



**UNITED WAY**  
Marathon County

Date Thanksgiving!!

Payable to: Our Community \$ 98,500<sup>00</sup>  
Ninety-eight thousand and <sup>00</sup>/<sub>100</sub> Dollars

Memo 2,413 Turkey Trot Runners

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**OUR  
IMPACT  
2025**

## FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND 2025 BOARD PRESIDENT

### Uniting to Thrive

As we look back on 2025, one common theme continues to emerge: **Resilience.**

Time and again, this community continues to prove its commitment to building a better future for our neighbors. By giving your time, skills, and resources, you helped us do more than just stand tall in the face of adversity; **we responded in the moments that it mattered most**, proving that when our neighbors are in need we move fast and we move together.

Our evidence is not only in the measurable and long-term impacts of our Bold Goal, but also in our immediate response to emergencies, our ability to adapt to new needs, and our capacity to handle the growing demand for our services.

As we look ahead to 2026 and beyond, we remain committed to mobilizing our community to action, so that all our neighbors can thrive.

Thank you for stepping into this work with us. Our community is better when we respond together.



Ben Lee,  
United Way CEO



Dave Greene,  
United Way 2025 Board President

## 2025 UNITED WAY OF MARATHON COUNTY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Dr. Swati Biswas - Marshfield Clinic region of Sanford Health
- Julie Bliss - UnitedHealth Group
- Samantha Diedrich - McClone Insurance
- Rob Elliott - Northcentral Technical College
- Lisa Felch - J&D Tube Benders
- Dave Greene - EO Johnson
- Mitchell Guralski - Creative Planning
- Todd Hagedorn - Wipfli
- Paul Herold - Marathon Cheese Corp.
- Amy Janke - Retired
- Nancy Kaiser - Marathon Cheese Corp.
- Christy Keele - CASA of Marathon County
- Michael Loy - Geared Equity
- Jessica Meadows - County Materials Corp.
- Dave Nelson - BMO
- Tom Newell - Greenheck Group
- Dr. Casey Nye - DC Everest School District
- Andrew Shallow - Associated Bank
- Bailey Sleeper - National Eczema Association
- Jennifer Smith - Bridge Community Health Clinic
- Kari Solomonson - Peoples State Bank
- Craig Uhlenbrauck - Miron Construction
- Kalli Yaklyvich - ICW Group
- Steve Zeinemann - Retired

## LIFTING COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO FINANCIAL STABILITY

### 2025 COMMUNITY INVESTMENTS:

United Way of Marathon County invested \$1.6 million into the community in 2025, supporting programs that provide a lifeline to individuals and families facing challenges with access to food, housing, childcare, employment and income, and behavioral health.

Below are the programs funded in 2025 through the traditional Request for Proposals process.



### BASIC NEEDS

- Catholic Charities of the Diocese of La Crosse – Good Shepherd Shelter (Wausau Warming Center) and Beyond Shelter
- Northcentral Community Action Program – Emergency Housing Assistance Fund
- The Neighbors’ Place – More than Food
- The Salvation Army Wausau – Transitional Living
- Faith in Action – Driving Force for Seniors
- Wausau Area Mobile Meals – Wausau Mobile Meals

### BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

- Bridge Community Health Clinic – Childhood Mental Health Counseling, Substance Abuse Treatment, Mental Health Therapy, SAFE.
- Marathon County School Based Consortium – School Based Mental Health Services
- The Women’s Community – Domestic Abuse & Sexual Assault Victim Services, Transitional Living
- Children’s Wisconsin – Child & Family Counseling
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northcentral Wisconsin – Mentoring Program

### CHILDCARE

- Childcaring – Good Start Grants
- Boys & Girls Club of the Greater Wausau Area – Before & After School Programs
- Spencer Kids Group – Spencer Kids Group Youth Center

### EMPLOYMENT & INCOME

- Wisconsin Automotive & Truck Education Association (WATEA) – Wheels to Work
- Judicare – Judicare Community Law Clinic
- Girl Scouts of the Northwestern Great Lakes – Creating Equitable Pathways into Leadership

## MORE THAN 7,000 STRONG: ADVANCING TOWARD OUR BOLD GOAL

In 2025, **7,155** community members had been lifted to financial stability through services provided by programs funded by United Way of Marathon County.

