

# STRATEGIES FOR A BETTER TOMORROW



Focus Group Report  
United Way of Marathon County

GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.  
**LIVE UNITED**™



# BRINGING PEOPLE AND RESOURCES TOGETHER

## Overview of Report:

The purpose of this report and project is to help United Way and the broader community select a limited number of issues and strategies that will improve people's lives in Marathon County. United Way has stepped forward to take the lead by bringing people together and providing the necessary time, expertise and resources. This document is a summary of the full report available at United Way or on the web at [unitedwaymc.org](http://unitedwaymc.org).



## Description for change:

United Way of Marathon County Board has adopted the following statement to describe its direction:

United Way is sharpening its focus by addressing the root cause of problems to create lasting change in people's lives. We're becoming more focused in making strategic choices, which is critical, because needs are growing faster than resources. Together with community partners, we will concentrate on preventing problems while maintaining a safety net for people in need.

## Methodology:

The following four issues were selected as critical topics by United Way volunteers:

- Supporting Children in the Early Years
- Helping At-Risk Youth Develop and Achieve their Potential
- Improving Families' Ability to Meet Basic Needs
- Improving Health and Wellness

A group of knowledgeable people participated in a facilitated process to analyze each focus area. The process involved each group developing a vision statement, identifying the most critical barriers to achieving the vision and the things that need to be done to address the barriers. The process and discussion was guided to focus on the underlying issues, identify realistic and achievable goals and understand that the report is dynamic and things will change.



Each group's facilitated dialogue built common understanding about what it takes to achieve the goals and make progress toward realizing the vision together. Groups were reminded that implementing the strategies to move toward success requires working in new ways with investments of time, relationships, technology, expertise, money and other resources.

# FOCUS AREA SUMMARY

## Supporting Children in the Early Years

**Vision:** Our community values the importance of early childhood development and works together to ensure young children develop to their full potential.

**Goals:** (abbreviated statements) Children in their early years are supported for optimal physical, social/emotional and intellectual development by their:

- Parents having and using knowledge and resources to provide the support that is important for their development.
- Families having access to quality early child care and educational programs.
- Community which is willing to invest in programs that support young children.

### Sample Strategies:

- Educate parents and businesses about the importance of and ways to support children.
- Coordinate resources and programs to be more strategic and collaborative in meeting the needs of families.
- Educate community leaders on the importance of early child development and develop an executive level leadership team that takes action.



## Helping At-Risk Youth Develop and Achieve their Potential



**Vision:** Youth in Marathon County with at-risk factors are inspired and equipped to become positive, contributing members of the community.

**Goals:** Youth with at-risk factors:

- Achieve educational/vocational goals necessary to become positive, contributing members of their community.
- Develop the life skills necessary to become positive, contributing members of their community.

### Sample Strategies:

- Share resources and coordinate efforts so that schools and community organizations work together to define respective roles in supporting at-risk youth.
- Expand utilization of programs in school and community settings which effectively educate families and youth in life skills.
- Connect youth with mentors or other role models who can help them see the value of education.

# FOCUS AREA SUMMARY

## Improving Families' Ability to Meet Basic Needs

**Vision:** Families and individuals in Marathon County will be financially secure and stable in meeting their basic needs with hope & confidence for their future.

### Goals:

- People who are able to work have the necessary resources to meet basic financial needs through coordinated programs and services.
- Families and individuals have food and reside in housing and neighborhoods that help meet their basic needs through coordinated programs and services.

### Sample Strategies:

- Create and/or participate in collaborations to identify and pursue practical options for creating new jobs that match the skills and circumstances of local residents.
- Offer expanded and effective programming to educate residents about how to manage their financial resources more wisely.
- Expand our communities' housing subsidy programs and help local businesses and landlords navigate federal programs.
- Expand ready access to food programs through greater collaboration, innovative delivery systems and expanded resources.



## Improving Health and Wellness

**Vision:** Residents have the resources, knowledge, and support necessary to effectively meet their physical and mental health needs.

**Goals:** (abbreviated statements) Residents in Marathon County improve and maintain physical, dental, behavioral and mental health because they:

- Understand the components of wellness and healthy living and know what services are available to help them take necessary action.
- Have access to necessary resources and services to meet their basic health needs.
- Have access to prevention and treatment programs to address behavior that is abusive to themselves and their families.

