

# CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR NEIGHBORS IN NEED



## Elevating Employees and Communities The Power of Paid Leave

For employers and employees alike, a significant milestone has arrived. Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) benefits are now a reality in Colorado, unleashing a wave of support for Colorado workers facing the ultimate dilemma of balancing work and family. As of January 1, 2024, this game-changing program offers a lifeline, providing partial pay for things like parental leave, medical leave or to care for an ailing family member.

As FAMLI has rolled out, I've been ruminating on the profound implications for my employees, our investors, our partners, and the workforce as a whole.

At United Way, paid leave is deeply aligned with our mission to improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of our community. Being a data person, I get excited to share statistics that show impact: paid leave policies see increased productivity and higher levels of employee satisfaction.

Not only that, but countless studies prove how vital the early childhood period is to ensuring children have the opportunity to succeed emotionally and even financially as they grow. The data for infants is incredible: researchers estimate that providing 12 weeks of job-protected paid maternity or paternity leave in the United States would result in nearly 600 **fewer** infant and post-neonatal deaths per year.

You may have heard that paid leave has recently impacted my family. My husband and I welcomed our second child, Owen, on New Year's Day. This topic has me reflecting on my first interview for the role of President & CEO of United Way – a role I've known I've wanted my whole life.

I told the hiring committee that my partner and I were planning to have more children. It was with trepidation that I shared this with the committee because I was eager to fulfill this role, but I also knew we wanted to grow our family. To delay the trajectory of my career path in order to have a family – or vice versa – would have broken my heart.

That the board of directors supported my conviction speaks to United Way's commitment to supporting its staff and staying true to our guiding values. I felt supported wholeheartedly from day one of the interview process, and it is making all the difference for me and my family now.

A lot of families have had to make the hard decision between the work they care about and the family they love. Just imagine what kind of work and impact others would pursue if they had the flexibility of paid leave. Because of FAMLI, more people will now be able to do just that.

When United Way learned FAMLI was on the horizon, our leadership



**Melanie Woolman  
President & CEO**

**“ We are walking the talk which is vitally important to our mission: the only way that our employees can accomplish the heroic work that they do day in and day out is to provide them the flexibility and Family Friendly Workplace environment that allows them to care for themselves and their families.**

*Melanie Woolman*

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# Colorado Department of Local Affairs

## Helping the Housing Navigation Center Stand Strong

Between the State of Colorado and its local communities, the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) stands as a bridge, providing financial support and assistance. One of the branches of DOLA, the Division of Housing: Office of Homeless Initiatives (OHI), focuses on bridging the gap between homelessness and the resources to make homelessness rare, brief, and one-time in Colorado.

Colorado has yet to see the end of winter weather, but thanks to OHI, those in need of help and housing stability have the assistance they need at the Housing Navigation Center. DOLA supplies approximately \$950,000 per year to the center, which offers everything from emergency shelter, to long-term services that help people find and stay in the housing they need.

Thank you, DOLA and OHI for your support!



**“The Housing Navigation Center is a transformational resource in Weld County. The efforts of United Way of Weld County are helping to create a future where no one is left behind, and the Division of Housing is proud to be partners with United Way in this work.**

**Kristin Toombs, Director of the Office of Homeless Initiatives**



## Local Leadership for Your United Way Board Member: Juriana Sperandio

**United Way:** Why is it important for you to volunteer your time?

**Juriana Sperandio:** Volunteerism presents a unique opportunity to connect and contribute to our community in a meaningful way. I believe that when we leverage our skills and talents to give back, we can strengthen the communities where we live and work.

**UW:** What is your goal as a board member?

**JS:** My goal is to help United Way of Weld County continue to positively impact the lives of so many in our community. JBS USA is certainly a large employer in Weld County, but we also prioritize community service, giving back through our Hometown Strong community investment programs, providing tuition-free college opportunities at Aims to both our employees and their children, and actively participating in multiple Habitat for Humanity projects in

the area. I am honored to serve on the board, doing whatever I can to positively impact our youth, families and those in need in our Weld County community.

**UW:** Why do you think United Way is important to Weld County?

**JS:** United Way is well positioned to mobilize and connect resources that enable impact. Weld County is the third largest county in Colorado and has some unique challenges, so the five initiatives we resource are critical to making Weld County a better place to live. Our initiatives of Reading by 8, Thriving by 25, Weld’s Way Home, Aging well and Connecting Weld provide resources to overcome a wide range of challenges in our community. I encourage everyone who is able to support United Way. They are truly making a difference and JBS is proud to be a part of their important work.

