

UNITED

Community Impact 2020-21



Your Support Is Making A Difference

2020 was a year unlike any other, filled with upheaval, change, and uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of supportive partners and community members like you, however, we were able to launch new initiatives and forge ahead in the face of trying circumstances.

As United Way underwent great change as an organization, a new Strategic Plan was developed to help us meet current and future challenges in this new landscape. This 3-year Strategic Plan focuses United Way's efforts on preparing children for academic success, empowering families to be financially stable, and leading efforts that help our communities recover in times of crisis.

The following pages detail what we and our community partners accomplished together in our refreshed focus areas of school readiness and academic achievement, financial empowerment, and crisis response and recovery. Your support plays a crucial role in our work and we are pleased to recognize our donors online at unitedwaysb.org/recognition.

As we look forward to the rest of 2021 and beyond, we know there is much work still to be done. Despite the challenges that still lie before us, it is heartening to see how quickly, creatively, and effectively so many in our community joined together to help our neighbors in need. We deeply appreciate your involvement and support and look forward to continuing to work together in the years ahead.



Steve Ortiz
President & CEO



Our Mission

To enrich the lives of children and families and build resilient communities by leading local programs and partnerships that improve school readiness and academic achievement, financial empowerment, and crisis response and recovery.



Our Vision

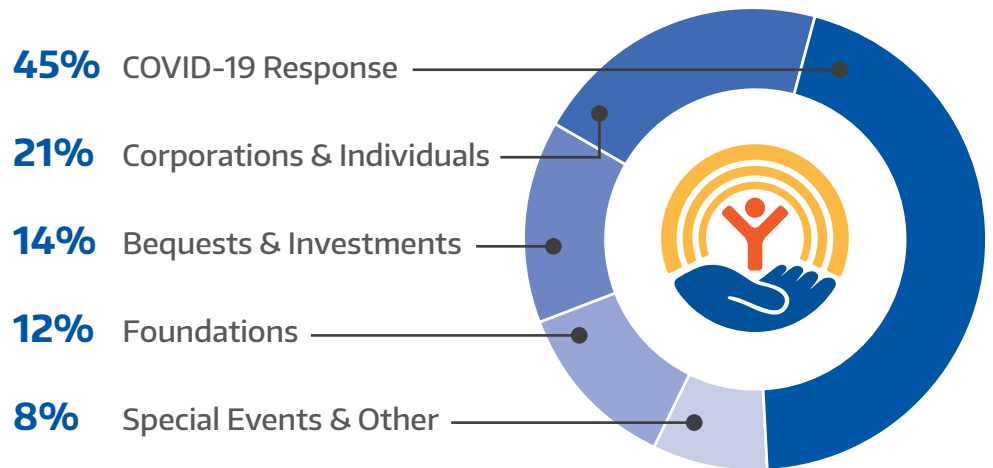
Strong local communities where committed networks of leaders and organizations are united to provide children and families the education, financial skills, and resources necessary to be successful today and resilient in times of community crisis.





United Way invested **\$5.9 million** into our local community

Total \$ raised by category



Programmatic Focus

United Way of Santa Barbara County prioritizes three programmatic focus areas consistent with our newly refined mission and vision.



School Readiness and Academic Achievement



Financial Empowerment



Response and Recovery in Times of Community Crisis

Working with our community partners, we lead innovative programs to support these focus areas. The following pages describe these programs and the impact that you make possible.

*Numbers above as reported in June 2020 990



Helping Our Students

With the COVID-19 pandemic, our local students are facing learning loss unlike any our community has ever seen before. The stakes are especially high for students in their elementary school years. If students are unable to close the learning gap and are still underperforming by third grade, they face substantial future difficulty graduating high school.

With prolonged school closures and distance learning, United Way's educational programs and partnerships are more important than ever before. Without additional learning support, local children will struggle with the effects of the pandemic's school closures for years to come.

In 2020, United Way significantly adapted and expanded its educational programs and partnerships to support School Readiness & Academic Achievement during the pandemic.

