



OUR IMPACT

2023

United Way
of Marathon County



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FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND BOARD PRESIDENT

As an organization, in partnership with our community, we have a new mission: **UNITING TO THRIVE.**

We encourage you to learn about issues affecting families in Marathon County. As an organization, we are determined to create innovative solutions, building a path forward, so we can meet our **BOLD Goal** of lifting 10,000 community members to financial stability by 2033. This requires action.

To that end, 2023 was a year of transition for United Way of Marathon County. We have a new strategy to address the needs of our community. This strategy sharpens our focus to address community members struggling with financial stability. These families are called ALICE (Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed). ALICE lives paycheck-to-paycheck, one crisis away from financial ruin.

This mission requires us to come together to address the financial stability of our community members in the ALICE population. We will begin in 2024 by investing in programs that meet the needs of ALICE families, measuring results, and reporting on our effort. Helping alone is not enough. We must create change and act together to see the outcomes we want. We urge you to join us!



*Jeff Sargent,
United Way Executive Director*



*Ryan Gallagher,
United Way 2023 Board President*

2023 UNITED WAY OF MARATHON COUNTY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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MOBILE FOOD PANTRY



Our Marathon County Hunger Coalition's Mobile Food Pantry continues to help reduce barriers to farm-fresh food for those who can't afford it. The pantry on wheels debuted in 2023.

The mobile pantry pops up in neighborhoods where there is a higher density of need, and the initiative is to serve the people that live in that neighborhood. Of course, no one is turned away. Some items offered are farm-fresh organic leafy greens, eggs, seasonal fruits and vegetables.



All food is free. There is no limit. Guests enjoy choosing their own produce, knowing that they can fill their bag with as much as they need – not with as much as they can afford.

The first mobile pantry rolled into the 400 Block downtown Wausau on June 19, 2023. Within a few hours, 200 pounds of produce and \$2,700 worth of food had been distributed. In August 2023, the food pantry gave away 1,000 pounds of food while set up in the Red Eye Brewing Company parking lot. The coalition purchases food for the mobile pantry through local farms.

FARM TO FAMILY



What started as a seed is now flourishing – the Farm to Family produce box initiative began in 2020 with a \$10,000 donation.

In four short years that project has continued to grow and now our Marathon County Hunger Coalition is able to invest \$96,000 into it, making sure even more community members have access to fresh produce.



The Farm to Family produce project is now made possible by dollars raised at the annual Turkey Trot and a strong partnership with Cattail Organics and Red Door Family Farm.

Boxes are filled with various produce items and then distributed to food pantries and nonprofits .



The coalition has forged a strong partnership with Cattail Organics and Red Door Family Farms - the farms plan, grow, and harvest organic produce.

The coalition purchases it, then volunteers carefully assemble it into the boxes. Next, the coalition distributes the boxes to food pantries. Pictured above are employees from Miron Construction packing boxes.



Individuals look forward to receiving the boxes as one way to offset expenses and enjoy the taste of farm-fresh food.

Not only does the coalition's partnership with the farms make it possible to secure farm-fresh food for local pantries, but it also helps the farm owners pay a living wage to their employees, like Ashley pictured above from Red Door Family Farm.



COMMUNITY CLOSET

When the Community Closet opened to the public in August 2023, the response from the community was overwhelming, showing the need was, and still is, high. Since opening, about 500 individuals are served each month. Guests are able to offset their expenses by getting free clothing and shoes for themselves and their families.

Olivia, pictured above far left, was so proud to leave the closet with her mom and her new jacket she picked out herself. Look at her smile!

Then, on a chilling winter day a young child came in without a coat. A volunteer immediately took him to the coat rack, and he was so happy to get a warm coat he was all smiles when he left.

Those looking for services like this, are often times denied because they make too much income to qualify – at the closet, it doesn't matter. We realize the cost of basic needs continues to rise while incomes stay the same.

This is exactly why Mersades (pictured above), visited the closet. Mersades, a working, single mother of three left with a few bags of clothing (including work scrubs) and clothes for her children. Despite her struggles, her positive attitude was contagious, and her face shined with appreciation.

Mersades was spotted waiting for the bus after she left the closet. She had her bags in hand and still had a smile on her face.



MOBILE COMMUNITY CLOSET

Matt, a Wausau resident, walked into Community Partners Campus (CPC) on a blistery cold winter day wearing a lightweight jacket peppered with holes.

The temperature was a chilling 34 degrees. He was there that day to receive services from the many nonprofits housed in the building.

Matt was pleasantly surprised to see the Mobile Community Closet had set up shop inside the CPC and when he left, he had a new jacket and bag of winter clothes to take home with him. He immediately threw away his old jacket. This is just one resident out of 71 that were served that day and Matt couldn't have been more grateful.

