

## ON THE COVER



At age 30, Mikeesha came to a crossroads. A single mother of two, she was unemployed and struggling financially—with no clear plan for where to go next.

That's when United Way's **HOPE Initiative** stepped in. HOPE strengthens families with comprehensive support in education, income, and health. After being accepted as a participant, she was encouraged to write down her goals and work with her case manager to achieve them.

Her first goal: Find a job. Check! She is now an AmeriCorps VISTA Literacy Specialist at Oakridge Neighborhood Services.

Next: Graduate from college after 10 years of on-again, off-again enrollment. Check! She graduated from DMACC in December.

During this journey, Mikeesha has landed on a career path. In May, she begins at Iowa State University to earn a degree in Human Development and Family Studies. She plans to work for a nonprofit and fight sex trafficking.

Over the past two years, HOPE has been there to guide Mikeesha. She has taken classes in financial literacy, nutrition, and parenting. She especially benefited from learning how to budget, track her spending, and build her credit.

Mikeesha has a message for anyone struggling in life. "All hope is not lost. Hope is never lost. There is always somebody who loves you and who is rooting for you."

See our other cover stories and more at [www.unitedwaydm.org/stories](http://www.unitedwaydm.org/stories)



Aaron dropped out of high school to care for his newborn daughter and work full time. Seventeen years later, he joined **Bridges to Success**, a United Way initiative that gave him the support he needed to achieve his high school equivalency diploma. Now he is working toward his auto restoration certificate and opening his own business.



At age 17, Minerva gave birth to her daughter, who became critically ill. A nurse home visitor through a United Way-funded program coached Minerva to be the supportive parent her daughter needed to overcome developmental delays. Today, Minerva's daughter is a curious, crawling one-year-old.



Five-year-old Honor went from throwing temper tantrums to being a curious, engaged listener during his weekly **Power Read** sessions with volunteer mentor Scott. Honor points out details in books and makes up side-plots as they read. "Even when I don't know it, he's learning," says Scott.

# UNITED WAY OF CENTRAL IOWA COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT 2017



[www.unitedwaydm.org](http://www.unitedwaydm.org)

## HELP IS A PHONE CALL AWAY

United Way of Central Iowa 2-1-1 is the three-digit helpline that connects anyone with local support and resources. Individuals can call 2-1-1, text their ZIP code to 898211, or visit [211iowa.org](http://211iowa.org) for personalized information about food, shelter, health care, legal services, crisis intervention, and much more. The service is free, confidential and available 24/7.

Top needs of callers in 2016:

- Tax preparation assistance
- Rent payment assistance
- Holiday programs
- Family crisis shelters
- Utility service payment assistance



## ESSENTIAL NEEDS

United Way's new Essential Needs investment priority helps elevate the importance of central Iowans having access to basic needs as the foundation to reaching the Community Goals for 2020 in Education, Income, and Health. In 2016, 67,000 central Iowans were food insecure (Feeding America) and 3,500 needed shelter (Iowa Institute for Community Alliance; annual data). Without access to essential needs, children cannot learn in school, families cannot be financially stable, and individuals cannot enjoy health and well-being.

4.13



For the 12th year in a row, United Way of Central Iowa has been rated 4 stars by Charity Navigator, an independent organization that assesses nonprofits based on responsible use of resources. United Way of Central Iowa is among the top 1 percent of charities for this rating.





GOALS FOR 2020

# EDUCATION

Increase the percentage of central Iowa students who graduate from high school to 95%

## CENTRAL IOWA HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE

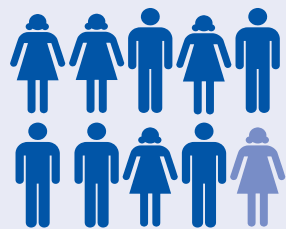


Source: Iowa Department of Education

FOCUS AREAS

Help children read proficiently by the end of third grade.

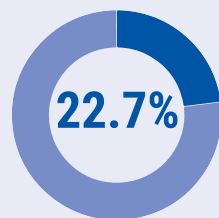
FOCUS GOAL:



**90%** of third-graders will read proficiently by 2020. Third-grade reading is the No. 1 predictor of high school success.

