A year of impact for a future of possibilities

# UNITED WAY OF GREATER ATLANTA

## FISCAL YEAR REPORT 2025-26

UNITED WAY
Greater Atlanta





# UNITED IS THE WAY TO A STRONGER FUTURE

**Dear Friends, Supporters, and Partners,**

Across Greater Atlanta, we see the power of possibility. We see it in children discovering a love of learning, in families building stronger foundations, in young people preparing for meaningful careers, and in communities creating opportunity.

**For more than 120 years, United Way of Greater Atlanta has brought people together around the belief that when children thrive, entire communities thrive too.** Today, that belief is guiding a sharper focus on one of the defining challenges facing our region: economic mobility. Greater Atlanta ranks 50th out of 50 major U.S. cities for economic mobility, meaning too many children's futures are still shaped by their circumstances rather than their potential. Yet we know a different future is possible when children and families have the support they need.

No single nonprofit, school, employer, government agency, or donor can create that future alone. That is why **United Way of Greater Atlanta serves as the connector across systems and sectors**, bringing together education, family stability, workforce development, philanthropy, business, and community partners to expand opportunity for every child. United is the only way. This year, thanks to our donors' generosity, our volunteers' commitment, and our partners' leadership, we expanded opportunities for children and families throughout our region. **Together, we invested in educational success, workforce pathways, family stability, and community-led solutions.**

At the same time, we remained a trusted first line of support for families facing immediate challenges. Through **211**, our community resource contact center, we connected people to critical services and responded quickly when crises emerged. When the freezing of SNAP benefits threatened food access for thousands of families in November, we quickly launched our **Hunger Crisis Response Fund**, mobilizing donors, partners, and community resources to help meet urgent needs. This work helps families navigate today's challenges while building the stability needed to pursue greater economic mobility tomorrow.

Identifying where opportunity exists, and where it can be strengthened, is essential to creating lasting change. That is why our **Child Well-Being Index®** continues to guide both our work and the work of our partners across the region, helping identify where investment and collaboration can have the greatest impact. The data reinforces what we have learned through decades of work, that economic mobility is built over time. It grows when children have consistent support, strong relationships, and opportunities that build on one another throughout childhood.

That understanding shapes our long-term vision for Greater Atlanta: a region where every child has a pathway to opportunity, every neighborhood has the conditions that help children thrive, and every family has the stability to turn hope into reality. The stories in this report demonstrate what is possible when people work together to create brighter futures for generations to come.

**Thank you for believing in what is possible when a community comes together around its children.** Your generosity, partnership, and leadership are helping build a stronger Greater Atlanta. As we look ahead, our work is far from finished. Together, we have an opportunity, and a responsibility, to align our region's talent, generosity, and resources around the success of every child.

**The future of Greater Atlanta will be shaped by the opportunities we create today.** United is the Way we'll continue building a region where every child has the chance to reach their full potential and contribute to a stronger, more prosperous future for us all.



**Milton J. Little Jr.**
President & CEO, United Way of Greater Atlanta



**Brian Sappington**
Board Chair, United Way of Greater Atlanta




# OUR VISION

A THRIVING AND INCLUSIVE GREATER ATLANTA WHERE EVERY PERSON, REGARDLESS OF THEIR BACKGROUND OR CIRCUMSTANCE, HAS EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES TO LIVE A HEALTHY LIFE AND TO ACQUIRE THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS THEY NEED TO EARN A SUSTAINING WAGE SO THAT THEY MAY ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.

# WHY UNITED WAY

**For more than 120 years, United Way of Greater Atlanta has brought people together to meet our region's greatest challenges. Today, we are building on that legacy by investing in what every child deserves: the chance to grow up with stability, support, opportunity, and hope for what comes next.**

As a trusted convener and catalyst for change, we bring together nonprofits, businesses, school systems, government leaders, philanthropists, and residents to remove the barriers that hold children and families back. Because a child's future is shaped by more than one moment, one program, or one organization, United Way looks at the whole child and the whole community, aligning resources so where a child starts in life does not determine where they can go.

