2020 COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT

A HERO ASKS FOR HELP

At first glance, Casey Wright may not seem like a typical hero. But to his two kids Kinnick (8) and Kyndall (7), he’s just that.
Increase the percentage of central Iowa students who graduate from high school to 95%

**SCHOOL READINESS**

Early screenings catch developmental, hearing, and vision issues before they interfere with learning. Children from families with low-income are almost **twice as likely** to have a reported developmental delay or disability as children from families with higher-income.

**EARLY-GRADE READING**

50% of students of color are reading on grade level in 3rd grade compared to 78% of their white peers – a **28%** gap.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL SKILL BUILDING**

It is vital to focus on building both academic and social skills in middle school (reading, comprehension, fluency, transition from arithmetic to mathematics, and camaraderie).

**WHERE WE WIN**

1,602

central Iowa children worked with 1,039 **volunteer reading mentors** to improve reading skills and school readiness through programs like Book Buddy, Power Read, and Real Men Read.

156,767

**books for children** have been collected over the past five years and distributed for free to childcare centers, schools, nonprofit programs, and others who serve families in low-income households throughout central Iowa through **Stuff the Bus** and other book drives.

63%

of middle school students in central Iowa participated in at least one out-of-school activity. Since United Way began funding the Community School Coordinator position at Des Moines Public Schools, 5,163 6th-12th graders participated in more than one out-of-school activity, a **304%** increase.

Casey and his family seek a better life in Des Moines.

New to Des Moines, Casey is eager to move his family out of poverty. Despite going through a custody battle for Kinnick (8) and Kyndall (7), being a single dad, and having a full-time job, he completed the DMACC HiSet program to earn his high school equivalency in less than four months. He’s since enrolled in DMACC to finish with an associate degree.
Increase the percentage of central Iowans who are financially self-sufficient to **75%**

### WORKPLACE SKILLS GAP

54% of jobs in Iowa require skills training beyond high school, but not a four-year degree. Only 49% of workers are ready to fill these jobs.

**FOUR-YEAR DEGREE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workers</th>
<th>Jobs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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**SKILLS TRAINING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workers</th>
<th>Jobs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49%</td>
<td>54%</td>
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</tbody>
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**HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>19%</th>
<th>15%</th>
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### EDUCATION & INCOME DISPARITY

While 62% of White Iowans over the age of 25 have attained some postsecondary education or training, only 33% of Hispanics and 56% of African Americans have education beyond high school.

The median household income for Black American households in Polk County is **$33,816**. In comparison, the median household for all of Polk County is **$63,350**.

### CHILDCARE & THE CLIFF EFFECT

Largest average monthly costs for an Iowa family of four (2 adults, 1 preschooler, 1 infant):

- $1,035 child care
- $800 health care
- $659 rent or mortgage

95% of parents receiving Child Care Assistance benefits are working, but a raise of as little as 15 cents per hour could cause them to lose these benefits.

### WORKPLACE SKILLS GAP

Central Iowa Works is a United Way of Central Iowa initiative that turns barriers into stepping stones to employment.

500 central Iowans are being served by Central Iowa HealthWorks, 100 more than our goal.

Other Central Iowa Works programs provide training and more for 90 employers, nonprofits, government agencies, and community partners.

### EDUCATION & INCOME DISPARITY

36,000 more central Iowans are financially self-sufficient than 3 years before.

### CHILDCARE & THE CLIFF EFFECT

We lead efforts to eliminate the child care "cliff effect" and increase access to quality and affordable child care by expanding income eligibility of the Child Care Assistance (CCA) program to 0-200 percent of the federal poverty level, including a tiered co-pay schedule. We advocate for the stabilization of the child care provider market through CCA program improvements and reimbursement rates.

Like many, they needed help, but not just in one area.