*Juriana Sperandio is the Global Chief Human Resources Officer at JBS, and has more than 20 years of HR experience. In her current role, Juriana ensures the organization can fulfill its business priorities by supporting, developing and empowering its employees and leaders. Juriana holds a Master of Business Administration degree from the University Center of Varzea Grande, and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from the University of Cuiaba. She and Anderson, her husband, have two children, Lucas and Isabela.*

## Caring for Employees, and Their Children Cornerstone Partner: Yoder Family of Companies

Here in Weld County, Yoder Family of Companies is taking action to improve the landscape of work for employees: by opening a child care center for staff and their families.

The Early Childhood Education Center will offer a comprehensive curriculum designed for infants and children up to the age of five to nurture and prepare them for success. Staffed by certified educators, it will be located at Journey Church in Greeley, state-licensed and Colorado Shines-rated for meeting health and safety standards. Journey Church members will also have access to child care slots available. Any remaining child care slots will be made available to children of first-responders.

Bill Johnson, Director of Human Resources at Yoder, told the Greeley Tribune: “We wanted to create a family-friendly work environment where people can focus on their jobs because they know their children are cared for.”

“United Way is an invaluable part of our community fabric because it serves as a powerful catalyst for positive change in our community, addressing critical issues such as education, health, and housing. By contributing to the United Way, I actively participate in a collective effort to create lasting impact, ensuring a brighter and more equitable future for all members of our society.”

Bill Johnson  
HR Director



Yoder Family of Companies has been a Cornerstone Partner for 11 years.

*Continued from cover*

team reevaluated our own 15-year old leave policies, which were already generous. We decided to leverage what the state was implementing in conjunction with updating our own to support our team.

Now, employees who have been with us a short time have more benefits than they would have previously, and established employees are not losing benefits they have accrued through their longevity. They can rest assured they will be fully paid in a time of paid leave, rather than receiving the partial pay that the State of Colorado would have provided through FAMLI.

I am proud – and I hope you are too – that your United Way is able to provide for our employees those things that we advocate so strongly for. We are walking the talk which is vitally important: the only way that our employees can accomplish the heroic work that they do day in and day out is to provide them a family friendly workplace environment that allows them the flexibility to care for themselves and their families.

**So, why is this important and what does it have to do with United Way?** Throughout this newsletter, we share more about the constellation of needs paid leave can positively impact, including child care.

In February of 2023, the US experienced a shortage of 60,000 child care workers; that same month, 4.9 million people in the US missed work because they were caring for children not in child care. Those same studies show that more than one in four parents have quit a job or dropped out of education to avoid rising costs of child care. This is why the Childcare Desert Map (pg. 4) and the Early Childhood Development Center (above) exist.

**Now that FAMLI is in place, United Way of Weld County will be even more successful in achieving our goals.** Imagine how paid leave could prevent a household from experiencing financial instability due to an unforeseen surgery. Imagine what it could mean for a parent needing to care for a child experiencing a mental health crisis or a family caring for someone with dementia.

As you read through this newsletter I ask that you take in the data and stories. Reflect on the positive impact of policies and practices that support family leave, work-life balance and other family-friendly initiatives. **Be an advocate.** We all benefit when workplaces not only hire employees, but elevate them.



**United Way can help you create a productive, family-friendly workplace!**

- ★ Retain and attract top talent
- 📈 Increase employee productivity
- ↩️ Lower rates of absenteeism
- 👤 Gender equality in the workplace

**Contact us today!**





# United Way is Mapping a Way to Meet the Urgent Need for Child Care



Weld County faces a challenge: the population is increasing, and there is not enough quality childcare to support the growing need for families. This creates what is called a child care desert.

This is why United Way created a Child Care Desert Map for Weld County. **With a few clicks on the online interactive map ([unitedway-weld.org/cdmap](https://unitedway-weld.org/cdmap)), anyone can instantly see areas of need specific to child care, be they advocates, nonprofits, or companies who wish to help their employees find the child care they need.**

Stefanie Knipple, Director of Reading Great by 8 at United Way of Weld County, says, “Until it’s documented – right in front of you – it is hard to understand the gravity of the situation.”

The Child Care Desert Map shows many data points instantaneously, such as where child care centers are needed because they’re especially lacking, which providers accept Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), and the location of the highest concentrations of home care available.

On average, the cost for infant care for five full days is \$440 per week, compounding the challenge by putting it out of reach for many families. “Our goal is to eliminate the child care desert,” Stefanie says, “and the map is a very tangible tool to help us answer: Where is the need? How can we and other partners meet it with funding, resources, energy and support?” To support Reading Great by 8 or other areas of our work, please visit [unitedway-weld.org/donate](https://unitedway-weld.org/donate).