## OUR NETWORK

A powerful coalition of nonprofit partners, educators, corporate leaders, public agencies, volunteers, and donors working together to expand opportunity across Greater Atlanta.



## OUR ASSETS

Data, tools, and community-driven solutions that spark action and change lives, including the **Child Well-Being Index®**, **ALICE data**, **211 Contact Center**, **Regional Commission on Homelessness**, and other innovative resources that connect families to support.

## OUR KNOW-HOW

Deep local expertise, trusted relationships, and proven strategies that help communities address complex challenges. From early learning and literacy to workforce development and housing stability, we're building the conditions that make economic mobility possible.

# UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE

**Greater Atlanta is full of possibility. Yet for too many children and families, opportunity remains out of reach.**

Among the nation's 50 largest metro areas, Greater Atlanta ranks last for economic mobility, meaning a child's future income is more likely to be determined by the circumstances they are born into than by their potential.

Behind that ranking are real families navigating daily barriers. Children struggle in school when housing is unstable. Parents working hard but falling behind when childcare, transportation, or health care becomes unaffordable. Across our region, these obstacles can limit opportunity for children, creating ripple effects that are felt for generations.

To change that reality, we first have to understand it. United Way uses our **Child Well-Being Index®**, **ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed)** data, and **211 Contact Center** data to pinpoint where needs are greatest and where investments can make the biggest difference.

## Child Well-Being Index®

The 2026 Child Well-Being Index® shows meaningful progress in some areas across Greater Atlanta, such as high school graduation rates and broadband access, while also revealing persistent and urgent challenges in education and financial stability:

- **1 in 3 households** struggles to afford housing costs
- Third-grade reading proficiency has fallen to **37.7%**
- Eighth-grade math proficiency has fallen to **41.6%**

Too many children still face barriers to economic mobility. The Child Well-Being Index® helps United Way identify where investments, partnerships, and collective action can create the greatest impact and help more families move from stability to opportunity.

## ALICE + 211 insights

ALICE describes working families who earn more than the federal poverty level but still cannot afford necessities, where one unexpected expense can create a crisis. A missed paycheck, medical bill, or car repair can mean choosing between rent, groceries, childcare, or keeping the lights on.

**Last year, 211 handled 447,140 contacts for community referrals including:**

- **77,891** requests for rent assistance
- **56,481** requests for utility payment assistance
- **42,938** requests for food pantries

Together, ALICE research and 211 data reveal both the financial strain facing working households and the basic needs driving families to seek help.

**#50 of 50**
Atlanta's ranking among the nation's largest metro areas for economic mobility.

**81,000**
children live in 88 communities facing the greatest barriers according to the Child Well-Being Index®.

**30%**
of Georgia households are ALICE, hardworking families earning above the poverty line but below the threshold of financial survival.

**Data alone doesn't change lives. What sets United Way apart is our ability to turn insight into action.**

By combining deep community partnerships with research-driven decision making, we identify where support is needed most and mobilize the resources, relationships, and investments that help create lasting economic mobility across Greater Atlanta.