"God is good," he said.

In 2023, United Way was fortunate to receive a \$100,000 grant from Impact 100 Greater Wausau to provide a mobile closet to the community.

The Mobile Community Closet expands the existing closet and eliminates barriers by bringing clothing to accessible locations throughout the county.

The first trip was to Edgar in November 2023. The mobile closet is just one way we are working to lift 10,000 community members to financial stability.

MAKING AN INSTANT IMPACT

Warm blankets for elementary school kids, healthy meals, childcare, and rent assistance were just some of the basic needs that were funded by our Instant Impact grants in 2023.

This specific grant opportunity is designed to address immediate needs or projects in our community that help us achieve our Bold Goal to lift 10,000 community members to financial stability.

- Grant Elementary - \$5,000
- New Beginnings for Refugees - \$10,000
- Childcaring, Inc. - \$10,000
- The Neighbors' Place - \$10,000
- North Central Community Action Program - \$10,000



The Boys & Girls Club of Wausau received two Instant Impact grants in 2023 – both were for food. The organization received \$7,500 last summer to purchase healthy food and snacks for the summer program. The Boys & Girls Club also received a \$10,000 grant to provide free meals to kids over holiday break this past December.

INVESTING \$1.6 MILLION IN OUR COMMUNITY IN 2023

The programs funded in this cycle were focused on education, financial stability, and health to ensure every child and person has a chance for success. A total of 36 grants were awarded to 24 nonprofits amounting to \$1.6 million dollars.

Objectives in 2023 included:

Health

- Decrease relationship violence and sexual assault
- Improve mental health
- Improve seniors' ability to live independently
- Reduce alcohol and drug abuse

Financial Stability

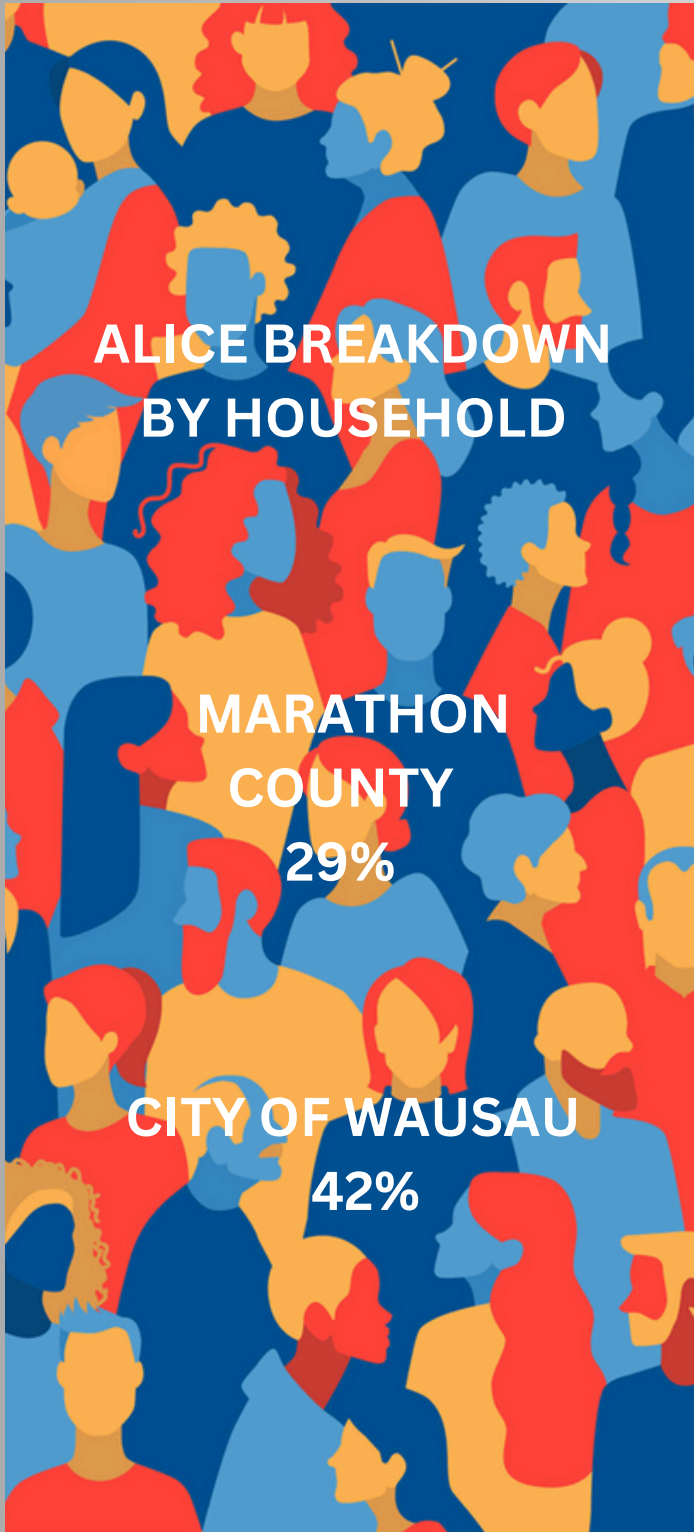
- Improve food security
- Increase safe and affordable housing
- Increase skills to improve financial stability

