

Overview

This document shares brief statements and images from local donors who have invested in UWECI. The stories can be used in multiple ways, such as internal emails to staff members, social media posts (on personal and corporate social media accounts), etc. It's our hope that the incredible stories of some of our most dedicated donors will inspire others in making a gift and creating positive community change with UWECI.

How to Use

This document should be “plug-and-play,” meaning you can pick and choose information to copy and use within your own campaign promotions. [All images can be downloaded from this link.](#)

Customizable Template

UWECI has developed a [Canva template](#) for companies and individuals to use for creating their own donor testimonials to promote campaigns and giving. Companies are welcome to add their logo to any graphics created with UWECI's template, showing their company's support of UWECI's campaign.

Contact Information

If you have any issues with these materials, accessing links, etc., please contact your UWECI Staff Representative or email: campaign@uweci.org.

Want to see your company or employees represented? Email your testimonial and/or photos to marketing@uweci.org!

Jessica Walker, East Central Iowa Council of Governments, 2026 Campaign Co-Chair

“I believe everyone deserves the opportunity to thrive. Supporting United Way allows me to be part of meaningful, lasting change for people and families across our community. I know that when we come together, our collective generosity creates opportunities, strengthens lives, and builds a better future for everyone.”

Zach Bohannon, First Interstate Bank, 2026 Campaign Co-Chair, Board Vice Chair

“I am proud to be affiliated with UWEI because it is the best organization in our community positioned with a goal to solve the multi-dimensional problems like systemic poverty through its efforts to unite local resources, volunteers, and businesses through its focus on education, financial stability, and health.”

Wendy Nielsen, Cedar Rapids Bank & Trust, 2025 Campaign Co-Chair

“As a community bank, investing in initiatives that strengthen and uplift our neighborhoods is not just part of our mission, it’s at the heart of who we are at Cedar Rapids Bank & Trust. By partnering with United Way of East Central Iowa, we’re aligning our efforts with an organization that embodies our values. United Way is a true connector, utilizing their research, data, and network to identify the needs of our community and then implement effective solutions for the greatest impact. This partnership allows CRBT to not only reinforce our commitment to serving our community, but also to amplify the impact we can make together. When our community thrives, we all succeed.”

Nick Nielsen, GreatAmerica Financial Services, 2026-2027 UWECI Board Chair

“I choose to support UWECI because it’s rewarding and fun. UWECI is a great connector of those who can support and those who are in need. This organization is a leader in the community and works hard to understand the immediate and long-term needs of our community. They’ve provided leadership, support, and guidance when needed. In times of need, you can count on UWECI to step up to the challenge and serve our people.”

Erica Bergfeld-Reed, UFG Insurance, 2026-2027 Women United Vice Chair

“I choose to designate my dollars and volunteer for Women United because I know that my donation and time is going to support the well-being of women in our own community. The important work that our partner agencies do every day is making a difference in the lives and well-being of women right here in our community. Women’s health is a very important topic and close to my personal life. Women United helps women focus on treatment and live their best life after a diagnosis.”

Bre Horstman, Skogman Companies, 2026-2027 ELU Vice Chair

“I am passionate about lifting up our community, but I also know that my individual dollars can only go so far on their own. What I appreciate most about United Way is they don’t just address symptoms. They work to identify the root causes of the biggest challenges facing our community and partner with organizations and programs best equipped to create meaningful, lasting solutions. By giving to United Way, I know I am joining others to help build a stronger, healthier, and more vibrant community for everyone. Together, we can accomplish far more than any of us could on our own.”

Jo Pearson, UWECI Donor

“I am proud I can be a donor to UWECI. It comes back to helping make a difference in people’s lives right here in my community. When you donate, you are helping locally. If you want your money to have a local impact, donate to United Way to do that. Your money supports programs and neighbors in your community.”

Megan Johnson, YPN, UWECI Supporter

“United Way of East Central Iowa provides a pivotal role in bringing our community together to create lasting change. While local nonprofits are on the front lines addressing critical needs every day, UWECI provides the vision, leadership, and coordination that help those efforts achieve even greater impact. By taking a community-wide view of our challenges and opportunities, United Way connects people, organizations, and resources around shared goals, ensuring we work smarter, not harder. Their ability to unite partners and invest where it matters most is helping build a stronger, healthier, and more vibrant future for everyone in East Central Iowa.”