# OUR IMPACT

## LAST YEAR, WE HELPED:

**186,609**
people through our programs

**4,241**
community members advocate for local solutions

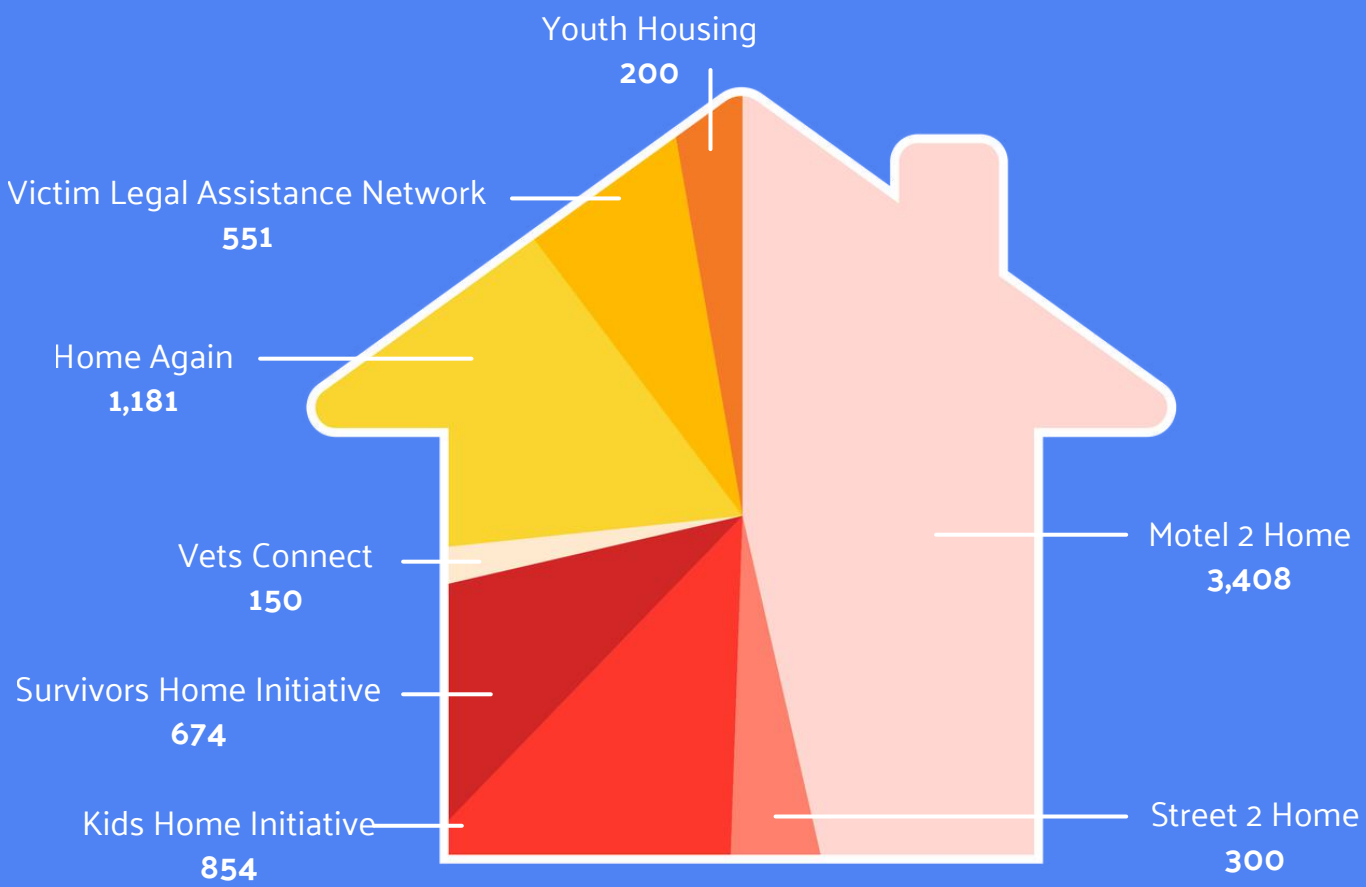
**29,521**
youth and families navigate college and career pathways

**40,748**
individuals build financial foundations

**112,099**
kids and educators advance learning and academic success

## HOUSING:

Our Regional Commission on Homelessness housed a total of **7,318 people**





**200+**

families each saved more than $1,000 through our emergency savings program



## VITA:

**12,791**

total tax returns completed

**$3.7 million**

earned in claimed income tax credits

**$4.4 million**

saved in tax prep fees



**1703**

high schoolers helped in filling out the FAFSA through College Bound

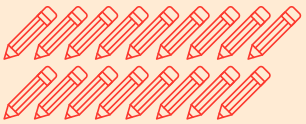
**458**

youth enrolled in apprenticeships through CareerReady ATL



**159**

teachers received training in the Science of Reading through Literacy and Justice for All



**2,850**

children attended 17 Learning Spaces locations



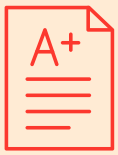
**83,744**

books and literacy resources distributed to kids




**365**

scholarships awarded to help children access quality early learning




**4,276**

children are developmentally on track & progressing on assessments



**23,599**

students utilized out-of-school programs through our partners

# EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO LEAD

Through a partnership with **Sage D Collective's Legacy Leaders program**, United Way is helping grassroots women leaders across Atlanta strengthen their leadership skills, expand their networks, and grow their impact.

