

UNITED IS THE WAY

We believe **transformation happens when the entire community** – neighbors, businesses, nonprofits, and volunteers – comes together around shared goals. United Way of Story County is a leader, investor, and catalyst in creating this **positive, long-lasting change**.

Join us in creating lasting impact for Story County.
Our 2030 goals begin with **you**.



United is the Way We Create **BRIGHT FUTURES**

Every young person deserves the opportunity to thrive. At United Way of Story County (UWSC), we help children get off to a strong start and empower youth to reach their full potential by breaking down barriers to success.

We advance what works, including early childhood education at nonprofit child care centers, targeted literacy supports, out-of-school learning opportunities, and summer learning experiences. These investments foster a future where every young person has a foundation for the love of learning and can realize their dreams.

Because of You

Your investment is creating Bright Futures across Story County:

- Our youngest learners are receiving high-quality child care and early childhood education opportunities, nurturing a love for learning before kindergarten
- Children are building academic confidence through one-on-one literacy tutoring, setting them on a path of long-term stability as they grow
- Financial barriers are alleviated for low to moderate income families who enroll children in out-of-school and summer learning programs

2030 Community Impact Goal

Deliver 12,500 high-quality early childhood education opportunities.



Iowa Reading Corps

Literacy proficiency is one of the greatest predictors of long-term stability. According to the Iowa Department of Education, nearly **1 in 3 Story County third graders did not meet grade-level benchmarks**. To help more students achieve short- and long-term success, UWSC invests in the evidence-based, one-on-one tutoring offered through Iowa Reading Corps (IRC).

Last year, UWSC nearly doubled its investment in IRC and added two new schools, significantly expanding our reach and setting local students up for lifelong academic success.

That investment yielded incredible results for Story County kids last year:

- **344 elementary students** received dedicated weekly tutoring
- **64 minutes of individualized tutoring** were delivered to each student weekly
- **73% of assessed students exceeded their growth goals**, representing a 7% jump in student success

By closing the literacy gap early, IRC does more than just boost test scores—it helps kids build lasting confidence, learn to love reading, and sets them up for a lifetime of academic success.



Out-of-School and Summer Learning

When school lets out for the summer, many students experience “summer learning loss,” where a lack of academic engagement leads to a measurable drop in skills by the fall.

Out-of-school and summer learning programs are crucial because they bridge this gap, keeping students’ minds active in engaging educational environments. These programs ensure students return to the classroom confident, sharp, and ready to succeed.

UWSC invests in ten organizations across the county who provide summer learning and out-of-school programs that address the unique needs of our youth, ensuring they have the support needed to achieve their academic goals.

Child Care and Early Childhood Education

Quality early childhood education and child care lay the critical foundation for a child’s entire future, as roughly 90% of brain development happens before age five.

During these formative years, high-quality programs foster essential cognitive, social, and emotional skills that set children up for long-term academic success. Beyond the classroom, children who access high quality early care are statistically more likely to graduate high school, earn higher wages, and build healthier lives.

Investing in early education isn’t just about preparing kids for kindergarten—it’s about unlocking their lifelong potential.

United is the Way We Build

FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT

UWSC is committed to helping families build long-term financial stability through education, tools, and resources that reduce debt and grow savings. **1 in 4 Story County households don't have \$400 on hand** for an emergency, leaving families one unexpected bill away from crisis.

We aim to provide financial education for everyone by implementing effective programs like Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Women United, as well as collaborating with local partners on programs like Wheels for Work. Our goal is to help every person in Story County gain the knowledge and confidence to make informed financial decisions.

Because of You

Your investment is building Financial Empowerment across Story County:

- Parents and caregivers have more opportunities to work because they have access to affordable, high-quality child care
- More people are filing their taxes for free through VITA, ensuring they are maximizing their credits and refunds
- Community members are receiving financial coaching and building savings habits through our Women United Matched Savings Program

Wheels for Work

Without a personal vehicle, routine tasks like getting to work, securing quality child care, attending medical appointments, and running to the store for groceries become massive hurdles.

That's why UWSC partners with Ames Ford Lincoln for Wheels for Work. The program takes donated vehicles, ensures they are safe and fully repaired, and gives them to local families—providing the independence they need to thrive. Over the past decade, this vital initiative has put 83 families in the driver's seat!

Affordable, High Quality Child Care

Funding sliding scale fees reduces the financial barriers families face when seeking high-quality child care.

In addition to supporting individual families, these investments allow nonprofit centers to maintain robust staffing and ensure program availability for the entire community. This kind of support creates long-lasting impact by helping families break cycles of poverty and grow our local workforce and economy.

