

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*

November 2023

United Way of Portage County Fourth Quarter Updates

Don't Rain On My Homecoming Parade!



Above: Heather Rainone, United Way of Portage County Director of Development and Marketing, passes out candy as the United Way team marches forward with the Flashes.

Left: The Kent State University Golden Flashes Marching Band takes its music to the streets of Kent.

United Way of Portage County staff and volunteers had fun passing out candy during Kent State University's 2023 Homecoming Parade on Saturday, Oct. 21, joining Flash, the KSU Marching Band, and hundreds of participants and onlookers for the annual tradition.



Get Connected. Get Help.™

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.

United Way volunteers and staff were former staff member Julia Colecchi and her dog, Lincoln. Connor and Ryan Macovitz, sons of United Way intern Sara Evelyne, eagerly passed out candy along the parade route with United Way volunteer George DeBord and UWPC PResident and CEO Bill Childers.



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



UWPC Calendar of Events

****[HEAP Winter Crisis Program](#) through Community Action Council of Portage County runs from 11/1/23-3/31/24****

11/11/23 - Veterans Day.
United Way will be serving coffee at the Portage County Courthouse in Ravenna during the annual Veterans Day ceremony starting at 11 a.m.

***[Save the Date](#)*
6/28/24 - Day of Caring**

The United Way office will be closed the following days:

Nov. 23, 24
Dec. 22-26
Dec. 29 - Jan. 1
Jan. 15

If you need assistance, call our 2-1-1 Information and Referral Line from any phone. Help is available 24/7.

Spotlight on 2-1-1 Information Line

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

What is 211?

211 is a vital service utilized by thousands across Portage County. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, members of the community can contact 211 for free crisis and emergency counseling, disaster assistance, food, health care and insurance assistance, stable housing, utilities payment assistance, employment services, veteran services, and childcare and family services. **Every call is completely confidential.**

La ayuda comienza aquí

El 211 te conecta con ayuda amable de expertos.

Todas las llamadas son completamente confidenciales.

What Does 211 do?

No matter the situation, the specialists at 211 listen, identify underlying problems, and connect people with resources and services in their community that improve their lives.

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

Thank you to all of our veterans, past, present, and future. Your country thanks you, Portage County thanks you, and I thank you for



your bravery,
your service,
and your
sacrifice.
Please join us
for coffee on
the lawn of the
Portage
County
Courthouse in
Ravenna at 11
a.m. on
Saturday, Nov.
11 as we
honor you.

PORTAGE COUNTY VETERANS DAY REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY



Please Join Us On
Saturday, November 11, 2023, at 11:00 AM
Ravenna Courthouse Lawn



Board of Commissioners

Upcoming Partner Events

**11/12/23 - Girls on the
Run 5k 'Breathe and
Believe'
Cuyahoga County
Fairgrounds at 9:30am
[register here.](#)**

11/23/23 - Thanksgiving

11/28/23 - Giving
Tuesday. You can
donate to United Way
of Portage County at
our website
www.uwportage.org

12/8/23 - Kidney
Foundation Giving Tree
donations must be
received by this date.
Donate online [here.](#)

12/8/23 - Center of
Hope's and Kent Social
Services' 'Hope for the
Holidays' Christmas
donations needed by
today

12/25/23 - Christmas

1/1/24 - New Years Day

3/2/24 - Kidney
Foundation of Ohio
[32nd Annual Gala](#)

United Way of Portage County named Partner of the Year by the Salvation Army during its annual Red Kettle Kickoff Dinner



United Way of
Portage County was
named 2023
Agency Partner of
the Year by The
Salvation Army of
Portage County
during their Red
Kettle Kickoff Dinner
on Nov. 2. We are
happy to partner
with Salvation Army
and celebrate all the
good work for the
community! UWPC
President and CEO
Bill Childers
accepted the award
from Major Paul
Knickerbocker. Bill
and UWPC Finance
Director Karlo

Petrak were happy to represent United Way at the dinner.

*Please consider
assisting our
community impact
partners in their
mission to serve
Portage County,
bringing hope and
help to families this
holiday season.*

Hope for the Holidays

Help families in need this holiday season by donating:

- Non-perishable food items,
- \$15 grocery store gift cards,
- \$20-\$25 unwrapped toys for ages infant to 13,
- Or online at fcsserves.org/hope

Mail or drop off food, gift cards, and toys to:



The Center of Hope
1081 W Main Street,
Ravenna, OH 44266



Kent Social Services
1066 S Water Street,
Kent, OH 44240



To download a flyer, please click on it.