Leaders like **Jennifer Thompson** of the **Grant Park Farmers Market** and artist and activist **Charmaine Minniefield** of the **Praise House Project** are using that support to preserve culture, expand food access, and strengthen communities. Connections formed through the cohort now enrich communities, demonstrating how bringing leaders together across sectors can create impact far beyond any one organization.

**By investing in women leaders, United Way is helping turn community-driven ideas into lasting change across Greater Atlanta.**

Read more →





United Way's **SPARK initiative** is helping students access mental health support before challenges become crises.

Through a partnership with **Clayton County Public Schools**, Student Behavioral Health Specialists provide school-based wellness activities, mental health education, and connections to individualized support and therapy services.

By bringing care directly into schools, United Way of Greater Atlanta is helping students build resilience, improve well-being, and stay on track for success. **These early interventions have contributed to a 15% reduction in K-2 referrals for behavioral evaluations across the school system**, demonstrating the power of addressing mental health needs before they escalate.

Read more →

## OUR FOCUS

- **Strengthen Resident Leadership & Engagement**
- **Organize Community Involvement to Amplify Voices**
- **Engage in Community-Driven Innovation**



# PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION

Through **CareerReady ATL**, United Way's youth apprentice program, **Jasiah** gained more than workplace experience at **Arden's Garden**. He discovered new strengths, built valuable skills, and saw firsthand how his ideas could make a difference.

**On his second day, Jasiah identified a solution with a supplier that saved the business $30,000**, proving that young people can make a meaningful impact when given the opportunity.

His story reflects why youth apprenticeships matter. Businesses gain access to emerging talent, new ideas, and a stronger future workforce, while young people develop the skills and experience needed to succeed in high-demand careers. **Today, Jasiah is pursuing a career path projected to grow 17% over the next decade.** By connecting talent to opportunity, programs like CareerReady ATL help strengthen local businesses, expand economic mobility, and build a more competitive region for everyone.

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For **Christina**, a Gwinnett County high school student, college represented opportunity, but the path forward wasn't always clear.

Through United Way's **College Bound program**, she received personalized support with applications, financial aid, scholarships, and enrollment. With a trusted coach by her side, Christina turned uncertainty into confidence and took the next step toward her goals.

United Way's College Bound advisors work in schools throughout the year, helping hundreds of students and families navigate the college admissions and financial aid process. Today, she's pursuing a college education and creating new possibilities for herself and her family. **Her journey shows the difference that guidance, encouragement, and access to opportunity can make.**

Read more →

## OUR FOCUS

- **Strengthen Academic Support**
- **Expand Career Pathways & Apprenticeships**
- **Increase College Planning & Funding Education**
- **Secure Housing and Basic Needs**



# FOUNDATIONS FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

In South Fulton, **Learning Legends Academy** is giving children a safe, nurturing place to learn, grow, and prepare for school.

After a series of costly repairs threatened the center's future, owner **Alana Dorsey** received support through a **United Way renovation grant**, in partnership with **PAACT Collaborative**, helping create a stronger, more welcoming space for young learners.

**Each year, United Way of Greater Atlanta helps fund eight to twelve renovation grants for centers like this**, benefiting hundreds of children, often in communities where our Child Well-Being Index® highlights a need for more quality early learning options. These investments help more children build a strong foundation for success.

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Pre-K graduates took center stage as they signed their name with oversized pencils to celebrate their next big milestone: kindergarten.

Through a partnership with **Atlanta Public Schools** and **Clayton County Public Schools**, United Way of Greater Atlanta helped children and families mark the transition with books, learning resources, and a joyful welcome into their school community.

More than a celebration, **Kindergarten Signing Day** helps children feel excited, confident, and ready for their first day of school while connecting families to resources that support learning at home. That preparation matters: **research shows children who enter kindergarten ready to learn are about five times more likely to read proficiently by third grade.** By helping children start strong, United Way is laying the foundation for lifelong learning and greater opportunity.