### Sample Strategies:

- Identify the content of important health information and develop effective methods for delivering this information.
- Educate the public about physical, dental, behavioral and mental health needs in the community and encourage them to be supportive of those in need and the services they require.
- Educate the public about the dangers and consequences of substance abuse and how to prevent it.
- Offer prevention programs targeted to youth who are at-risk of becoming domestic abuse offenders based on established criteria.



# ADVANCING THE COMMON GOOD

This report is to be used by the community  
as a call to action to

## LIVE UNITED

...to influence the condition of all.

The identified strategies are the things that can be done to improve the education, income and health of our county's residents. These are the building blocks for a good life. By joining hands and working together we can improve our community.

Each of us can be part of the change---by giving, advocating and volunteering, we can LIVE UNITED.

### Next Steps:

United Way will use this report to restructure its work so that we are better positioned to make strategic choices and create lasting change.

Future action will include providing time, technology, expertise, and other resources in support of bringing people together to work for the common good.

### As United Way looks to implement these changes, the core of the work will involve:

- Making strategic choices to narrow our focus
- Developing strong collaborative partnerships
- Setting measurements for success
- Aligning resources and energy with research based strategies which result in innovative and successful program development or expansion
- Delivering results

The benefit will be lasting change that will build strong, healthy and vital communities for a sustainable future.

Full report available at [unitedwaymc.org](http://unitedwaymc.org).



# FOCUS GROUP MEMBERS

Pam Anderson  
Nell Anderson  
Judy Beier  
Cindy Bodenheimer  
Becky Bogen-Marek  
Denis Burgess  
Deb Burgess  
Julie Burmesch  
Judy Burrows  
Jackie Carattini  
Peggie Carrier-Deimer  
Cheryl Davis  
Trudy DeSimons  
Dean Dietrich  
Lisa Dobberke  
Kathy Drengher  
Jill Eckert  
Sandra Ellis  
Patti Filak  
John Fischer  
Jane Freitag  
Pauline Frome  
Sue Gantner  
Tammy Gardner  
Brian Goodwill  
Jane Graham-Jennings

Julie Grip  
Marjorie Hackbarth  
Roxane Hagedorn  
Claudette Haring  
Kevin Heinking  
Shu Blong Her  
Dua Her  
Carole Hess  
Cathy Howe  
Shirley Hubert  
Jane Huebsch  
Jeffrey Joyce  
Ray Kacvinsky  
Karen Katz  
Pat Kinney  
Micki Krueger  
Jeanne Lang  
Thomas Lee  
Jessica Lind  
Mary Lontkowski  
Ann Lucas  
Rachel Martin  
Michael McCarthy  
Deb Menacher  
David Munoz  
Lon Newman

Kristen Novey  
Susan Nowak  
Tony Omernik  
Kay Perkins  
Karen Petersen  
Wendy Peterson  
David Phelps  
Cindy Piotrowski  
Jennifer Plisch  
Tom Rau  
Richard Rayborn  
Colleen Rinken  
Jerry Rosso  
Linda Salzman  
Jeff Sargent  
Ron Schnyder  
Laura Scudiere  
Lori Shepherd  
Rachael Sherfield  
Lee Shipway  
Laurie Solomon  
Corinne Solsrud  
Win Spencer  
Robert Stasney

Brian Stezenski-Williams  
Rita Straub  
Amy Tamsen  
Gwen Taylor  
Joan Theurer  
Pixie Tipple  
Debi Traeder  
Joy Trollop  
Vicki Tylka  
Carrie Vergin  
James Verkest  
Melissa Vetort  
Bob Voelker  
Todd Werner  
Julie Willems Van Dijk  
Kao Lai Xiong  
Peter Yang  
Laura Yarie  
Shannon Young  
Gina Zacho  
Kelly Zagrzebski  
Katie Zientara  
David Zuege

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# FOR MORE INFORMATION

Full report available at office or on-line at [unitedwaymc.org](http://unitedwaymc.org)

United Way of Marathon County, 137 River Drive, Wausau, WI 54403

**Phone:** 715-848-2927 **Email:** [jkelly@unitedwaymc.org](mailto:jkelly@unitedwaymc.org) **Web:** [unitedwaymc.org](http://unitedwaymc.org)

**Lead Staff:** Joanne Kelly; JoAnn Janikowski ~ **Facilitator:** Ron Stevens, ChangeWays