WHY IT MATTERS

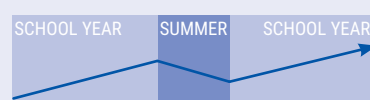
EARLY-GRADE READING



of central Iowa students are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade. (Iowa Department of Education, 2015-2016)

Children who cannot read at grade level by the end of third grade are **4 times** less likely to graduate from high school. (Annie E. Casey Foundation)

SUMMER LEARNING LOSS



Without access to enriching summer activities, at-risk children lose as many as three months of reading comprehension skills over the summer. By the end of third grade, they will have lost an entire year. (Campaign for Grade-Level Reading)

ECONOMIC DISPARITY

Children from low-income households hear an average of **30,000,000** fewer words by age 3. They are **4 times** more likely to be absent from school than their middle-class peers. (Campaign for Grade-Level Reading)

WHAT'S WORKING



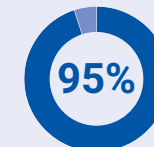
Our 3rd Graders Must **READ!** TO SUCCEED.

**Read to Succeed**, United Way's first-ever community-wide call to action, is focused on helping central Iowa kids read proficiently by the end of third grade. In 2016, **739** volunteers were engaged as reading mentors.

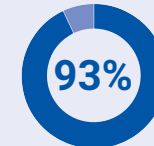
**66%** was the increase in print literacy skills for preschool children who participated in **Book Buddy**.

**98.2%** of elementary students who participated in **Power Read** demonstrated improvements in reading.

**12,490** children participated in United Way-funded programs promoting academic growth during out-of-school hours:



showed good attendance, an increase of **12%**.



passed all classes, up **10%** from last year.

**2,596** children ages 0-5 participated in high-quality early literacy program, and, of the

**1,812** who received developmental screenings, **11%** needed and accessed additional services.

**1,764** students participated in **Summer in the City** to help prevent summer learning loss.

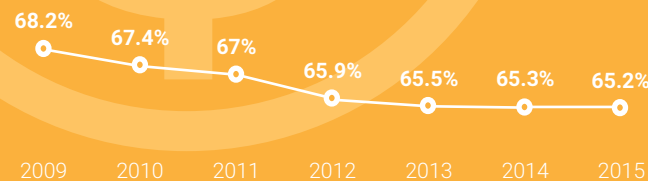
**86%** of middle school students participate in at least one out-of-school activity, up from 30% since United Way has funded Community School Coordinator position at Des Moines Public Schools began.

**Graduation Walk** doubled to **476** volunteers, who visited the homes of high school and middle school students at risk of dropping out or who had high absenteeism. Over five years, Graduation Walk volunteers have visited **5,365** homes, encouraging more than **1,500** students to graduate.

# \$ INCOME

Increase the percentage of central Iowans who are financially self-sufficient to 75%

## PERCENT OF CENTRAL IOWANS WHO ARE SELF-SUFFICIENT



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, most recent 5-year estimates for Polk, Dallas, and Warren Counties (2011-2015)

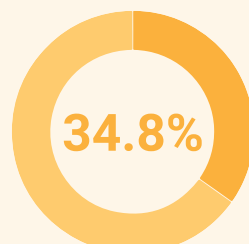
Help adults acquire skills and credentials for better jobs.

FOCUS GOALS:

**10,000** high school equivalency diplomas will be awarded to central Iowans by 2020.

**20%** of central Iowa adults with no postsecondary education or training will make progress toward an associate's degree by 2020, an increase of **15,000** individuals from 2008.

**\$700K** An Iowa high school graduate, throughout their career, earns an average of **\$700,000** more than a high school dropout. (National Center for Education Statistics; 2016, adjusted for inflation)



of central Iowans are not financially self-sufficient, defined as **250%** of the Federal Poverty Level. (U.S. Census, American Community Survey)

LIFETIME EARNINGS

An Iowa high school graduate, throughout their career, earns an average of **\$700,000** more than a high school dropout. (National Center for Education Statistics; 2016, adjusted for inflation)

**34K** central Iowans (18 years+) do not have a high school diploma or equivalency. (U.S. Census, American Community Survey)

EMPLOYMENT GAP

**55%** Middle-Skill Jobs

**32%** Middle-Skill Workers

**55%** of all jobs in central Iowa require some postsecondary education, and only **32%** of the workforce has the right skills for these jobs. (Iowa Workforce Development, 2015)

**2,000** nonprofits, businesses, and community members support the **Opportunity** Plan to bring prosperity to the one-third of central Iowans who are not financially self-sufficient. Eight issue-focused work groups are creating new opportunities for low-income central Iowans.