**“We need enough quality care so kids can be the best people they can be.”**

**Stefanie Knipple,**

Director of Reading Great by 8

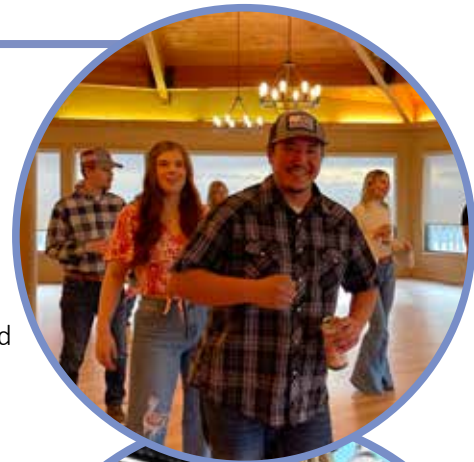
## Helping - and Having Fun - as a Leadership Giver

Recently, United Way’s Leadership Givers got a behind the scenes look at Greeley Hat Works. Trent and his team demonstrated the amazing tools used in creating one of a kind custom hats. With two social events already completed in 2024, Leadership Givers hit the dance floor with Country Kickup to meet, connect, and learn to country swing and line dance at the Mad Russian Golf Club. Additionally they popped into Mom’s Popcorn Co in downtown Greeley to learn more about making – and of course tasting – the delicious snack. These events were all a part of United Way’s quarterly socials for Leadership Givers: individuals who donate \$500 or more in any given year to United Way of Weld County.

“We do our best to show our thanks to our donors,” says Travis Hitt, VP of Philanthropy, “We recognize it’s a substantial amount to give,

and want to show that we are very grateful. But that’s not all. Quarterly socials are a great opportunity for everyone to connect in person and get to know each other while supporting nonprofits and small businesses in Weld County.”

Travis says there is only one requirement: “That you come ready to have a good time.” To learn about becoming a Leadership Giver, visit [unitedway-weld.org/leadership-giving](https://unitedway-weld.org/leadership-giving) or give Travis a call at 970-304-6185.





## High Plains Housing Development Corp Thinking Big to Bring an End to Homelessness

Thanks to the donation of a 6.5-acre industrial property by Dennis Hoshiko, High Plains Housing Development Corp will soon transform it into safe housing and resources for low-to-moderate income families and individuals.

In Phase 1, the StarRise Apartments will offer 58 one-bedroom Permanent Supportive Housing units for those suffering chronic homelessness who also have co-occurring conditions like behavioral health diagnoses, substance abuse disorders, or chronic medical conditions – those who do not have the ability of becoming housed on their own.

An existing brick building will also serve as a 5,000 square-foot center for supportive services to help tenants stay stably housed. “As you can imagine, someone who hasn’t lived indoors for a

long time will have a lot of needs,” says Jodi Hartman, Executive Director of High Plains, which is now in its 30th year. **“But this housing-first model enables us to work with that tenant for a longer period of time than a traditional housing situation, helping them with additional services to keep them housed.”** This highly researched and supported model across the country shows that 85% of tenants remain on their stability plans and stay housed.

Currently, the complex financing is being finalized with funding from about nine different sources. Construction breaks ground early June of 2024, and tenants can begin to lease apartments in September of 2025. Jodi remarks, “For the longest time it felt so far away, and now we’re talking in a year and half we’ll have people living in that building.” About

300 people are currently unhoused in Weld County, and 156 are chronically homeless and living on the streets.

United Way donates office space to High Plains, but Jodi says the impact has been even greater, with the help of Lyle SmithGraybeal, Chief Operating Officer, who advocated for the effort. “Lyle was instrumental in saying we didn’t need to reinvent the wheel, that High Plains could do this development work. If it hadn’t been for United Way, I don’t know where the community would be in its capacity to develop affordable housing.”

“This is a big, challenging project,” Jodi says, “but one that will be a lifelong infrastructure for the community to help those most vulnerable living on the street.”

## Upcoming Events

**NORTHERN COLORADO CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL**

**COMMUNITY HELPERS**

**March 30, 2024**  
10 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
Island Grove Regional Park - Greeley

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WELD COUNTY'S Early Childhood Learning  
United Way  
United Way of World County

Presented by **Aims COMMUNITY COLLEGE** All in.

