope Town aims to inspire profound change and empower individuals to build a foundation for a brighter future. Notably, 3,724 of Hope on Wheels rides were recovery-related.

In January 2024, Hope Town was invited to present the Hope on Wheels program at the 2024 Ohio Recovery Housing Annual Conference scheduled for March 20 and 21 in Dublin, Ohio. The presentation's topic/title is, "The Wheels of Change: Bridging Gaps in Recovery Housing through Transportation," and will showcase the positive community impact of the program. Ted St. John, Hope Town Executive Director and Founder, will lead the presentation.

Through a 5-year partnership with the Portage County Sheriff's Office, Hope Town's Re-Entry Services facilitate planning and coordination for individuals transitioning from incarceration, reducing recidivism. The Linkages and Navigation program, in collaboration with PCSO, deploys a dedicated team of peer supporters to address urgent needs, ensuring a smoother re-entry process and connecting individuals to essential treatment services.

Visit Hope Town Ohio online at <https://hopetownohio.org/> or <https://www.facebook.com/Hopetownohio/>



Girls on The Run

GOTR is a confidence-building program for girls in third through eighth grade, inspiring them to build confidence, kindness and decision-making skills while building a sense of connection in a team setting. At the core of their mission, Girls on the Run Northeast Ohio serves as one of the preeminent organizations designed to enhance girls' social, emotional and physical skills and behaviors to successfully navigate life experiences.

The spring programming starts the week of March 4 and goes until the week of May. There are currently 62 teams joining the program this spring season.

GOTR's 5K fundraiser will be held on May 11 at Canal Park, home of the Akron RubberDucks. Volunteer coaches are always needed. If you're interested, contact Mackenzie Smith at mackenzie.smith@girlsontherun.org

For more information about Girls on the Run, visit gotrnortheastohio.org, email gotrnortheastohio@gmail.com, or call 234-206-0786, ext. 702.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern OH & Western PA

Big Brothers Big Sisters provides children facing adversity with strong and enduring, one-to-one mentoring relationships. Big Brothers Big Sisters gives children skills that increase their chances of graduating from high school, achieving academic success, and setting high goals. BBBS is currently looking for [volunteer mentors](#) (Bigs) to mentor children (Littles) at the King Kennedy Community Center in Ravenna.



Big Brothers Big Sisters is always looking for volunteer mentors to mentor children who need positive role models. Additionally, the group is working to start school-based mentoring programs in Portage County schools. High School students will be mentors (Bigs) to elementary students (Littles). For more information regarding volunteer opportunities, contact Noelle Connell, the Match Support Specialist, at nconnell@fcsserves.org or 330-631-3042.

Learn more about Big Brothers Big Sisters on their [website](#).



Kidney Foundation of Ohio

The Kidney Foundation of Ohio provides direct financial assistance to patients suffering from renal (kidney) disease that enables them to receive lifesaving medications and treatments. In 2023, Kidney Foundation of Ohio has assisted more than 600 individuals impacted by kidney disease. They also help pay for medication

costs, transportation to and from dialysis, and emergency situations related to health care. For more information on the Kidney Foundation, visit their [website](#), or find them on social media [Facebook/Instagram](#) @Kidneyfoundationofohio

The Salvation Army of Portage County

The Salvation Army of Portage County offers unique, local programs, designed to meet the specific needs of our community, such as Christmas assistance, missing persons services, and homelessness support. The Salvation Army has an open-door policy when it comes to those needing help with housing — whether they need a place to rest their head inside our doors or need help finding a way to stay in their own home. Learn more on [Facebook](#) or at their [website](#).



The Salvation Army
Ravenna/Portage County,
Ohio

Volunteer Portal

<https://uwportage.galaxydigital.com>

For more volunteer opportunities, sign up or login in here to our volunteer portal. Make a difference today by joining us at United Way of Portage County to unite people with resources to improve the quality of life of families and individuals in Portage County.



You are *not* alone.
If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or visit 988lifeline.org
There is always hope.



LIVE UNITED

Follow **United Way of Portage County** for events and updates



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