Education

- Improve academic performance
- Improve career readiness
- Improve school readiness

To see a list of our community investments scan the QR code.





ASSET LIMITED INCOME CONSTRAINED EMPLOYED

ALICE is invisible – they do their best to blend in, hide their struggles from coworkers, friends, and the public. But they are still suffering, most likely in silence.

The acronym ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. This refers to a population of households in Marathon County that are working or are retired. They struggle to provide the basic needs for themselves and their families due to the rising cost of food, shelter, transportation, and clothing. The cost of basic needs continues to rise, but their income stays the same.

The ALICE population brings in an income above the Federal Poverty Level but below a basic survival threshold. **Due to their income level, they are not eligible for most financial assistance.**

We have a new funding strategy to address the needs of our community. This strategy sharpens our focus to address community members struggling with financial stability.

As an organization, in partnership with you, our community, we have a new mission: **UNITING TO THRIVE.**

**Latest data is based off the 2021 ALICE report. At that time, community members were receiving COVID payments, along with the extended child tax credit. That is no longer the case. New data will be released mid-May 2024.*



Scan to check out the ALICE Economic Viability Dashboard.

CORPORATE ENGAGEMENT



We're thankful for the strong relationships we hold with area corporations that support us not only through the campaign workplace, but also through engagement activities.

Connexus Credit Union employees stepped out of the office and into the dirt October 2023 to help our Marathon County Hunger Coalition with a new demonstration garden called "Our Garden."



Our Lunch, Learn, and Do series is an opportunity for employees from businesses to enjoy lunch, hear a presentation from a United Way staff member or local expert and participate in a project.

The first in the series took place May 2023 where guests learned about ALICE. Next, participants created "welcome home" kits for New Beginnings for Refugees and made laundry detergent kits for our Community Closet.

VOLUNTEERISM



Make a Difference Day is our community's annual volunteering event where community members come together to rake yards for homeowners who are elderly or disabled.

In October 2023, we raked 105 yards among 45 volunteer groups. Pictured above in color-coordinated flannels are employees from Express Employment Professionals - Weston.



Our bulk mail volunteers work behind-the-scenes saving us precious time and thousands of dollars annually by stuffing envelopes with mail.

The group pictured above are inserting campaign materials into envelopes. These volunteers, like all of our volunteers, are vital to our organization and we wouldn't be able to do what we do without them.



Braysen Hesse, a 7th Grader at John Muir Middle School, was the recipient of one of the **Emerging Leaders** School Grants in 2023. He was awarded \$100 to build a raised garden area where the food grown will be used in the cafeteria for healthier food options and given to students who may not have access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Braysen was featured on television station WAOW and was the only student who was awarded an Emerging Leaders School Grant. In the photo he is being interviewed by a WAOW reporter.



AFFINITY GROUPS

United Way of Marathon County has three Affinity Groups consistently engaging with the community – **Women United, Emerging Leaders and Retire United.**

Women United's signature event, Power of the Purse, raised \$53,500 in 2023 – a 15 percent increase from 2022.

The group was able to invest \$100,000 into the community by funding 12 grants that work to increase financial stability and improve lives for women in our community.

In 2023, Retire United purchased and donated three AEDs to area non-profits that were not outfitted with the life-saving device.

The group presented AEDs to the Aging and Disability Resource Center, Community Partners Campus, and GiGi's Playhouse (Down Syndrome Achievement Center).

Pictured above, Wausau Fire Department EMS Division Chief Jared Thompson, shows CPC Executive Director Tara Glodowski how to check the batteries on the AED.