**We Are United Way**

**2024 Community Leaders Luncheon**  
Wednesday, May 15  
11 a.m. - 1 p.m.  
DoubleTree by Hilton - 919 7th St - Greeley

Make a reservation by May 1  
[UnitedWay-Weld.org/communityleaders](https://UnitedWay-Weld.org/communityleaders)

United Way  
United Way of World County



# Celebrating 15 years of AmeriCorps and United Way Partnership

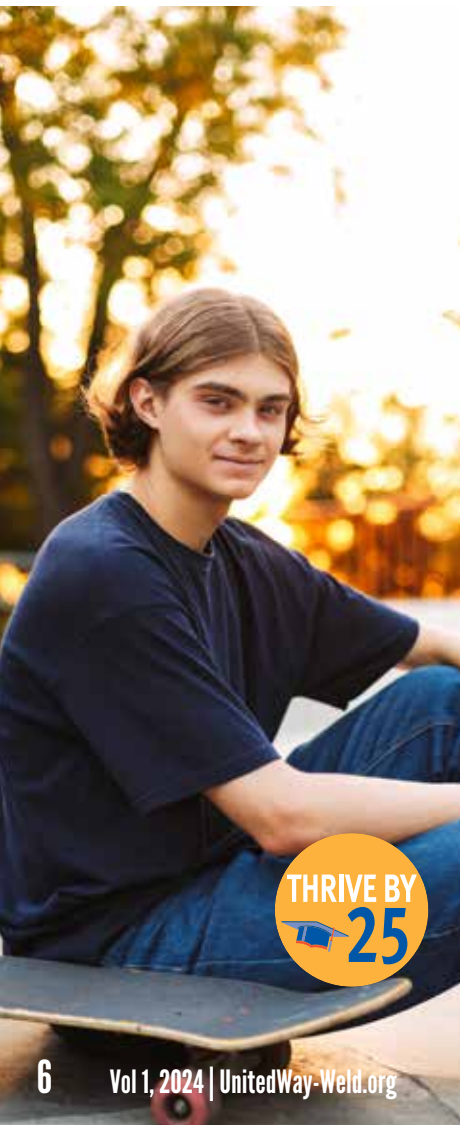
In December, United Way celebrated the completion of a 15+ year partnership with AmeriCorps that reduced poverty and increased the capacity of partner organizations.

In 2006, Michael Muskin, then a United Way employee, discovered that United Way could become an AmeriCorps Project Station; it could match AmeriCorps members with local agencies that were increasing their impact. The program soon took flight, placing seven full-time members at Weld County nonprofits.

Over time, this number grew to 24 members serving throughout Northern Colorado. Among them was Melanie Woolman, United Way's current president & CEO.

Lyle SmithGraybeal, chief operating officer, says this is what makes AmeriCorps stand out. "It helps agencies build their organizational capacity, so that they can do what they do better and grow in the ways that they serve. Without this AmeriCorps partnership, a number of the organizations that work with our most vulnerable neighbors would not be as robust as they are today." Thank you AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps members for serving Weld County and Northern Colorado!

Over 15 years	227 full-time members	58 summer associates
	Worked at 138 nonprofit and government agencies	
Raised \$9.3 million in donations and grants		\$1.9 million in in-kind gifts
Recruited & managed 5,000 volunteers who worked 25,000 hours		



## Rebalance Helps Youth Find Calm in the Storm

Kevin, a teenager in Weld County, had a history of fighting. He was expelled from several schools, he said, because when a kid said something upsetting, his gut reaction was to fight.

When overwhelmed, many kids lack the emotional stability or language to work through distressing moments in ways that are healthy and helpful. This is why Northern Colorado Youth for Christ created Rebalance. They host non-religious classes to guide youth through a proven safe self-discovery process, teaching them techniques to regulate their emotions and to have the communication skills they need to thrive in relationships. Last year, Rebalance served 500 kids, with hope to grow to serve 1,000 each year.

"Across the nation," says Rebalance Program Director Megan Packard, "studies are showing that having a sense of belonging and a trusted adult in a child's life is what helps them through their struggles."

In Rebalance classes, youth are led through a physical activity while learning about one

theme, like honesty. In the second part of the class, they share a meal donated by Weld Food Bank and discuss the theme in-depth as they apply it to their own lives.

In each class, students are also taught "calm-down" techniques: practices they can take into their everyday lives that will help them pause and calm down when strong feelings arise.

After attending two, 12-week Rebalance classes, Kevin shared some news: at his new school he found himself in the same class with a boy who he had a physical altercation with in the past. He felt his gut reaction: to fight. Instead, Kevin asked the teacher if he could step out into the hallway to do a calm-down technique. "I now go to class with this kid everyday," Kevin said. "We're not going to be friends, but I have no issue being in the same classroom with him."

