

## Editorials

# Give to United Way for a more equitable region

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Stylist Alisha Riff gives a haircut as she volunteers at the United Way of King County's Community Resource Exchange in Seattle in April 2016. (AP Photo / Ted S. Warren)

By [The Seattle Times editorial board](#)

Communities throughout King County bustle with robust business expansion and shiny new buildings. But the homeless encampments and sleeping bags in the region's sidewalks and doorways show many residents are left far behind. Thousands of families lack stable housing and steady income. Children sleeping in shelters show up at schools hungry and tired every day. In the classroom, they often struggle to keep up with lessons.

The United Way of King County is a powerful mechanism for individuals and corporations to contribute to improving these inequities. With [roots that extend nearly a century](#), the organization has become one of the region's most trusted and successful nonprofits. Its goals of helping people through the crisis of homelessness, improving educational opportunities from preschool to community college, and empowering adults to establish financial stability has helped sustain lives throughout the county.

Each of these needs presents an immense task for a region riven by financial and social disparities. United Way of King County has shown that success is within reach. Thanks to a [visionary 1999 donation](#) from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to cover operating costs, 95% of every dollar contributed to United Way is spent on building a stronger community, often by providing supplies, services or shelter.

This dedication to careful spending produces results. In its last annual drive, United Way surpassed its goal of raising \$35 million by July 1, 2019, for projects including expansion of the Benefits Hub program. At the time, Benefits Hubs helped students in need get food, shelter, transportation and child care on six college campuses.

Today, United Way is preparing to open its eighth on-campus Benefits Hub, among other ambitious and much-needed programs, according to United Way United Way president and CEO Gordon McHenry Jr. To help students from needy families reach that post-high school point, United Way provides education assistance from preschool lessons to GED support.

This year's fundraising campaign chairs, Microsoft chief marketing officer Chris Capossela and his wife, Leigh Toner, said they've been proud to see the philanthropic spirit shown by corporate donations and adult volunteers alike. Often, contributions include time, as well as dollars.

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“Now so much of it is about volunteerism,” Capossela said, “and we’re finding that this is a wonderful way to get a kid in their 20s to be introduced to the United Way. Every weekend there’s a volunteer activity, and, oh, by the way, they’re meeting 75 others who are 24 also and are new to Seattle. So there’s this interesting social networking built in.”

United Way of King County is fueled by contributions to help provide fresh opportunity. This year’s goal is \$41 million. Every donation of money or time will help build a stronger region.

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