



On January 8, 2019, United Way of Trumbull County (UWTC) is announced a new strategic focus – United in Helping Children and Families Thrive. By doing so, UWTC is following the lead of United Way Worldwide and the trends of United Ways across the country by moving away from investing in a broad array of social services to making funding decisions that specifically focus on helping families in poverty or at risk of poverty.

“Children and families cannot thrive if they are not financially stable,” says Ginny Pasha, President and C.E.O. of United Way of Trumbull County. *“We want a community where everyone has opportunity to reach their full potential,”* she added.

According to Matt Martin, Chairman of the UWTC Planning Committee, the new focus is the result of two years of strategic planning that began with a deep dive into the greatest needs of the community. A survey arranged by Dr. Lance Grahn at Kent State Trumbull and conducted by the Kent State Stark Campus revealed that education and helping individuals and families achieve financial stability were the two most critical needs in Trumbull County. This is supported by recent data including The ALICE (Asset Limited Income Constrained) Report which was based on research conducted by Rutgers University on behalf of the Ohio United Way. The ALICE Report reveals that 48% of families in Trumbull County are living below the threshold to afford the basics. ALICE households may be forced to make tough decisions like whether to pay an electric bill or fill a prescription, buy food or fill their gas tank.

A minimum wage of nearly \$9.50 an hour is required for a single working individual to meet the bare necessities of housing, food, health care and transportation. For a family of four with two children in need of childcare, the required hourly wage jumps to \$35.00 per hour.

Individuals included in the ALICE population include people we depend on every day: child care workers, cashiers, food service personnel, health care providers and more.

John Walsh, Chairman of the Board for United Way of Trumbull County, announced that the goal is to help individuals be successful through three areas of focus:

- Earn Well - Foster enhanced programs and services that promote self-sufficiency and financial stability. These programs and services will include helping individuals gain and maintain employment, having access to health care including drug prevention, and providing financial education to help manage limited resources.
- Learn Well - Improve learning experiences, educational opportunities, and enrichment experiences for children ages 0 through grade 12 to prepare our students for 21st Century jobs in a global environment.
- Stay Well - Ensure basic needs are met which will be the foundation of the work.

Ginny Pasha went on to say that, *“While the new focus is narrower, we hope to continue working with our long-time partner agencies and new agencies to be United in Helping Children and Families Thrive in Trumbull County. If children are struggling because their families cannot make ends meet, they are more apt to not achieve in school, and therefore not graduate. If people do not have the skills that employers need, the cycle of poverty continues with the next generation.”*

In conclusion, John Walsh added, *“We want to make sure this is a county where everyone can thrive. This is a new strategy for community building. In my opinion, the United Way of Trumbull County is stronger and more attuned to the needs of the community than it has ever been.”*