

UNITED WAY OF THE MIDLANDS CONTACT:

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United Way of the Midlands Aims to “Silence the Growl” and Decrease Summer Hunger

In the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area, there are people in every zip code who do not always know where their next meal will come from. In fact, over 102,000 people are food insecure, and summer can be particularly difficult for them.¹ During the school year, 62,000 students in the metro area qualify for free or reduced lunches. During the summer, when these supports are not available, families have to find new ways to provide meals. In Nebraska, 1 in 5 children are considered food insecure.²

Summer hunger impacts the whole family, putting extra strain on families already struggling to meet their budget. Low income families spend an additional \$300 a month for groceries when children are out of school.³ In the metro area, 20.4 percent of residents “often” or “sometimes” worry about running out of food before there is money to buy more.⁴

People struggling with food insecurity are faced with the choice of putting food on the table or paying for other basic needs such as utilities, rent or medications.⁵ Parents and guardians may skip meals to ensure their children have enough to eat, or they may eat less nutritious food because it is less expensive, which increases the risk of diet related diseases. Children who do not have enough to eat generally have poorer health, do worse in school and have higher hospitalization rates.⁶

In 2017, with the support of the Iowa West Foundation (IWF), United Way of the Midlands (UWM) published a report on food security in our community. Building upon this work, UWM secured a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to convene partners across the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area to create a comprehensive plan to address food insecurity and improve the nutritional quality of food. For the past year, with the support of the USDA, the IWF and Wells Fargo, more than 40 public, private and nonprofit partners have been meeting to develop goals, strategies and objectives as part of this comprehensive plan. This work bolsters UWM’s ability to invest strategically in food supports across the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area. In 2017, UWM funded programs provided nearly 500,000 healthy meals to people in our community.

Together, we can ensure everyone has enough food throughout the summer. During the month of May, UWM is raising funds to “Silence the Growl” and decrease summer hunger in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro. With the help of corporate and individual donors, UWM will continue to invest in healthy food and hunger relief programs and partner with organizations to meet food needs in the community. These programs include emergency food pantries, healthy meal programs, community gardens, after-school and out-of-school programs that include meals for the students and meal assistance for seniors. Help “Silence the Growl” for those in need at unitedwaymidlands.org/silencethegrowl.

About United Way of the Midlands

Thanks to donors, volunteers and community partners, United Way of the Midlands (UWM) is not only focused on addressing our community’s human needs today; it is focused on what can be and what should be. It is building on today’s strong partnerships to create even more comprehensive human service efforts tomorrow, so our community can solve some of the root causes of poverty. UWM is community-based, community-focused. Thanks to those who share their strength, UWM is COMMUNITY STRONG. Please visit UnitedWayMidlands.org for more information.

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¹<http://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2015/>

²www.feedingamerica.org/research/map-the-meal-gap/2015/2015-mapthemealgap-exec-summary.pdf

³www.nokidhungry.org/pdfs/Fact_Sheet-2016.pdf

⁴www.douglascountyhealth.com/images/stories/2015%20PRC%20CHNA%20Report%20-%20Omaha%20Metro%20Area%20Douglas%20Sarpy%20Cass%20Pottawattamie%20Counties.pdf

⁵www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/our-research/hunger-in-america/hia-2014-executive-summary.pdf

⁶www.sustainabletable.org/280/food-security-food-access