2030 Community Impact Goal

Invest in tools to build long-term financial stability for 1,000 households annually.



Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

Filing taxes can be confusing, stressful, and expensive, especially for those already working hard to make ends meet. Many people simply don't know where to start or can't afford to pay for professional tax preparation, which can mean missing out on valuable refunds and credits.

That's where free tax assistance programs like VITA come in. VITA is a community-based, IRS-sponsored program that provides free basic tax preparation services to qualifying taxpayers.

A partnership between UWSC and Iowa State University Ivy College of Business, VITA makes tax season less overwhelming and more empowering by offering free, reliable help to local residents who need it most.

Each year, certified VITA volunteers help hundreds of people file their taxes accurately and on time, bringing hundreds of thousands of dollars back into our community. Those refunds make a real impact, helping families catch up on bills, build savings, and handle life's unexpected costs.

Tax Returns Filed at Community VITA Sites

There have been **184% more** returns filed at VITA community sites since FY22!



Refund Total from Community VITA Sites

In three years, local tax refunds have **skyrocketed by 51%**, bringing money back into our neighborhoods to uplift Story County families!



Women United

In March 2026, UWSC announced the redesigned Women United program, built to help families move from stability to true empowerment. The program still includes financial education and has expanded to offer a new matched savings program for eligible participants.

The Matched Savings Program empowers participants to achieve critical financial milestones—like purchasing a vehicle, furthering their education, or securing a home deposit—in just 6 to 12 months. By committing to save a small amount each month, participants build lasting savings habits that foster long-term financial stability. Upon successful completion of the program, UWSC matches their savings dollar-for-dollar up to \$1,000, turning hard work into a secure future.



**Financial
Education**



**New Matched
Savings Program**



**Building
Community**

United is the Way We Foster COLLECTIVE WELL-BEING

Our community thrives when we face challenges together. By focusing on social connectedness through mental health programs and volunteerism, we can build a Story County where everyone succeeds. True collective success happens when we look toward future strategies while anchoring our community with essential, basic needs support.

Because of You

Your investment is fostering Collective Well-Being across Story County:

- More families have access to basic needs, providing the stability they need to achieve long-term change
- People of all walks of life receive unique support ranging from housing support, mental health counseling, and adult day care for seniors
- Volunteerism is steadily rising in Story County, creating new connections and fostering a sense of belonging every day

Basic Needs

Meeting basic needs means tackling community challenges head-on. Through collaborative partnerships and dedicated local programs, UWSC is driving real change where it matters most:

- **911 individuals** participated in healthy food access/nutrition programs
- An average of **58,386 meals** were served monthly through UWSC partner agency programs and services

Mental Health

By creating tailored solutions that support mental health and well-being, we are building a stronger safety net for everyone in Story County. Last year, UWSC proudly delivered:

- Mental health awareness programming for **8,314 participants**
- **12,115 hours** of counseling, a growth of 58% from FY22



2030 Community Impact Goal

Meet basic needs while fostering 15,000 meaningful connections.

VOLUNTEERISM

At UWSC, we invite you to make a real impact in our community through volunteer opportunities of all kinds. Whether you're interested in mentoring youth, assisting with food drives, or helping a senior complete their taxes, your time and talents can bring about meaningful change. Join us in supporting those in need, fostering connections, and building a stronger community together.

Group Volunteering

Volunteering together is a powerful way to build teamwork, foster connection, and show firsthand how time and resources make a difference in our community.

We offer a variety of kit-building group volunteer options for local teams and organizations to choose from including Snack Kits, Smile Kits, Hygiene Kits, Literacy Kits, and more. We take care of all the logistics, including supply purchasing and delivery. Your organization covers the cost of materials and a coordination fee. Over 1,000 kits have been assembled and distributed since the program began in 2025.

Day of Caring

Day of Caring is more than just a volunteer event; it is a celebration of compassion and collective action. By participating, you are helping us forge the meaningful connections and social momentum needed to reach our 2030 Community Impact goals.

Campaign Kickoff Breakfast: We begin the day with a burst of energy and community spirit at Cornbred. Join neighbors, colleagues, and changemakers as we gather to fuel up and celebrate the launch of our campaign before heading out for a powerful day of service.

Serving Nonprofits: Following breakfast, hundreds of volunteers will fan out across Story County to tackle hands-on projects that revitalize local nonprofits and enhance our shared community spaces.

NEW! Uniting Volunteers: We are elevating the volunteer experience this year with a brand-new afternoon program at the ISU Alumni Center. Join us for lunch followed by an afternoon of kit building.

NEW! Inspiring Kids: For the first time, we are inviting families to join the fun! Bring the kids and show the next generation the power of giving back.



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