As the challenges facing working families in Marathon County grew, United Way sharpened its focus in 2024 on what it would take to **create lasting change**.

With more than **45,000** of our neighbors living paycheck to paycheck, attention turned to ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) households working hard but struggling to afford basic needs.

In response, a strategic shift was made to prioritize financial stability as a core pillar of our work, and we introduced our bold goal to lift 10,000 community members to financial stability by 2033.

ALICE individuals represent the backbone of our community. They are one unexpected expense away from crisis and oftentimes make too much to receive assistance.

These families and individuals now have stronger footing, increased income, or access to support programs that will help them continue moving forward.

This goal is more than a number; it represents real people receiving meaningful services and the tools needed to build a secure future.

It also reflects a community-wide effort to move beyond short-term relief and toward long-term solutions that empower families to thrive.

Today, that commitment remains as important as ever. United Way continues to partner with local nonprofits, businesses, and community leaders to create pathways to stability for ALICE households.

Together, we are working to ensure that every individual and family in Marathon County has the opportunity to get ahead.

### IMPACT SNAPSHOT

**24,332**

Individuals Served

**7,155**

Lifted to Financial Stability

**9,417**

Individuals Referred to Other Services

## UNITED WAY BRINGS \$254,000 TO COMMUNITY THROUGH OTTO BREMER FUND

United Way of Marathon County distributed \$254,000 to six local nonprofits in October 2025.

The funding comes from the Otto Bremer Trust Community Responsive Fund. The Otto Bremer Trust chose the United Way of Wisconsin network as its philanthropic intermediary.

“Any time that we can bring additional funds into our community, is a good thing. We’re grateful that the Otto Bremer Trust

saw the value in this partnership and that we’re able to make some really great investments in our community because of that partnership,” said United Way CEO, Ben Lee.

The six nonprofits that received funds were the Boys & Girls Club of the Wausau Area, Marathon County Literacy Council, Bridge Community Health Clinic, The Women’s Community, Wisconsin Judicare and Woodson YMCA.



Woodson YMCA was one of the recipients of an Otto Bremer Trust Community Responsive Fund grant in 2025.

## A STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE: 211 EARNS NATIONAL ACCREDITATION AGAIN

In October 2025, United Way of Marathon County's 211 program achieved its fourth consecutive accreditation from Inform USA, placing it among a select group of community navigation programs recognized for excellence nationwide.

This recognition didn't come easy. Over the course of the year, our 211 team worked closely with Inform USA to guarantee every aspect of the service, is held to the highest standard, from how calls are answered to how referrals are made.

"It's a rigorous process designed to make sure every caller receives accurate, compassionate, and effective support," said Megan Schreiber, 211 program director for United Way of Marathon County.

By dialing 211, community members can connect with a real person who listens, understands their situation, and helps them find resources for housing, food, childcare, mental health support, and more. It's a simple call, but for many, it's a lifeline.

For our community, that means when someone reaches out in a moment of need, they're not just getting help, they're getting trusted help. While 211 may not always be widely known, its impact is felt every day, quietly connecting neighbors to the resources they need to stay stable, safe, and supported.

## CITY OF WAUSAU ISSUES FIRST-EVER PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING FEBRUARY 11 AS 211 DAY



What began as a conversation in late 2025, came to fruition in 2026.

On February 11, 2026 in celebration of National 211 Day, Wausau Mayor Doug Diny issued an official 211 Day **proclamation** in front of a packed room at the United Way of Marathon County office.

This marks the first time the City of Wausau has formally recognized 211 Day – a meaningful milestone for our community.

National 211 Day highlights the essential role 211 plays in connecting individuals and families to health and human services.

Available 24/7, 211 is a free and confidential service that connects people to local resources including housing assistance, utility support, food access, mental health services, and more.

Callers simply dial 211 on their phone.