Read more →

## OUR FOCUS

- **Increase Access to Early Learning**
- **Build Reading Skills**
- **Support Family Health & Basic Needs**
- **Strengthen Family Engagement as First Teachers**



# CREATING STABILITY FOR FAMILIES

After losing their housing, **Taquana and her family** spent two years moving between relatives' homes and a hotel while trying to keep work, school, and family life on track.

Through United Way of Greater Atlanta's **Kids Home Initiative**, delivered in partnership with **Henry County schools and housing providers**, she received support with move-in costs for a permanent home, giving her daughter the stability she needed to stay focused on school and her family a place to finally call home.

**Housing instability can have a ripple effect on children**, with the school counseling team seeing more school absences, mental health challenges, and setbacks in academic performance. By helping families secure safe, stable housing, United Way is creating opportunities for children to learn, grow, and succeed.

Read more →






At three Title I Atlanta Public Schools, United Way of Greater Atlanta partnered with **Community Farmers Markets** to bring free monthly produce markets directly to families facing food insecurity.

Alongside hands-on lessons about nutrition and farming, students and caregivers could take home fresh fruits and vegetables, helping bridge the SNAP gap and ensuring more children had access to healthy food, especially during school breaks when families need it most.

**Nearly 7 in 10 families experiencing food insecurity do not qualify for food assistance programs**, making community-based solutions like school produce markets a necessary source of support. Because United is the Way, we're helping make essential resources more accessible where families already are.

Read more →

# OUR FOCUS

- **Secure Stable Housing**
- **Support Basic Needs & Equitable Access to Resources**
- **Build Savings & Create Economic Mobility**
- **Increase Access to Employment Pathways**



# PROGRAMS AND PARTNERS

We know lasting change takes collaboration. Guided by Child Well-Being Index® data, our extensive knowledge on where and how to best drive impact, and more than 120 years of experience at the heart of our region's most pressing challenges, we bring together nonprofit partners, big and small, investing in and creating proven solutions and innovative initiatives to maximize our collective impact.

## Programs

- AARP Foundation Experience Corps
- Building Resilient Professionals
- CareerReady ATL
- College Bound
- Financial Achievement Club
- Fostering Family Leaders
- Generative A.I. for Nonprofits (G.A.I.N.)
- Gwinnett Reentry Intervention Program (G.R.I.P.)
- Learn4Life
- Learning Spaces
- Literacy and Justice for All
- Maternal Health
- Mental Health
- Mission United
- Motel to Home
- OUT Georgia Impact Fund
- Powering the Potential of Young African American Males for Academic Achievement
- STEM UP
- Survivors Home
- United Way 211
- United Way Volunteer Involvement Program (V.I.P.)
- VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance)