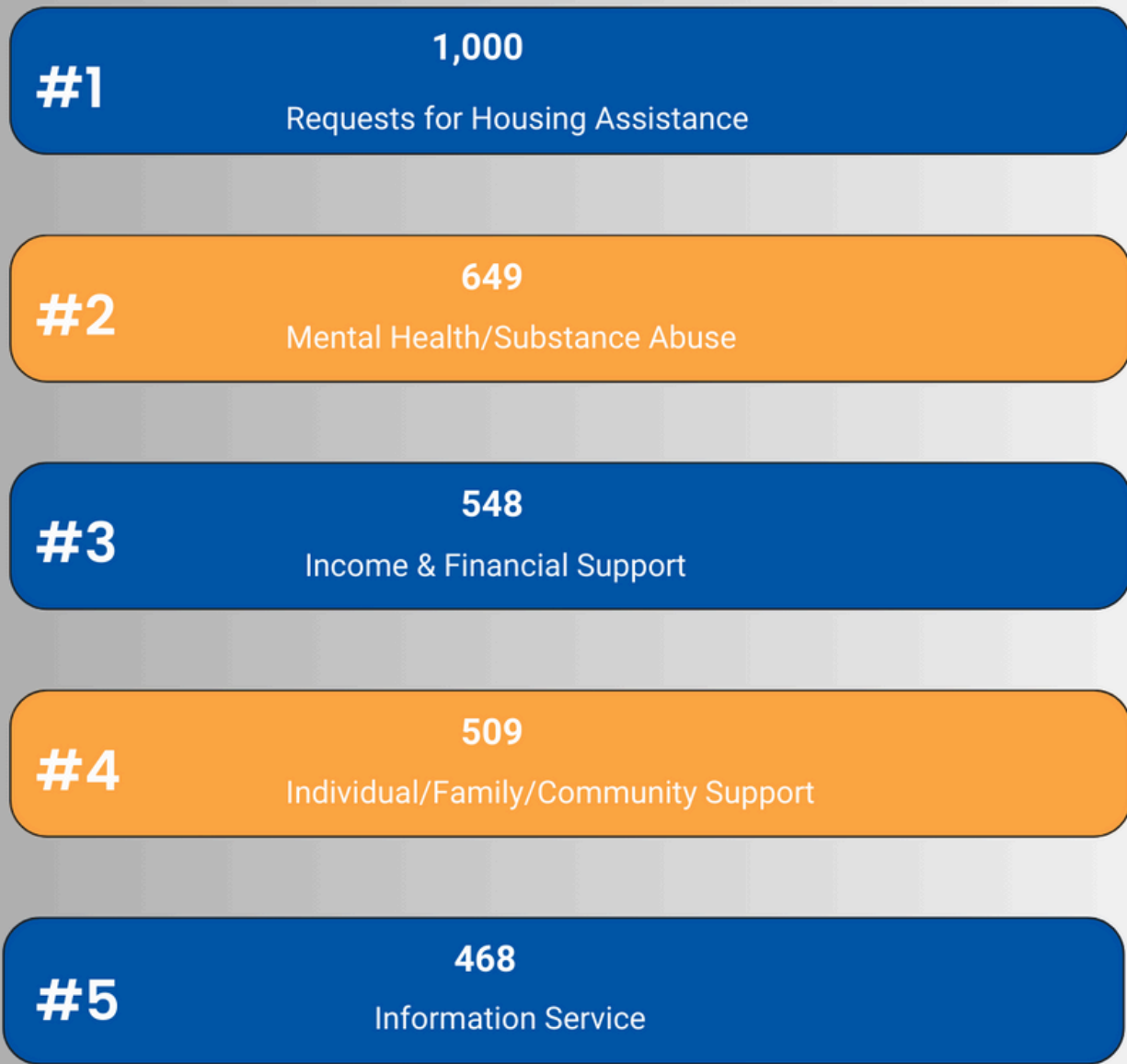
Help Starts Here

211 is our community information and referral service. We help eliminate barriers by connecting people with services.

In 2023, United Way 211 answered 4,796 requests for help from Marathon County residents, providing 10,854 referrals to community resources.



Below are the Top Five Needs Identified



More Ways Than Ever to Get CONNECTED

14TH ANNUAL TURKEY TROT BREAKS RECORDS



The 14th Annual Turkey Trot raised a record \$72,100! That wasn't the only record set Thanksgiving Day 2023 – the number of participants also surpassed previous years with 1,925.

Funds raised at the event are used by our Marathon County Hunger Coalition to purchase food to area pantries and nonprofits throughout the year.



POWER OF THE PURSE 2023



Women United's annual fundraiser Power of the Purse raised \$53,500 in 2023 – a 15 percent increase from 2022! There were 280 amazing supporters at the event held Thursday, June 8 at the beautiful Hilton Garden Inn located in Wausau.

Power of the Purse benefits United Way of Marathon County's Women United affinity group by giving to programs to increase stability and improve lives for women in our community. The group invested more than \$100,000 into the community in 2023.



United Way
of Marathon County



OUR BOLD GOAL

LIFT 10,000 COMMUNITY
MEMBERS TO FINANCIAL
STABILITY BY 2033