

UNITED WAY OF THE MIDLANDS CONTACT:

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United Way of the Midlands Celebrates National Volunteer Month

Volunteers are an essential part of United Way of the Midlands' (UWM) work to advance the common good in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area. During National Volunteer month in April, UWM is celebrating those who take action and encourage other individuals to be at the center of social-change discovery and actively demonstrating their collective power to foster positive transformation through volunteerism.

Not only does volunteering benefit the community, individuals who volunteer also reap the benefits through physical and mental health. In fact, a 2017 United Healthcare National Study reports those who give back through volunteerism had improved mood (93%), lower stress levels (79%), improved self-esteem (88%) and an enriched sense of purpose (94%).¹ A 2013 Carnegie Mellon study found adults over the age of 50 who volunteered on a regular basis were less likely to develop high blood pressure, which is a major risk factor for heart attack and stroke.² Volunteering may also improve cognitive function of older adults, especially women.³

UWM unites efforts toward common goals on a local level, leveraging the volunteer resources and know-how of the entire community. Meaningful and important volunteer projects are coordinated to support UWM's goal of impacting poverty by strengthening the local organizations that also pursue that goal every day. Last year, 3,495 local volunteers invested 51,039 hours of service in our community.⁴ The Corporation for National and Community Service reports the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area ranks 15th among mid-sized American cities for the number of residents who volunteer their time.⁵

UWM'S VOLUNTEER "DAYS OF SERVICE" PROJECTS

Though UWM is paying special tribute to volunteers during this month, it is year-round volunteerism that plays a vital role to energize and mobilize UWM-funded programs. UWM offers three signature volunteer events each year and encourages community members to participate. These volunteer events promote the spirit and value of volunteerism, increase the awareness of local human service issues and demonstrate what people-working together can accomplish.

- **Day of Action – June 21, 2018:** Focusing on childhood literacy, UWM connects caring volunteers with out-of-school time programs for children, to spend time during that day as Reading Buddies for students in kindergarten through third grade. **Register today** www.unitedwaymidlands.org/DayofAction.
- **Day of Caring – September 21, 2018:** This annual volunteer service event is open to individuals and teams of volunteers for a variety of projects at local nonprofit and civic organizations. Projects will range from organizing, cleaning and painting at local nonprofit sites, to helping metro area students with their homework and job interviewing skills.
- **Holiday Helpers – November and December 2018:** The holidays are a time to celebrate the things we are most thankful for, and many want to share their time helping those in need across our community. Individuals and teams can sign up for meaningful holiday projects that will help individuals in need and the organizations that provide them support.

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COMMUNITY-MINDED COMPANIES COME TO UWM FOR SERVICE PROJECTS

A variety of Omaha-Council Bluffs area companies, small and large, come to UWM for help with creating and coordinating meaningful, customized volunteer projects for their employers and members. Employers greatly benefit when they encourage employee participation in volunteer activities – employees are more engaged, they develop professional skills and they are happier and healthier, resulting in better productivity and reduced sick time. The 2017 National Study reports:¹

- 87% employees believe they develop professional skills as a result of their volunteer activities
- 86% employees indicate learning better time management
- 92% employees agreed volunteering as a team helped them develop their people skills/teamwork
- 71% of those surveyed (almost three-fourths) who volunteer through work report feeling better about their employer

“I had a vision of what I wanted to accomplish for our last volunteer activity and so I reached out to United Way. We talked through what my vision was, worked together and came up with a great plan that they helped me execute. It turned out to be a wonderful volunteer experience for us,” says Dolores Terwey, U.S. Bank assistant vice president project analyst and UWM campaign manager.

“When our employees come back from volunteer activities,” Terwey says, “they seem more energized, they’re excited, they talk to their coworkers about their experience and the organization. It’s a win-win situation for the company, United Way and the organizations we’ve helped out.”

Volunteering provides benefits beyond measure. Communities are stronger and volunteers are able to see first-hand the impact their contributions are making. Prospective volunteers can reach out directly to UWM to learn more about the many available opportunities there are to serve in the metro area. Individuals and groups can contact the Volunteer Engagement Director at volunteer@uwmidlands.org or 402-522-7949 to coordinate meaningful volunteer projects with UWM’s funded partners.

Projects can also be viewed on UWM’s volunteer website, www.unitedwaymidlands.org/volunteer. UWM’s funded agencies update the website year round with their projects and information, including time and number of volunteers needed. Users simply have to create a login and answer a few questions about the areas they prefer to volunteer for. Then users can view all local projects and be updated when new projects in those areas are added to the site.

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 newsroom.uhc.com/content/dam/newsroom/2017_VolunteerStudy_Summary_Web.pdf

² Carnegie Mellon University. “Volunteering reduces risk of hypertension in older adults.” Science Daily. 13 June 2013.

³ www.futurity.org/volunteering-seniors-cognition-1575942

⁴ This number includes volunteers from Day of Caring, Day of Action, Finance Committee, CIRT, UWM Board, Community Investment Committee, CRCSF, Holiday Helpers, Campaign Managers, Campaign Volunteers, Planning Giving and Endowment, Women United, UWM Young Professionals, corporate custom projects

⁵ www.nationalservice.gov/vcla/mid-size-city-ranking-volunteer-rate