Megan invites anyone interested to set up a tour of their indoor skatepark and youth center. "You will probably be wowed to see who we are and what we have here." Learn more at [coloradorebalance.com](http://coloradorebalance.com).

# Living with Joy through Dementia Together

The intricate workings of the human brain allow us to seamlessly navigate our daily experiences by processing both past and present information. However, dementia disrupts this intricate balance, causing unpredictable and progressive interruptions in cognitive function.

Night after night, Maria found herself waking to the sight of her husband Peter meticulously rolling up the bedsheets, insisting on sleeping on the sofa instead. This behavior puzzled Maria, prompting her to seek insights from Peter's sister. Through their conversation, Maria uncovered a crucial detail: as a child, Peter had often slept on the sofa due to a shortage of bedrooms in the house. It became increasingly evident that Peter was grappling with dementia. His brain struggled to retain recent memories, leading him to draw upon his past experiences in an attempt to navigate his present reality.

Dementia Together is a nonprofit that offers education and enrichment to help

those living with dementia and their care partners, using evidence-based, counter-intuitive principles of the SPECAL method. **Last year, Dementia Together served over 2,700 people through over 725 sessions including classes, workshops, support groups, in-person and online Memory Cafes, and other social engagement opportunities.** Even those in rural Weld County can take part.

Cyndy Hunt Luzinski, Executive Director at Dementia Together, says, "Many people assume that a dementia-related diagnosis will cause an inherently tragic life, but it doesn't have to be that way. It is hard, but people living with dementia and their loved ones truly can find joy on the journey."

Maria says had they not found Dementia Together, "I would still be floundering in desperation, trying to understand how to deal with my husband's declining memory, feeling sorrowful and alone."

To learn more or get involved, visit [dementiatogether.org](http://dementiatogether.org).



## A Rich Commitment to Philanthropy Donor Spotlight: Teresa Henry and Bill Hertneky

"For us, one of the most impressive aspects of Weld County is just how incredibly caring and philanthropic the people in our community continue to be," says Bill Hertneky and Teresa Henry. They would certainly know: Teresa and Bill have been giving to United Way for 44 years.

"I had an attraction to Weld County and Northern Colorado," Bill says, "given the area's heritage of irrigated agriculture, and the related cattle feeding and dairy industries." The two met at a banking conference; Bill was working for United Banks and Teresa was a CPA. Their employers encouraged volunteerism, and United Way was an obvious choice for them.

Now retired, they spend their time traveling internationally and enjoying the outdoors in Colorado. But much of their time is devoted to leadership roles in the community: at their church, on the Poudre River Trail Board, the American Cancer Society, and at the Weld Community Foundation, as well as the roles Bill contributed to United Way.

"We believe that just as Weld County enjoys a wealth of water and natural resources, its citizens are also rich in their commitment to philanthropy – which only makes this a better community in which to reside. United Way of Weld County has been a leader in this effort, and we've seen them transition into a convener of resource programs, and also striving for more self-sustaining and long term holistic solutions." Thank you Bill and Teresa, for being generous supporters of United Way of Weld County.

**“We recognized early on that United Way was one of the most efficient and cost-effective organizations which would allow us to support a multitude of great agencies and causes right here in Weld County.**

**Theresa Henry & Bill Hertneky**



United Way of Weld County  
PO Box 1944  
Greeley, CO 80632



**March 2024  
Newsletter  
enclosed.**



## CORNERSTONE PARTNERS

Cornerstone Partners direct their gifts to cover administration and fundraising expenses, allowing other investors to directly impact the community needs of their choice.

**\$50,000 +**



**\$25,000 – \$49,999**



**\$15,000 – \$24,999**



**\$10,000 – \$14,999**

Banner Health, BizWest Media, Chevron, Front Range Roofing Systems, Ghent Chevrolet Cadillac, Honda of Greeley, Kaiser Permanente, KFKA 1310AM & 103.1FM, McDonald Toyota, Townsquare Media, Yoder Family of Companies

**\$5,000 – \$9,999**

365 REAL Property Management, ENT Credit Union, FNBO, Mountain Valley Bank, Pepsi Beverages Company, PFC USA, Property Technica, Scheels, Tigre 102.1FM & 1450AM

## GIVE



[UnitedWay-Weld.org/donatenow](https://UnitedWay-Weld.org/donatenow)

## VOLUNTEER



[UnitedWay-Weld.org/volunteer](https://UnitedWay-Weld.org/volunteer)

## LEAVE A LEGACY



Contact Travis Hitt  
970-304-6185  
[THitt@UnitedWay-Weld.org](mailto:THitt@UnitedWay-Weld.org)

### Connect with us!



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