

The community's needs are great: Give to United Way

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A community member grabs produce at the food bank at Byrd Barr Place in Seattle's Central District on Tuesday, Aug. 16, 2022. (Daniel Kim / The Seattle Times)

By [The Seattle Times editorial board](#)

United Way of King County has a clear mission:
To have a racially just community where everyone has homes, students graduate and families are financially stable. That clear mission, of course, does not make for an easy goal.

Working toward such a transformative vision requires everyone's help.

These past few years have been particularly difficult, as the pandemic exposed and compounded inequities in education, health, housing and work. Even as the impact of the pandemic has eased, it has given way to inflation, keeping the people with the greatest need back on their heels, said United Way CEO Gordon McHenry Jr.

“As far as we can tell, the needs of this community are still at record levels, and I’m concerned the path forward is going to be long and arduous,” he said.

Long term success depends on policy changes and system transformation, but that immediate need must also be addressed. United Way’s “superpower” is its ability to combine different resources to help meet those needs, said Scott Meden, who co-chairs the 2022-2023 fundraising campaign along with his wife, Patty.

“United Way has a way of working with nonprofit partners, with state and local government, working with the community to raise funds, and pulling that all together to help solve complex problems,” he said.

The organization’s holistic approach to improve the lives of the most vulnerable has long set it apart from many other nonprofits, along with its clear-eyed work to support programs that produce measurable results and not simply to try and do good and hope for the best.

Rental assistance is one of United Ways services that has been particularly impactful during the pandemic and its recovery, with about \$1 million a week continuing to help

families remain housed. Overall, 20,000 households have received aid and about \$130 million has been disbursed so far.

As food banks became overwhelmed, a partnership with DoorDash for weekly home grocery delivery allowed United Way to battle food insecurity, supplying 6,700 households with boxes of culturally appropriate supplies.

Education is also an important weapon in the fight against poverty, whether that's teaching households how to benefit from the earned income tax credit, to helping reconnect youth who may have fallen through the cracks on their way to finishing high school.

As the need in the community grows, so does the need for everyone who can help to do so.

"Everybody's touched by these economic times, everybody's touched by what they see happening around us," said Patty Meden. "You have to have empathy, but you have to get up and do something about it."

Go to uwkc.org to learn more about how you can donate or volunteer.

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