

Glad You Asked!

Why Should I give to Sioux Empire United Way?

United Way is the most effective way to direct your charitable donations to caring and well-run community programs. Volunteers carefully invest your gift in programs that have proven records of providing life transforming services in a cost-effective manner.

How does United Way invest my gift?

Each year, over 100 trained volunteers work with our knowledgeable staff to carefully review the management and effectiveness of the agencies funded and use this information to determine funding levels. This information gathered from the review process is focused on results. The four key factors in these results include: program accountability, demonstrated change in peoples lives, efficiently and effectively run programs, and programs that are responsive to a changing community.

What does Sioux Empire United Way do besides raise and allocate funds?

United Way creates initiatives to meet identified needs within the Sioux Empire. The following are examples of programs that have been a part of the United Way initiative process.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (2001): Age-appropriate books are sent to children ages birth to five. Every month almost 10,000 books are being sent to children in Minnehaha, Lincoln, Turner and McCook Counties.

Workers on Wheels (2005): Active Generations' Workers on Wheels helps seniors remain independent in their homes by providing minor home repair, lawn and outside home repair, as well as transportation to and from medical appointments. In 2010, 1,013 jobs were completed and 558 rides were given for 416 older adults through WOW.

Genesis (2010): A program through Community Outreach that engages volunteers from the local faith community, service organizations and businesses to mentor families and individuals that are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless. Last year 42 families were served through Genesis with 87% of those participants achieving or maintaining permanent housing.

BackPack Program (2011): The BackPack program provides at-risk children with nutritious, easy-to-prepare foods for the weekends. The food is packaged and distributed in bags that children can easily fit into their backpacks and carry home. Currently 3,400 food packages are provided at 47 Sioux Empire area schools.

USucceed (2012): Through Lutheran Social Services long-term mentors will be provided to at-risk high school students. Participants will set a goal to graduate high school and as well as around money management, college and career exploration, social relationships, daily living, and more.

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Why am I not able to designate my United Way gift?

Each year 100 local volunteers dedicate over 1,500 hours to closely review all of the programs that receive funding from United Way. They visit the programs, look over program and financial forms, and specifically determine what United Way should provide in support for the upcoming year. Some programs funded by United Way are well known, while others are not. One thing is constant though — the need for funding. If we allowed designations then some of the lesser known agencies would not get the funding they need. Instead we've found that by giving one gift the entire community benefits!

What if I can't afford to give?

By giving a small amount each pay period through payroll deduction, most working people can afford to contribute. Even a small contribution will help someone who might not otherwise receive help. By giving just \$1 each week, you provide a night of hotel lodging for a family of four whose home was destroyed by a fire, or 20 hours of transportation to doctor appointments for the elderly.

What if a member agency asks me to give, too?

United Way contributions fund only services and programs — not buildings or equipment. Still, United Way cannot meet all the financial needs of partner agencies. Due to a potential decrease or loss in government funding, agencies often rely on other funding sources as well as their United Way allocation.

Does United Way only help the poor?

United Way works to benefit the entire community. Examples of broad-based services include: emergency food and shelter programs for people who have been affected by a disaster such as a fire, domestic violence prevention and counseling, and family crisis and stability programs. No one knows when a tragedy will strike and when help will be needed. Each of us benefits from living in a peaceful, healthy community.

I donate to my church.

I can see from the support you provide your church, that helping people is important to you. It is important to United Way as well. In fact, United Way partners with many church-affiliated programs such as Community Outreach. Often, United Way funded programs step in where church support stops. In a lot of ways, churches and United Way make a unique partnership where the overall goal is the same. To help local families, to help our community and to change lives for the better.

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Does United Way condone pressure to give?

Giving time or money is a personal matter and completely voluntary. Local employers endorse the United Way campaign because it is highly accountable to contributors and is one of the best ways to meet community needs; but everyone's gift should be voluntary.

My spouse gives, should I give too?

The success of our community's plan to help people and change conditions depends on the generous support of each person. We each have a community responsibility and United Way makes it possible for each of us to be powerful investors in community change. Consider combining your gift with your spouse to become a Heart Club member. Any combined gift of \$500 or more will be recognized individually at each spouse's company.

Does the Sioux Empire United Way support Planned Parenthood or any agencies that promote abortion?

Sioux Empire United Way DOES NOT support Planned Parenthood or any agencies that endorse or make referrals on abortion. There are 1,400 United Ways in the nation, all of which are separate entities. In other communities, United Ways may choose to support Planned Parenthood, but donations to Sioux Empire United Way do not now, and have not in the past, provided any funding for Planned Parenthood.

How do new programs become a part of United Way?

Each year United Way sets aside 2% of the overall campaign dollars specifically for grants. These grants support new ideas and expanding programs and are made available to any non-profit agency in Minnehaha, Lincoln, Turner and McCook counties. Grant applicants need to show community need, their ability to leverage other community resources, collaboration with other organizations, the potential for success in meeting identified objectives and likely overall impact of the project. United Way volunteers review these programs and looks at their results just as they do with all partner agencies. Programs can apply for grants up to three years.