## Partners

- 100 Black Men of Atlanta, Inc.
- AID Atlanta
- Alliance Theatre
- Amani Women Center
- ARCHI (Georgia State University Research Foundation)
- Atlanta Children's Shelter
- Atlanta Legal Aid Society, Inc.
- Atlanta Speech School, Inc. (RCLL)
- Atlanta Technical College
- Auditory Verbal Center, Inc.
- Barred Business Foundation
- Black Child Development Institute - Atlanta, Inc.
- Bloom Our Youth, Inc.
- Boat People SOS
- CaringWorks, Inc.
- Catholic Charities Atlanta
- Cherokee Family Violence Center
- Children's Museum of Atlanta
- Clarkston Development Foundation, Inc.
- Clayton County Public Schools
- Clayton State University
- Cobb Collaborative , Inc.
- CobbWorks, Inc.
- Community Assistance Center, Inc.
- COMMUNITY FARMERS MARKETS INC.
- Concrete Jungle
- Crossroads Community Ministries
- Douglas County School System/Communities in Schools of Douglas County
- Easter Seals North Georgia
- Elizabeth Baptist Church
- Fresh Films (a/k/a/ Dreaming Tree Foundation)
- Frontline Housing, Inc.
- Furniture Bank of Metro Atlanta
- Furthering Fathering
- GAEYC: Georgia Association for the Education of Young Children
- Gate City Day Nursery Association
- Gateway Center 24/7, Inc.
- GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students
- Georgia Building Trades Academy, Inc.
- Georgia Family Connection Partnership, Inc. (GaFCP)
- Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning (GFEC + L)
- Girl Scouts of Greater Atlanta
- Grady Memorial Hospital Corporation d.b.a. Grady Health System
- Hand Heart and Soul Project, Inc. (HHASP)
- Homes of Light, LLC
- House of Cherith, Inc.
- Housing Plus, Inc.
- Inspiredu
- Intown Cares
- Jewish Family & Career Services
- Jumpstart for Young Children, Inc.
- Kennesaw State University Research & Service Foundation, Inc. (KSURSF)
- KIPP Metro Atlanta Collaborative, Inc. d/b/a KIPP Metro Atlanta Schools
- Leading to Movement, Inc. (L2M)
- Learn4Life (L4L)
- Los Niños Primero
- Los Vecinos De Buford Highway
- Marietta Board of Education
- Martin Luther King Sr. Community Resources Collaborative
- Motherhood Beyond Bars
- Multi-Agency Alliance for Children, Inc.
- MUST Ministries
- Neighborhood Nexus
- Nicholas House
- Noor Family Services
- North Fulton Community Charities
- Odyssey Family Counseling Center
- OneGoal Metro Atlanta
- Osborne High School
- Our House
- Polyanna's Place, Inc.
- Positive Impact International
- Premier Academy, Inc.
- Project ReNeWal
- Public Works Alliance
- Quality Care for Children, Inc. (QCC)
- Raising Expectations
- Reach Out and Read, Inc.
- Rockdale Emergency Relief Fund, Inc.
- S.H.A.R.E. House, Inc.
- Saint Philip AME Church
- Ser Familia
- Single Parent Alliance & Resource Center
- St. Vincent De Paul Society, Inc.
- STRIVE Atlanta
- Teach O'Rea Preparatory
- The Center for Children and Young Adults
- The Center for Family Resources
- The Community Restoration Project Corporation
- The nsoro Educational Foundation
- The Scholarship Academy
- The Sheltering Arms (SA)
- Transformations By Atlanta Angels, Inc
- Trans Housing Atlanta Program, Inc.
- Trans Housing Coalition
- Turner Chapel AME Church
- University of Georgia Research Foundation, Inc.
- VOICES/ Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network
- We Love Buford Highway, Inc.
- YMCA of Metropolitan Atlanta, Inc.
- YOUTH EMPOWERMENT SUCCESS SERVICES
- Zaban Paradies Center

“ **The CareerReady ATL program changed my life**…A lot of kids don’t like to go to college–who wants to pay student loans? Who wants to be in debt? Even though it may seem hard with the economy we’re living in, don’t give up…There are so many options out there. **And with apprenticeship programs, there’s a lot out there for anybody to do anything they want.** ”

– **Tiffany Cannon**, CareerReady ATL apprentice

“United Way is tackling Atlanta’s biggest problem, which is the lack of economic mobility. **We’re making sure children aren’t sentenced to a life of poverty just because of the zip code they were born into**... United is the way we empower young Atlantans to take the first step in building generational wealth.”

– **Kristie Gonzales,** WXIA WATL 11Alive

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# UNITED IS THE WAY TO MAKE LASTING CHANGE IN OUR COMMUNITY

**United Way of Greater Atlanta is dedicated to bringing people and resources together to drive sustainable and equitable improvements, in the well-being of children and their families, across the 13 metro-counties we serve.**

The progress in this report was made possible by partners who chose to take action, and there is more work to do. Join us in investing in high-need communities, engaging employees as volunteers, and using your voice to champion economic mobility across Greater Atlanta. Together, we can create a future where every child has the opportunity to thrive, because when children thrive, entire communities thrive too.


**For more information on how you can help, please contact us:**

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(404) 527-7200


**Click here to learn more about United Way of Greater Atlanta.**

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