Curt Heideman, Bankers Trust, UWECI Board Member, 2023 Campaign Chair

“United Way of East Central Iowa is uniquely positioned to serve community members. Through impact assessments, UWECI is able to address the most vital needs in our local community. I like the fact that my investment stays home and funds programs that help families, especially children. UWECI has developed long-term solutions that will strengthen our region for years to come.”

Jennifer Welton, Cedar Rapids Bank & Trust, UWECI Supporter

“My mom was single mom who worked 2 jobs when I was a baby and went back to college to make a better life for us. She got a grant that could only be used for her college books, and the government considered it income and cut all her food assistance. After all bills were paid, we had \$50 a week for groceries, gas and other necessities. There are people that truly need help to better their lives for themselves and their children. We didn’t have access to United Way and their partners. My mom is a success story and resources like United Way provide invaluable services to help those like my mom.”

Dennis Jordan, Alliant Energy, UWECI Board of Trustees

“United Way’s founders had a simple goal: to make their community a better place through cooperative action. That cooperative approach to tackle the toughest challenges and respond to local needs through the power of partnerships and collection action is why I give to United Way. I can leverage my investment to do much greater things with the help of others and United Way than what I can ever do on my own.”

Pablo Estrada, JPMorgan Chase, UWECI Supporter

“Being raised in Cedar Rapids, this community has shaped everything about who I am. United Way has always been part of the fabric of this place – showing up for neighbors, connecting resources to real needs, and doing it with genuine care. That’s why I believe in this work. In my career, I’ve focused on financial health and inclusion – helping people across the board access the tools and opportunities they deserve. United Way lives those same values, and being part of the Campaign Cabinet is one of the most meaningful ways I know to give back to the community that gave so much to me.”

Chris Snyder, Cedar County Cooperative, UWECI Board Member

“Growing up, I watched my dad lead not only in business, but also through service to others. He was a passionate supporter of United Way, and through his example I learned early on that strong communities don’t happen by accident, they are built when people step up to help one another. He often reminded me of the saying, ‘To whom much is given, much is expected,’ and that lesson stayed with me throughout my life and career. Over the years, I’ve come to appreciate even more the vital role United Way plays in our communities. We all see needs around us, but it can be hard to know where help is needed most or how to make the greatest difference. United Way brings people together, identifies the most pressing challenges, and ensures resources are directed where they can have the biggest impact. I also value how easy it is for people to give through payroll deduction. Small, consistent contributions add up to meaningful change, and together those gifts help strengthen lives, families, and entire communities.”

Ben Fiedler, Benchmark, Inc., UWECI Supporter

“Giving and volunteering were modeled for me early by my mother, my grandmother, and through scouting. It was never framed as an expectation; it was just what you did. And it wasn’t only about dollars. My grandmother sewed quilts for people in need. For me, with a construction background, it tends to be acts of service. That’s what draws me to United Way. They support both kinds of giving, acting as a clearinghouse that directs donor dollars where they’re needed most and connecting volunteers with the nonprofits that can use their time. There’s a real strategy behind it, and that’s what makes the work matter.”

Jeff Knier, Alliant Energy, UWECI Board Member

“When I think about my “why,” it comes down to something simple: the communities Alliant Energy serves are more than a place on a map—they’re where people build their lives. Every day in my role in Operations Support, I’m focused on reliability, safety, and making sure the systems people depend on work. But stepping back, I’m reminded that behind every meter is a family, a small business, a senior, or a child – someone who depends on stability to have opportunity. That’s what connects me so strongly to United Way.

United Way focuses on the fundamentals that create strong communities—education, financial stability, and health. These aren’t abstract ideas; they’re the building blocks that allow people to move forward. And when those basics aren’t in place, no amount of infrastructure or economic growth can fully bridge the gap. My “why” is rooted in the belief that we all have a role to play in strengthening the communities we’re part of. For me, that means supporting organizations like United Way that bring people together, align resources, and focus on real, measurable impact.

I’ve been fortunate in my career to work alongside dedicated teams who care deeply about doing the right thing—not just for the business, but for the people we serve. That same spirit is what I see in United Way—neighbors helping neighbors, with purpose and accountability.”