

Merrill Area United Way, Inc.
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Merrill Area United Way
Dee Olsen, Executive Director

The year 2021 began with a devastating event for one Merrill area family. A person never knows when they will be presented with the biggest challenge of their life. The weekend of January 23rd the Kevin Hanson and Angela Volm family, including their baby son Jaxton lost all their possessions in an intense fire in the Town of Corning on Hilly Road. The home and their vehicles were totally destroyed. Fortunately, no one was hurt in the fire – but can you imagine how difficult that is in the middle of winter.

Its times like these when United Way and several other agencies were able to step in and help. St. Vincent DePaul gathered clothing, winter outerwear, boots, blankets, and many other items. NCCAP and St, Vincent began working on getting them an apartment as quick as possible. Within 3 days United Way hand-delivered a check for \$2,000 to assist them. The funds used to support the Hanson-Volm family came through the United Way Disaster Relief Fund. This fund was established following the tornado of 2011 with dollars directed to help when disaster hits. These funds have now supported three such families victimized by fire. United Way maintains a separate account for the disaster relief monies. If there are any donors who might wish to help sustain that fund; they may do so by contacting the Merrill Area United Way.

At United Way we realize that telling the story about what it is we do, how we support our funded agencies, how they in turn serve their clients and then again how they touch the lives of people through the programs they offer. Trying to communicate all that information is challenging. While the story telling is critical, United Way still relies on the media and social media, i.e., face book, websites, and our agencies to help in this effort. United Way does not have a budget for paid ads, billboards, radio ads or commercials. We believe the money given us should be used for its intended purpose – helping people by supporting our funded agencies. Don't misunderstand, we must spend a little to get the word out and bring the dollars in. However, our annual campaign, campaign materials, marketing, postage, and advertising budget combined is only \$6,400, or less than 2.2% of our entire budget. Our affiliation with a recognized worldwide organization, helps our name recognition.

The Merrill Area United Way just held its Annual Meeting on February 8th. The Board was presented with the 2020 Annual Report. The report identifies the significant role United Way plays in the community by supporting 20 programs to help people with, health, education, basic needs, and financial stability. It also highlights the many activities, challenges, and successes of 2020. The Annual Report is available to the public via our website; at merrillareaunitedway.org or visit us on Face Book. If you prefer having a copy mailed or e-mailed to you, just send a request to Delores.Olsen@merrillareaunitedway.org.

We hope that our ongoing messaging will help raise your awareness about the social needs and the social diversity in our area. Help us by Living United, helping others, volunteering and by giving financial support. Donations stay local and are always appreciated at Merrill Area United Way, P O Box 813, Merrill, WI 54452. For more information about Merrill Area United Way visit: merrillareaunitedway.org or email Delores.Olsen@merrillareaunitedway.org .