The local 211 center supports individuals across Marathon County and seven surrounding counties.

### Calls for Help in Marathon County

In 2025, United Way of Marathon County answered **4,614 requests** for help, providing **11,063** referrals to community resources.

The largest number of referrals were for housing assistance. Housing assistance was also the top unmet need in 2025.

211 can be reached by phone, text, email, online search or the app.

## HUNGER COALITION MOBILIZES AMID SNAP DISRUPTION, RAISES EMERGENCY FUNDS

When Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits were suddenly disrupted in November 2025 during the government shutdown, hundreds of families across Marathon County faced immediate uncertainty about how they would access food.

In response, United Way of Marathon County's Hunger Coalition, along with your support, acted quickly and decisively to ensure families did not fall through the cracks.

Within six weeks the coalition **raised \$42,000** in combined monetary and in-kind support. These rapid efforts were made possible by generous community partners, dedicated volunteers, and a shared commitment to making sure everyone in our county had enough to eat during a vulnerable time.



### Community Donations

One of the largest contributions came from Rock Ridge Orchard, which donated 3,600 pounds of apples—a gift valued at \$6,600. These apples were distributed to food pantries across the county and, due to high demand, were nearly gone by the next day.

### Emergency Mobile Markets

The coalition also raised \$6,000 in monetary donations, allowing them to host two last-minute Mobile Markets. These special distributions provided fresh produce and eggs to community members directly affected by the SNAP disruption, ensuring families had immediate access to healthy foods.

### Grocery Store Gift Cards for Students

In December, just after SNAP benefits were restored, the community came together to raise funds for grocery store gift cards to help students over winter break.

In partnership with the Rotary Club of Wausau and the Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin, **\$36,000** was raised to support hundreds of families across the county with \$100 grocery gift cards. To ensure all families could meet their diverse dietary and



cultural needs, gift cards were purchased from a variety of local grocers, including La Patrona Mexican Tienda, Tres Hermanos Mexican Grocery Store, Schofield Oriental Market, Asian Pacific Market, and Zillmans Meat Market, in addition to Athens Main Street Market, Festival Foods, and Hy-vee Wausau.

## GROWING NEED: MORE FAMILIES, INDIVIDUALS TURNED TO MOBILE MARKET IN 2025

In 2025, United Way's Hunger Coalition continued to bring food directly to communities in need, hosting eight Mobile Markets and serving more than **1,500 individuals** – a 25% increase from 2024.

Launched in 2023, the Mobile Market was designed to reduce barriers to food access by meeting people where they are. As new ALICE data revealed a growing need, particularly in rural communities, this approach became even more critical.

In Athens, nearly half of the population (49%) is now living below the ALICE threshold, highlighting the urgent need for accessible food resources.

In response, the Mobile Market expanded its reach in 2025, making a stop in Athens with plans to return and grow its presence in the future. The market also served rural Abbotsford, home to a large Hispanic population, helping ensure culturally relevant and accessible food reached families.



## BEHIND THE RACKS: HOW DONORS, VOLUNTEERS FUEL THE COMMUNITY CLOSET

From financial contributions to donated clothing and volunteer time, the Community Closet is powered by our community's generosity.

Closet volunteers contributed more than **2,300 hours in 2025**, valuing nearly **\$79,000** in volunteer value.

- Volunteers supported sorting, stocking, and assisting households, ensuring families could access clothing efficiently and with dignity.
- At least **24 clothing drives** and countless individual donations helped keep racks full throughout the year.

The Community Closet provides **free clothing**, helping families ease the strain of housing, food, childcare, and other costs, so they can use their income where it's needed most.

### Closet Continues to Expand Impact in Numbers

Families didn't just visit once, many came back throughout the year, showing how much they rely on the Community Closet as a trusted resource. In addition, there was a **19 percent increase** in the number of individuals served in 2025 compared to the previous year.

