

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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United Way Board Announces Funding for Programs to Help Stabilize Families, End Cycle of Poverty

TALLAHASSEE, FL – JUNE 29, 2023

The United Way of the Big Bend (UWBB) board this afternoon approved \$1.38 million to fund community programs in Leon County and seven neighboring counties, to help those with the greatest needs, stabilize those in the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) population, and reduce the root causes of poverty. The awards will fund seventy-nine priority programs in Leon County and the seven neighboring counties of Gadsden, Jefferson, Wakulla, Madison, Taylor, Liberty, and Franklin.

“In the past year of uncertainty due to the economy, we saw compassion and support soar to new heights and people continued to recognize the United Way as a trusted partner in helping those in need,” said UWBB Board Chairman Rhett Bagwell. “The real heroes in our announcement today are the people of this region who give to the United Way to help their neighbors who desperately need assistance,” he added. “Our collective impact on families, children, and seniors in this region totals more than \$3.7 million.”

Bagwell said that all programs receiving funding clearly address the United Way of the Big Bend’s priorities of housing, early learning, safety net, health and mental health, and skills development. In addition, they focus on those living in poverty and the ALICE population to help stabilize families on the edge of poverty.

“This level of community support provides hope for those struggling to make ends meet and is aligned with truly helping to end the cycle of poverty,” added Bagwell. “Our focus on supporting programs that produce measurable outcomes is also a way for current and future donors to see the vast needs and how their contributions change lives in our region,” Bagwell added. The UWBB received funding requests from regional non-profits totaling more than \$4.3 million, demonstrating the need for additional financial support for area programs.

Programs being funded are included in the attached list and assist the homeless, low-income seniors, children and families, those who are food-insecure or at risk, and those looking to improve skills to enhance self-sufficiency. It also includes funding for programs addressing health and mental health.

United Way of the Big Bend (UWBB) is a trusted community partner serving eight counties: Gadsden, Jefferson, Franklin, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Taylor, and Wakulla. The organization addresses basic needs, helps families become financially stable, provides opportunities for children and youth to succeed, and focuses on health and mental health. For more information, please visit us online at uwbb.org.

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United Way of the Big Bend



UWBB President and CEO Berneice Cox said the level of volunteer support in making the funding allocations is key. “Over the last eight months, volunteers donated 920 hours of time to this process of financial review, performance evaluation, allocations and impacts, and strategic transformation,” said Cox.

“Our community impact committee members alone donated 397 hours attending training, reviewing letters of intent financial review results from 49 agencies, reviewing 41 program applications, and participating in the deliberation process. The level of support from all of our volunteers is inspiring.”

Each program submitted was reviewed for financial solvency, program metrics, alignment with UWBB priorities and the organization’s capacity to provide the services, followed by a review by the Neighboring Counties Allocation Teams and Community Impact Committee. The final recommendations were presented to the UWBB Board of Directors on June 29, 2023.

“The volunteers on our impact committee and in the neighboring county review committees deserve our immense appreciation,” said Cox. We had content experts like bankers, CPAs, and social workers, as well as veterans, seniors and employees from area businesses. The diversity and depth of the volunteers helped ensure a thorough, detailed review of every application.”

Cox added that UWBB’s collective community impact of \$3.7 million includes significant grants and donations targeted for UWBB driven initiatives including the ReadingPals, MathPals, SMILE UNITED, VITA, Poverty Simulation, and after school programs.

“When local residents see the depth and impact of their support on the lives of families in need in our community, we know it will touch their hearts and also demonstrate our commitment to collectively making a real difference,” added Cox. Neighbors in the Big Bend interested in supporting the United Way can visit the website at uwbb.org.

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