Kidney Foundation of Ohio's Giving Tree Program provides gift cards to dialysis and transplant patients to help offset extra expenses during the holiday season. Make a monetary donation, send in a gift card, and/or organize a fundraiser with your friends & family or workplace.

To contribute to the Giving Tree program, fill out this [form](#). Gift cards can be mailed to Kidney Foundation of Ohio 2831 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44115.

GIVING TREE

GIFT CARDS ARE DISTRIBUTED TO DIALYSIS & TRANSPLANT PATIENTS TO HELP OFFSET EXTRA EXPENSES DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON.

GIFT CARDS ACCEPTED FROM: ALDI, BP GAS, CVS, DAVE'S SUPERMARKET, DOLLAR GENERAL, GIANT EAGLE, SPEEDWAY, TARGET & WALMART

MAIL GIFT CARDS TO:
KIDNEY FOUNDATION OF OHIO
2831 PROSPECT AVENUE
CLEVELAND, OH 44115

MAKE A MONETARY DONATION



DONATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY DECEMBER 8.



PORTAGE METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY'S GIVING TREE FOR THE WINTER OF 2023-2024

THE STORY OF THE GIVING TREE

Beginning in November 2009, PMHA has set up a Giving Tree each year for the cold weather season, from November through February. The tree contains hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, earmuffs and small blankets. Individuals and families who visit the PMHA Office lobby are invited to take what they need from the tree for free, no questions asked. The only rule was that a person must take only what they need for themselves and/or their household members, so that others in need can have access to the items they need as well.



The Giving Tree is sustained by donations from PMHA staff members, various community organizations and individual community members. All donations help PMHA to stock the Giving Tree for the cold weather season. Thank you to all of our donors for your generous donations!

Did You Know...?

- PMHA provided 490 items to those in need during the 2022-2023 winter season.
- Last winter, PMHA received donations from Ft. Chicks Inc., Girls Scout Troop 90220, RSVP of Portage County volunteer knitters, PMHA staff members, and various individual donors.
- Throughout the winter, PMHA experienced challenges in keeping up with the demand for cold weather wear. We typically run out of items quickly as the weather turns cold and snowy, and it can be difficult to keep stocked all winter long.

If you wish to donate cold weather wear to PMHA's Giving Tree, we will gladly accept new or handmade hats, mittens, gloves, scarves, etc. On behalf of the item recipients, we thank you for your generosity!

PMHA's first Giving Tree in 2009



*"Everybody can be great... because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love."
- Martin Luther King Jr.*



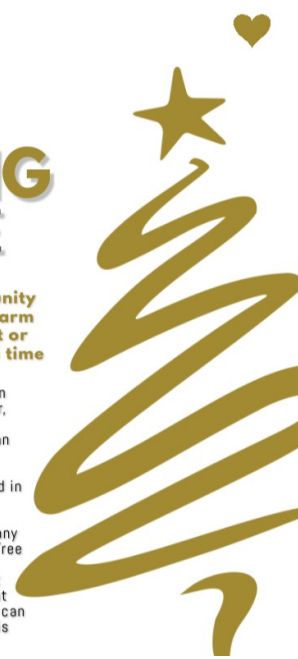
GIVING TREE

Helping our community members to stay warm this winter, one hat or pair of mittens at a time

Are you or your children in need of warm winter gear, such as a hat, a scarf, mittens or gloves? We can help!

The Giving Tree is located in the PMHA office lobby.

Those in need may take any item(s) from the Giving Tree for themselves and their children, but we ask that you please only take what you need, so that others can stay warm and toasty this winter, too. Thank you!



PORTAGE COUNTY JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES ANNOUNCES...

Presents for Kids HOLIDAY TOY CAMPAIGN 2023



PCJFS is collecting new, unwrapped toys, gift cards & monetary donations through Friday, December 1, 2023.

All donations will benefit the children entrusted to the care of Portage County Job & Family Services.

Please bring donations to:
Portage County Administration Building
449 S. Meridian St., Ravenna, OH 44266
proceed to 3rd floor window / 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM, M-F
A written acknowledgement for charitable contributions will be available at the time of drop off.

For questions or to schedule a pick-up of your donations, please call 330-715-0393

thank you!

PORTAGE COUNTY JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES ANNOUNCES...

Presents for Kids HOLIDAY TOY DRIVE-THRU 2023



Saturday, December 2, 2023
10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Portage County Administration Building
449 S. Meridian St., Ravenna, OH 44266
enter off Meridian St.