### Who was served:

- 1,173 unique households served
- 3,765 unique household members supported
- 2,720 total household visits
- 9,756 total household member visits



## MOBILE COMMUNITY CLOSET REDUCES BARRIERS, ROLLS INTO RURAL AREAS TO EXPAND IMPACT



*AbbyBank employees generously volunteered at all Abbotsford stops.*

The Mobile Community Closet expanded access for families facing transportation or geographic barriers and helped ensure support reached households across the community, meeting them in places they already spend their time, like schools and other social service providers.

In 2025, **370** families were served. In addition, expanding access in **rural areas** became a key priority and will continue to be an area of focus.

The latest ALICE data identified areas like Athens where nearly half of the population (49%) is now living below the ALICE threshold. Besides Athens, the closet also made six stops in rural Abbotsford as part of the Abbotsford Community Health and Resource Fairs.

- Community Center of Hope – Mosinee (4 visits)
- Edgar Elementary
- Bridge Community Health Clinic Family Festival
- Spencer Kids Group
- Head Start
- John Muir Middle School

## UNITED WAY DISTRIBUTES LAPTOPS AT NO COST TO MORE THAN 300 IN 2025



United Way of Marathon County distributed 330 laptops at no cost to eligible community members through the Techquity Wisconsin program in 2025.

The first distribution event was held at ECDC Multicultural Community Center in April 2025 where **75 were given out to refugees** working to rebuild their lives in Marathon County. This program is aimed at addressing Wisconsin's digital divide, partly by providing **access to devices**. The effort is supported by a partnership with United Way of Wisconsin, under the CPF Digital Connectivity and Navigators Program Grant, offered by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin.

"This new digital access will help our refugees achieve self-sufficiency, and gain critical skills in their employment, education, and ability to connect with others," said ECDC Executive Director Janice Watson.

Additional distribution events took place at The Neighbors' Place, Community Partners Campus, and Marathon County Social Services.



*The first distribution event was held at ECDC Multicultural Community Center where 75 were given out.*



*Recipients also received help with setting up their laptop as well as introductory lessons on how to navigate their new device.*

## GROWING EVERY YEAR: LOTTSA PASTA FOOD DRIVE REACHES MORE FAMILIES



The 2nd annual Lottsa Pasta drive collected **4,000 pounds** of pasta and rice in 2025 – 1,000 pounds more than what had been collected the previous year. The food drive was a **community-wide effort** with businesses, schools, and local organizations all pitching in. Festival Foods also participated.



United Way Hunger Coalition members and volunteers sorted the pasta at The Neighbors' Place. After it was sorted, the pasta and rice were distributed to local food pantries and service organizations in the county. To meet culturally diverse needs, rice was added to the list of needed items.

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## CORPORATE & COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS



**Ruder Ware** has a strong history of supporting United Way of Marathon County by creating and coordinating a multi-site kit-building project that brings together Ruder Ware offices and United Way partners across four different communities. In 2025, just in Marathon County, more than **300 Summer Success Kits** were created by Ruder Ware and distributed locally. Pictured are staff from Head Start receiving some of the kits.



Volunteers are the backbone of United Way and its programs. Whether supporting the Community Closet, Hunger Coalition, or Bulk Mail efforts, each and every volunteer plays an important role in strengthening our community. In 2025 alone, volunteers contributed **5,770 hours** of their time, representing more than **\$196,000** in impact based on Wisconsin's estimated value of \$34.00 per volunteer hour.

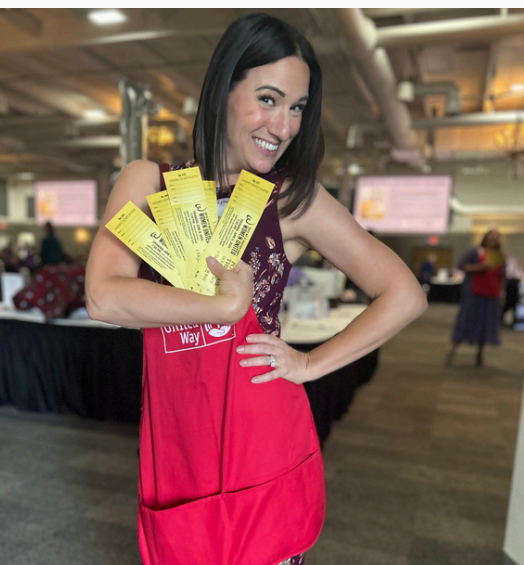
## EMERGING LEADERS BRING THE FUN TO COMPETE FOR A CAUSE, LAUGH -OUT-LOUD MOMENTS