Fun in the Sun

Every summer, United Way serves roughly 350 low-income children through its nationally recognized Fun in the Sun summer learning and enrichment program. Fun in the Sun transforms academically at-risk children from low-resource neighborhoods – grade 3 through high school – into successful, confident students. Due to COVID-19 closures in 2020, we adapted Fun in the Sun to a virtual model, providing children and families with a safe, supportive learning environment.

Virtual Fun in the Sun was able to continue supporting up to 350 students and families at seven virtual sites in Carpinteria, Santa Barbara, Goleta, and the Santa Ynez Valley. Students received weekly kits with supplies for art, STEM, and other learning activities. Nutritious meals were provided with support from the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County.

"Our daughter was always so engaged and learned new things while attending virtually! We truly appreciate everyone that took part in order to produce such a great alternative to the in-person summer program!"

Parent of Fun in the Sun Student

350

local students participate in Fun in the Sun every year

200

parents receive support during the summer for their children and family

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
unitedwaysb.org/fits





United for Literacy School-Based Programs

Every year, United Way supports the implementation of web-based literacy programs in partnership with 45 schools across the County.

Local educators relied heavily on our online literacy improvement software, Lexia and Reading Plus, which can be accessed 24/7 from anywhere with an internet connection, as schools migrated to a virtual classroom setting.

When schools closed in March 2020, program participants grew from 10,000 to more than 25,000 students per day. On average, United for Literacy participants gain 2 or more reading grade levels with regular usage.

45

schools across the county use United Way's United for Literacy literacy programs

25k

students were using United Way literacy programs daily during pandemic school closures in 2020

"Reading Plus and Lexia are great tools for the times we face."
Liz Barnitz, Principal of Hope Elementary School

"It helped me read more and read faster!"
Annet, local third grade student

"I like Reading Plus because you can choose the stories you like and the stories that interest you."
Crystal, local fifth grade student

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unitedwaysb.org/ufl





Early Learning Success Institutes

Distance learning has caused significant disruptions in the learning and social development of young students who have had little, if any, in-person learning. United Way has expanded our pre-K and Kindergarten in-person academic support programs to create Early Learning Success Institutes (ELSI) that will operate in 5 school districts to also address the learning needs of first and second graders.

At each site, a certified teacher and instructional aide will work with small groups of students to help them learn basic skills (i.e., sharing, numbers, colors, letters, early literacy, etc.). Teaching is individualized to address each student's particular presenting needs.

To help students maximize their progress, ELSI will also operate in tandem with the United Learning Center, United Way's tutoring center. ELSI students will receive tutoring sessions with one of our ULC instructors. Students and instructors will work together on personalized lesson plans that include a blend of teacher-delivered curriculum and students' use of customized, online, Common Core aligned reading tools. In addition, students will practice and develop social-emotional skills and mindfulness.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
unitedwaysb.org/elsi

5

school districts partner with United Way to operate Early Learning Success Institutes

250+

students on average are served every year by United Way's pre-K to 2nd grade programs



United Learning Center

United Way's United Learning Center was redesigned and relaunched in 2020. The United Learning Center, a tutoring center inside the United Way facility with satellite classrooms at local schools, was created to address the needs of academically struggling students who had challenges accessing affordable, effective tutoring. The program's relaunch came at a critical time due to the pandemic's prolonged school closures. During our pilot launch phase in 2020, we served Harding Elementary School's high-need first-graders who missed much of their kindergarten year, a crucial learning period for young children. During the pilot, all participants gained an average of 2.3 reading grade levels. The program will continue to expand across various school districts in 2021, with additional space reserved for students enrolled in Fun in the Sun to provide those students with extra academic support during afternoon education rotations.

"This has been a very difficult year for all students. When students are beginning to read, direct instruction that is targeted and diagnostic is required. The United Learning Center staff has been able to differentiate in person instruction providing each of our students with regular reading intervention to close their achievement gaps. Each student has shown marked improvement which will enhance their academic and social-emotional success in school. We are grateful to have such strong support for our highest needs students."

