



# UNITED WAY MONTEREY COUNTY 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

United Way Monterey County is dedicated to transforming lives by providing a pathway to prosperity for individuals and families in our community.

Through innovative programs and collaborative partnerships, we tackle the challenges of affordability in Monterey County, ensuring access to education, financial stability, and essential health services. By connecting individuals and families with critical resources and support, we foster sustainable change and expand opportunities for a brighter, more equitable future.

Working together, we can build a community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.  
United is the Way.







## MESSAGE FROM KATY CASTAGNA PRESIDENT AND CEO

This year marked the second full year of operation in The Community Impact Center. Our presence in the Salinas City Center has become a crossroads for community leadership and connections. This year, over 3,300 guests walked through our doors to attend 177 meetings and trainings. In addition, our tenants continued providing services to an untold number of clients, ranging from very young children to elderly adults. With all this happening in our home base, it is inspiring to know that United Way Monterey County continued to serve people throughout the county, providing opportunities and improving conditions through partnerships, innovative approaches, and inclusive engagement.

**United is the way we are building a resilient community.**

### FAST FACTS



**4,500 backpacks** packed with  
essential school supplies

**300 new books** gifted  
to preschoolers,



**\$1,898,197 in tax refunds**  
delivered to local families

**21,481 referrals** provided by  
211 Monterey County



## HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Improving Health and Wellbeing for All

**The Hope and Help Network** brings together providers of mental health and substance use disorder services. Through referrals, organizations build relationships and promote collaboration with each other to connect residents to the care they need. Over the past year, the Hope & Help Network texting resource reached 62 participants. All resources are accessible in both English and Spanish.

## FINANCIAL SECURITY

Creating a stronger financial future for every generation.

**CalWORKs** is a public assistance program that provides cash aid and services to eligible families with children in the home. United Way Monterey County (UWMC), in partnership with the Monterey County Department of Social Services, matches clients with community service positions to build job skills, references, and connections. Over the past year, 112 customer referrals were made for Job Site Training and Case Management support.

**Financial Literacy Education Workshops** are offered to individuals whose earnings are below the federal poverty level. The curriculum teaches participants how to set financial and career goals, manage a budget, understand and repair credit, and informs them about various child care and subsidy programs. 943 participants attended the workshops, with 924 demonstrating improved knowledge and financial literacy skills. A total of 57 workshops were conducted.

**The Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)** supported 920 households with \$6,632,479 in total rent and utility assistance to eligible households, with an average assistance per household of \$5,939 during its final phase of direct financial assistance. Another element of ERAP is the Housing Stability Program, which provides housing navigation assistance, case management, and financial support for obtaining permanent housing. 1,352 individuals or families have received case management assistance, 361 individuals or families have been helped in obtaining or maintaining housing, and \$189,731 has been distributed in deposit assistance.

**Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)** - UWMC offers VITA, a free tax preparation service for low-to-medium income working families and individuals throughout Monterey County. This service operates with the help of IRS-trained volunteers. 78 volunteers filed 1,270 tax returns for Monterey County residents. A total of \$1,898,197 was generated in Federal and State refunds.



# YOUTH OPPORTUNITY

Helping young people realize their full potential

**The Family Friends and Neighbors (FFN) Network** enhances a culturally relevant and widely utilized child care practice that supports the culture, language, and values of its community, providing low-cost, high-quality early childhood education. Program grants supported 72 FFN providers through 118 playgroups, trainings, workshops, and reflective groups. These providers cared for 128 children, with 83% of them improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities to support children's social-emotional and self-regulation skills.

**Monterey County Preschool Service Corps Program** partners with preschools by providing AmeriCorps Members who offer individualized language and literacy tutoring. They support kindergarten readiness and help children who are below age level for literacy. 13 members provided educational support to 104 children at 11 sites throughout Monterey County. As a result, 92 children advanced in three of ten Language and Literacy Development (LLD) Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) measures, and 76 children advanced in one of four English Language Development (ELD) DRDP measures.

**Preschool Spruce Up** - UWMC upgrades play facilities at early childhood education centers throughout the county. The goal of Preschool Spruce Up is to ensure that early learning environments are well-equipped to stimulate the social, emotional, and academic development of our youngest learners. 35 volunteers participated in a Preschool Spruce Up at the Salinas Child Development Center.

In honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., UWMC organizes a Day of Service where volunteers engage in various community service activities. UWMC and the Preschool Service Corps hosted a book drive, providing over 300 new books for preschool students.

**Read Across America** celebrates children literacy by reading books throughout Monterey County on National Education Association's Read Across America Day. 18 United Way volunteers engaged with preschool and kindergarten students in 22 classrooms, promoting literacy and a love for reading.

**Stuff the Bus** provides new backpacks filled with school supplies to students who are homeless or experiencing great need in Monterey County. This year, a total of 4,500 backpacks were distributed, with nearly 340 volunteers participating in **Stuff the Bus** events.

# COMMUNITY RESILIENCY

Addressing urgent needs today for a better tomorrow

**United Way Monterey County's Community Impact Center** hosts partners who serve low-income families seeking to improve their financial situation. Services are provided at no cost, offering community members the support and resources they need to build the life they deserve. UWMC proudly welcomed community members, donors, and special guests to the Community Impact Center for the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony of our Legacy Wall, which honors donors who have bequeathed gifts to UWMC.

**211 Monterey County** is a free, confidential referral and information helpline and website that connects people to essential health and human services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It provides resources for a variety of needs, receiving 21,481 referrals, 324 texts, and 36,128 website searches. The most requested services in our community are housing expense assistance, emergency shelter, and utility assistance.

**Smart Referral Network (SRN)** allows users to make "closed loop" referrals. Case managers, other front-line workers, and residents in need of services use the program to identify needed services in the 211 Monterey County health and human service database to more effectively enroll clients. Currently, 72 agencies participate in the SRN, referring clients to each other's services. The network made 1,694 outgoing referrals, with 56 resulting in services. A Smart Referral Chatbot was implemented, allowing individuals to connect with more than 80 local agencies and hundreds of services.

**The Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP)** is a FEMA-funded program supporting the work of local social service agencies, both nonprofit and governmental, in an effort to help people with economic emergencies (not disaster-related). UWMC facilitated the local process to allocate \$320,785 to eight agencies.

# SPECIAL PROJECTS

**Community Impact Center Mural Project** - This year, we unveiled the first mural on the side of the building facing Mid-Town Lane in the Salinas City Center. Created by artist Amy Burkman in collaboration with the Youth Orchestra of Salinas (YOSAL), this vibrant piece sets the tone for the larger initiative. The mural is the first of 16 panels to be painted by local artists, with the next three panels set for completion in early 2025 by a talented group of local artists. This project demonstrates the power of art to transform public spaces, fostering a sense of pride, community identity, and connection in the heart of Salinas.