Please bring NEW, UNWRAPPED gift donations only. A written acknowledgement for charitable contributions will be available at the time of drop off.

All donations will benefit children entrusted to the care of Portage County Job and Family Services.

questions? call 330-715-0393

Resource Development

Heather Rainone - hainone@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. To make an annual contribution, [visit our website](#).

Learn more about United Way of



Portage County's [workplace campaigns](#).

If you are an existing corporate partner or a new local company who would like to get your workplace campaign started, please contact Heather Rainone at hrrainone@uwportage.org or 330-297-1424 Ext. 3.

Ways to Give to United Way of Portage County



Visit our website
www.uwportage.org

UWPC Community Impact



Scan this [QR](#) code

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

Community Impact

Maureen Gebhardt - maureng@uwportage.org - 330.297.1424 x4

Strategic Planning with Community Partners



United way of Portage County's focus is always to make the most impact on the greatest need in Portage County.

We recently completed an 18-month Strategic Plan process and hosted a meeting with our partner programs and other community partners to discuss our three redefined focus areas — **Youth Education, Critical Needs, and Public Health.**

Thank you to all community volunteers, board members, and program partners for their dedication and leadership in helping us to establish our priorities and goals for the future.



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

School Supply Drives

United Way of Portage County helped to supply 370 students with the school supplies for a successful school year through the Center of Hope and Kent Social Services.



Thank you to Hometown Bank, Portage Community Bank, PARTA, Premier Bank, Streetsboro American Legion, Streetsboro VFW, Trelleborg, Deluxe Corp., AMETEK, Portage Development Board, Seven Seventeen Credit Union, Bryson and Owen Pozniak, Geraldine Hayes-Nelson, and the Portage County Democratic Party for participating in the drive and collecting the much-needed supplies.

United Way also participated in the Back-to-School Celebration events at Portage County Job & Family Services, Ravenna High School, and Suffield Elementary School.

Reading Role Models

The 2023-24 School Year Reading Role Model program is off to a great start! We are reading at six Portage County school districts, including West Park Elementary in Ravenna, Brimfield, Windham, Rootstown, Streetsboro, and Crestwood elementary schools. If you are interested becoming a reading role model, please check out [our volunteer page](#) at uwportage.org and check dates and times under "Reading Role Model" to sign up online. For any questions email maureng@uwportage.org. You can log onto the [volunteer portal](#) to register or check availability.



Dolly Parton Imagination Library: Literacy Starts at Birth



As the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library affiliate for Portage County, United Way is focused on making sure every child from birth to 5 years of age is registered to receive a free age-appropriate book once a month to encourage kindergarten readiness, family engagement and building vocabulary.

Since 2020, United Way of Portage County has served 6,449 children through this program with 4,417 children currently receiving books and 2,032 having graduated the program.

To learn more about Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Ohio or to enroll a child, click [here](#).



If you'd like to help sponsor this program, click [HERE](#) for 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. They recently launched their Recovery-Friendly Workplace

outreach initiative. The program is for employers looking to hire more staff while establishing, or improving, recovery-friendly workplace policies. It also benefits individuals with substance use disorders by matching their skill set with an employer who needs them. It is a Townhall II initiative designed to challenge the stigma of SUDs while empowering workplaces to provide support for employees in recovery. Townhall II's recent Sanctuary Kickoff event was an inspirational success. All told, they served about 200 meals to the community while informing people of their services and dedication to a trauma-informed model of providing service. Follow Townhall II on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#), or visit their [website](#) learn more.

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. During the 2023 fall season, Girls on the Run has had the privilege to serve 635 girls and has obtained more program sites in Portage County. The spring programming begins the week of March 4, 2024. **GOTR is always looking for [volunteers](#). At this time volunteers are needed for the 5K Run on Nov. 12, coaching, and assistance with in-office work.** If interested, please 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. **The Kidney Foundation of Ohio is seeking to hire a Client Services & Community Manager** to manage their assistance programs and serve as a liaison with community partners and healthcare professionals. **If interested, please email careers@kfohio.org.** For more information on the Kidney Foundation, visit their [website](#), or find them on social media [Facebook/Instagram](#) @Kidneyfoundationofohio



The Salvation Army
Ravenna/Portage County,
Ohio

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](#). Salvation Army is taking [applications for paid](#) bell ringers. They are always in need of volunteers and bell ringers. You can find more information on being a bell ringer [here](#). To sign up as a volunteer for Portage County Red Kettle Available Shifts, visit this [website](#).

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



United Way of Portage County | 999 E. Main Street, P.O. Box 845, Ravenna, OH 44266

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