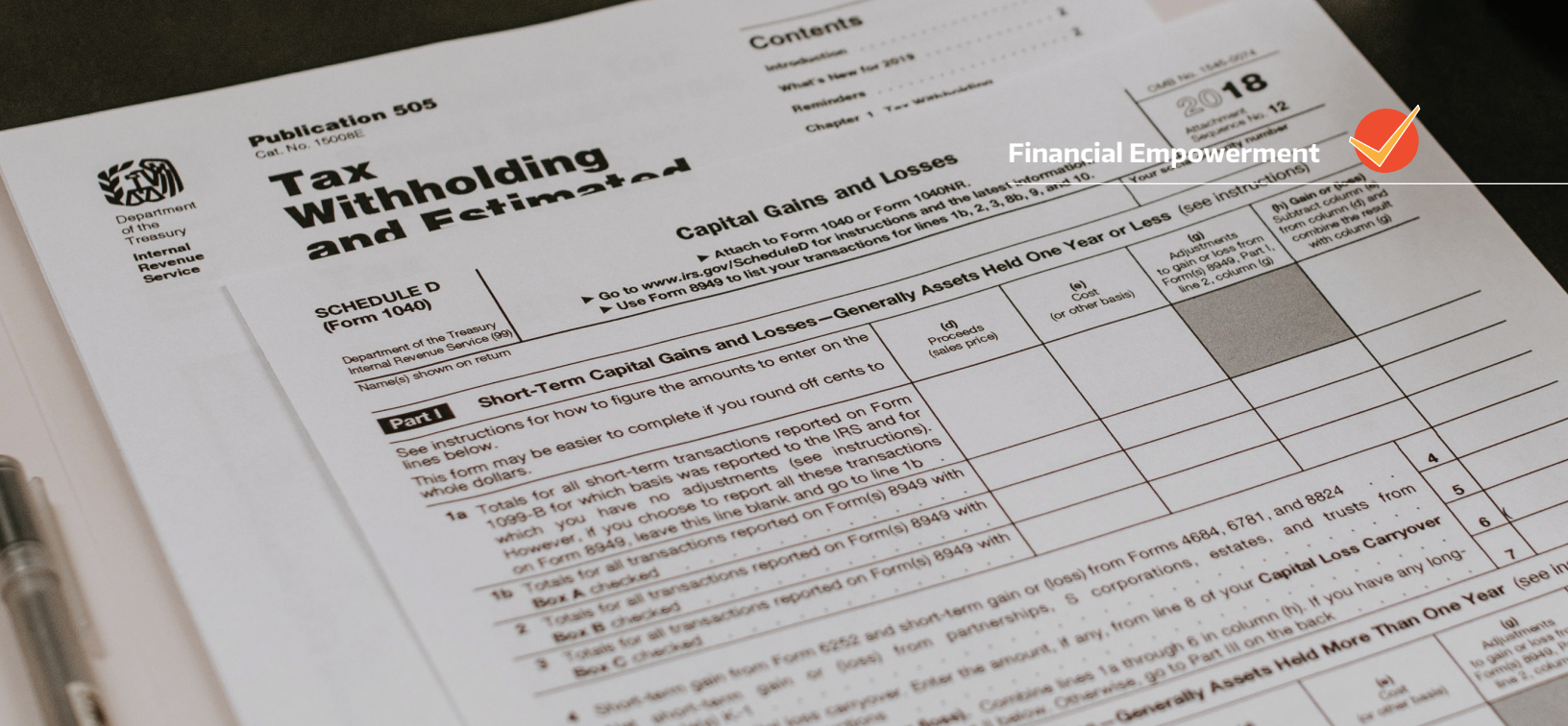
Veronica Binkley
Principal of Harding University Partnership School

2.3

reading grade levels gained on average by United Learning Center participants in 2020

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
unitedwaysb.org/ulc





Financial Empowerment

Financial Empowerment

With the help of community partners and volunteers, United Way is working to increase financial stability for low and moderate income families (those earning less than \$66,000 a year for a family of four). We employ a variety of strategies to help them gain more financial stability.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)

United Way annually joins with 13 partner agencies and 150 volunteers to help low-income residents complete and submit their taxes, charging no fee for the service. In 2020 and 2021 the program was moved online. Participants dropped their tax information off, and IRS-certified tax preparation volunteers scheduled online sessions to help complete their submittal. In 2020, 1,159 people were served, returning \$1.7 million in tax refunds to the local community.