Laughter, friendly competition, and downright silly games. The 2025 Emerging Leaders' Compete for a Cause raised more than \$3,700 and delivered more unexpected laugh-out-loud moments than anyone could have predicted. The group is a network of purpose-driven professionals and community builders who unite to help our community thrive. Emerging Leaders contributes to United Way's Bold Goal to lift 10,000 community members to financial stability by 2033. Members practice and grow community leadership while supporting others on their path to stability, creating visible, meaningful impact.



## WOMEN UNITED HOSTS ANNUAL POWER OF THE PURSE, INVESTING IN WOMEN ACROSS THE COMMUNITY

Women United's signature event, Power of the Purse, raised more than \$30,000 at the 15th annual event on June 5, 2025. About 180 supporters attended the fundraiser held at Central Wisconsin Expo & Convention Center. The auction was full of energy, laughter, and friendly bidding wars. All proceeds are invested into programs that support women in the community working to increase self-sufficiency and improve their lives.



# TURKEY TROT RAISES \$98,500 FOR THE COMMUNITY IN 2025 RACE

With incredible community support, our Hunger Coalition shattered records at its 16th annual Turkey Trot. The event sold out with **2,413 runners** and raised an amazing \$98,500 for our community. These funds help feed local families and individuals all year long. Funds raised at the event are used by our Hunger Coalition to purchase food for area pantries and nonprofits, like the Farm to Family produce box program, eggs and also supports Mobile Markets.



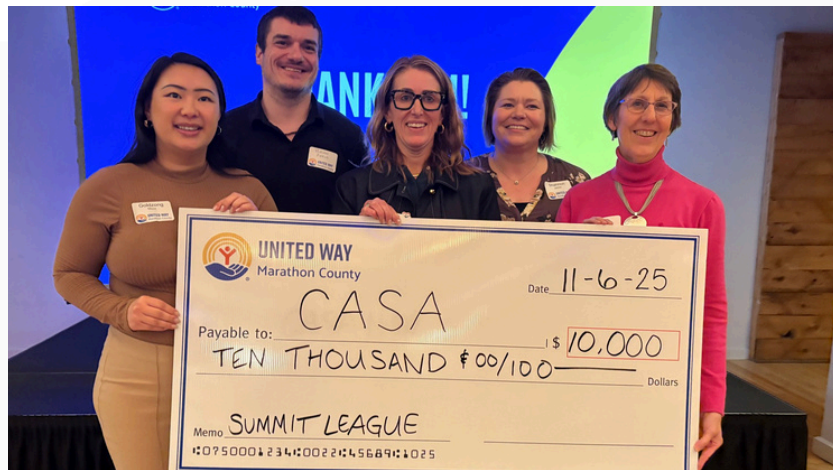
# SUMMIT LEAGUE MEMBERS AWARD CASA OF MARATHON COUNTY \$10,000 GRANT

In November 2025, Summit League members faced a tough decision at the annual leadership giving celebration – choosing which local nonprofit program would receive \$10,000 in funding.

Three incredible organizations took the stage, each with 10 minutes to share their story and vision for impact. After thoughtful presentations and heartfelt discussion, members cast their votes.

In the end, the \$10,000 award went to CASA of Marathon County for its **Criminal Court Child Advocacy Program** – a pioneering initiative that extends the CASA model into criminal proceedings, ensuring that child victims are supported and heard throughout the often-complex legal process.

We also celebrate our runners-up:  
**Community Center of Hope - awarded \$4,000**  
**Boys & Girls Club of the Wausau Area - awarded \$1,000**





**WE AREN'T JUST LOOKING TO THE FUTURE,  
WE ARE BUILDING IT.  
EXPANDING OUR IMPACT.  
MEETING THE NEED.**