“People just don’t go from $10 an hour to $20 – it’s not realistic,” Kelsie, Casey's case manager at Hawthorn Hill, said. And with his already meager budget, he was hit hard when his car broke down. Without a car, he lost his job. “Finding a job that will work around my kids is hard enough, but not having a car – that’s a lot harder,” Casey said.
Central Iowa’s Gallup National Health and Well-Being Index score
to 64.5

The Five Factors of Well-Being

Physical
- #1 most common childhood disease: TOOTH DECAY
- 5x more common than asthma
- 4x more common than childhood obesity
- 20x more common than diabetes

Purpose
- In 2018 41.5% of Iowans volunteered, ranking 4th in the U.S.
- Volunteering has a positive effect on one’s sense of purpose and life satisfaction.

Social
- 45% of people admit to feeling lonely
- Loneliness and social isolation are 2 of the most severe epidemics in the world today.

Financial
- Nearly 19% of rural household income is spent on food, compared to 17% of income in urban counties.
- One of the key indicators of health is access to fresh, affordable, healthy foods.

Community
- 60% of health is determined by zip code rather than genetic code.
- The healthiest communities are those with the most economic stability.

15,700 central Iowans accessed affordable dental services funded by United Way of Central Iowa with over $176,000 in donated care in the form of free services and sliding fee discounts.

More than 10,787 volunteers donated over 87,189 volunteer hours in opportunities sponsored by United Way of Central Iowa, a total of $2,217,216 in economic impact.

Highlights include:
- $2.1 million in funding to the Area Education Agencies for school-based children’s mental health supports
- A statewide crisis hotline
- Clarification of eligibility
- Additions to the state board charged with oversight

45,484 pounds of fresh produce were grown in the community and corporate giving gardens supported by United Way of Central Iowa, feeding 18,193 central Iowans.

94,876 children in central Iowa demonstrated healthy habits through United Way’s 5-2-1-0 initiative in schools, childcare centers, out-of-school programs, and health care clinics.

Education, Income, Health, and Essential Needs all tie together in our lives.

His son had a hard time transitioning away from his mom, but after meeting with a therapist, Casey has noticed big improvements. “I don’t know how anybody survives as a single parent without help,” Casey said. Without Hawthorn Hill, he’d be in a far different, far worse position than he’s in right now. “Seeking support is so, so important at any level, at any point in life.”
Without access to essential needs, children cannot learn in school, families cannot be financially stable, and individuals cannot enjoy health and a sense of well-being.

In central Iowa, more than 62,000 (11%) residents are food insecure. Nearly one-third are children.

Feeding America

Housing costs increased by 6% while the average household income only increased by 1.9% from 2017 to 2018.

Polk County Housing Trust Fund & U.S. Census

Nearly 58,000 households in the Des Moines MSA are cost-burdened, spending more than 30% of their income on housing. Nearly 25% of those are severely cost-burdened, spending more than 50% of their income on housing.

Des Moines Area Religious Council

30 Organizations came together through the OpportUNITY workgroup for Food Insecurity to promote Summer Meal Meet-Ups for children. The awareness campaign focused on providing information and materials to everyone who had contact with children living in low-income households and resulted in an 11.3% increase in participation.

Central Iowa Transportation Study

3,000 people received United Way-funded legal assistance to help increase financial stability. Successes include:

- 731 Families/individuals stayed in their homes.
- 1,104 People received legal assistance with housing issues.
- 851 Families/individuals were protected from losing their assets, such as income, a vehicle, or a home.

Due to COVID-19

211 served as the statewide hotline to respond to the questions and concerns regarding COVID-19 pandemic for the Iowa Department of Public Health, receiving an average of 1,200 calls per day in March 2020.

Get Connected - Get Help™
Despite Fair Housing Act protections, families with children can experience discrimination when searching for housing. When seeking shelter, Casey was surprised to find that options near them were either full or didn’t accept men with children. Eventually, he was guided to Hawthorn Hill New Directions Shelter and was able to work toward getting a home through the organization’s The Home Connection program.

“I just want to see my kids in a place where, if they need help, that I’d be the one they ask,” Casey said. “I’m not gonna stop trying to provide a better life for my kids, and that means making my life better in the process.”

Read the full story on unitedwaydm.org/casey