**1,794** individuals received coaching through the **Financial Capability Network**, which helps low- and moderate-income central Iowans build their financial knowledge and skills.

**1,116** adults enrolled in the United Way-led **Bridges to Success** initiative to earn a high school equivalency diploma. Bridges to Success uses innovative strategies to help central Iowans on a path to financial self-sufficiency.

**\$12.5 million** in state funding was secured in 2013 for adult basic education and post-secondary career pathway training, and this funding has been maintained every year since. United Way advocated for this change with Skills2Compete, a coalition serving as a voice for adult education and workforce.

**185** Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) volunteers returned **\$8.3 million** in tax refunds in 2016.

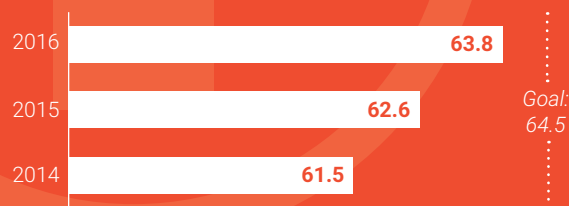
**5,666** families each received an average refund of **\$1,466** through free tax preparation.

# + HEALTH

Increase central Iowa's Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index score to 64.5

## CENTRAL IOWA WELL-BEING INDEX SCORES

A comprehensive measure of health

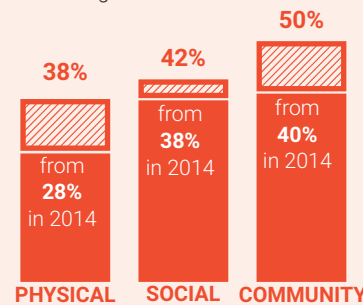


Source: Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index, West Des Moines-Des Moines Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)

Give all central Iowans equal opportunity to make healthy choices.

FOCUS GOALS:

Increase the percentage of central Iowans who are thriving in **physical, social, and community** well-being to:



**PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL HEALTH** Americans who have strong positive relationships are more likely to eat the recommended number of fruits and vegetables per week. (Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index)

COMMUNITY HEALTH



of central Iowans struggle with or suffer from poor community well-being, reflecting a lack of equal access to healthy and vibrant neighborhoods, green space, and safe walking routes. (Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index)



**SOCIAL HEALTH** Loneliness is as damaging to one's health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. (Holt-Lunstad, 2015)

MENTAL HEALTH

**1 out of 6** employees in Iowa has experienced significant childhood trauma, making them:

**2.5x** more likely to have high absenteeism  
**3.6x** more likely to have serious job problems  
**6x** more likely to be depressed

(2016 Iowa ACEs Report)



**293** volunteers donated **1,356** hours and gave **8,065** pounds of fruits and vegetables to pantries from corporate giving gardens, feeding **3,226** central Iowans.

**1.52 million** pounds of food were donated through United Way-funded food rescue programs.

**3,945** children participated in **5-2-1-0** programming, which promotes healthy habits in environments such as child care centers and schools.

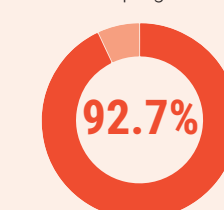
**1st Five** continued to expand across Iowa to promote healthy child development, thanks to advocacy efforts by the **Iowa ACEs 360 Policy Coalition**, a United Way-supported group raising awareness of childhood trauma and resiliency.

**12,552** central Iowans have saved over **\$1.2 million** in prescription costs through United Way-supported **FamilyWise**, a program that provides free prescription savings cards to central Iowans.



The United Way-supported coalition **Invest Health** is partnering with low-income neighborhoods to address barriers such as safety, walkability, and transportation to create more opportunities for central Iowans to exercise, connect with others, and access resources that improve well-being.

**3,257** central Iowans accessed United Way-funded mental health programs.



are maintaining or improving their well-being as a result of receiving these services.