Financial Literacy Education

Establishing savings to cover emergencies, college, or retirement is often difficult for lower-income families who are juggling many priorities on limited budgets. Through the financial education components in a variety of programs, United Way and our community partners offer families tools to implement a savings plan for longer-term goals and emergencies.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
unitedwaysb.org/income



COVID-19 Response & Relief

In times of disaster or crisis, United Way convenes and deploys our existing, experienced partnership network to lead the community in meeting both short- and long-term basic needs. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the economy, Santa Barbara County's most vulnerable residents are facing an emergency like never before.

To respond to the pandemic, United Way is leading a multi-pronged response involving dozens of partner organizations in Santa Barbara County. Based on needs assessments conducted with community partners, these response efforts are focused on providing direct assistance for basic needs to local individuals, families, and nonprofit organizations; supporting students, essential workers, and workplaces with learning and childcare services; and assisting the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department in meeting critical health needs.

Cash Assistance Grants for Individuals

In March 2020, United Way, the Santa Barbara Foundation, and the Hutton Parker Foundation launched the COVID-19 Joint Response Effort to provide financial support to residents in need and safety net nonprofit organizations. As of April 2021, with the support of many local funders, this philanthropic collaborative has raised more than \$5.6 million to help people impacted by the pandemic and the nonprofits that serve them. \$2.2 million of these funds are being distributed to individuals and families in need of rapid cash assistance grants.

Rental Assistance and other Emergency Grants

United Way has been awarded \$18.2 million in federal funds restricted to emergency rental assistance from the County of Santa Barbara, the City of Santa Barbara, and the City of Goleta. These restricted funds help provide emergency rental assistance for specific local families and individuals to help them stay housed during this pandemic. United Way has partnered with Family Service Agency to provide individual case management and to distribute grants to individuals on a rolling basis.

As of April 2021, more than 3,500 households (representing 10,500 individuals) have received these financial assistance grants to help meet basic needs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
unitedwaysb.org/covid19

"I wanted to thank you for your generous gift. When I opened your letter, I had to read it again and again. Then I sat down on the bed and cried. I have never had this kind of help in my life. We began slipping on payments and things were starting to snowball. What you have done for my family and the community is truly a blessing. Please thank everyone in your organization and all of your donors."

Grant Recipient



\$27 million raised or managed to help our county

as of April 2021

3,500+

local households have received financial assistance from United Way

217

nonprofits have received emergency grants from the Joint Response Effort

600+

students have been served by the Learning & Enrichment Centers

984

individuals served through the Critical Needs Fund (Contact Tracing & Isolation)

Learning & Enrichment Centers Collaborative (LECC)

The LECC is a learning/enrichment collaborative program to support students and families with distance learning. LECC provides increased access to technology, safe and quiet spaces conducive to learning, educator and/or parent support to help students with virtual learning, school supplies to help students learn from home, and other wraparound services to support social/emotional skill development, mental wellness, and healthy living. Due to overwhelming demand from school districts, LECC has served students from three high-need target populations: homeless and foster youth, children from low-resource families, and children of educators.

Supporting Santa Barbara County Department of Public Health

The Public Health Critical Needs Fund was established by United Way to quickly deploy resources to help the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department and other medical leaders reduce the viral transmission rate and help safely reopen the economy. The fund has helped provide safe spaces for vulnerable residents to self-isolate, assisted with contact tracing efforts, and is currently working to promote equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines.



**Please contact us to learn more
and to get involved today.**

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