



**MERRILL AREA UNITED WAY, INC.**

**Merrill Area United Way, Inc.**

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April 2023 -- Foto News Article

Merrill Area United Way

Dee Olsen, Executive Director

Spring is a time for refreshing, renewal, and incredible changes. April is a time when this Director reflects on her first year as United Way Director. A tornado touched down in Merrill on April 10, 2011. I was hired to start my new job on May 1<sup>st</sup>. But rather than jumping into the job, I jumped into a full-blown response campaign to raise funds and help those that were devastated by their losses. Then Director Lynn Zentner and I worked side by side that entire summer as we dealt with many ramifications from the tornado and the trail of damage it left behind, both materialistically and emotionally. Reflecting on the 2011 tornado pushes out a reminder for people to be watchful of the weather patterns and changes, and of course, stay tuned to the emergency sirens in case they sound off in the city.

With the closing of the Lincoln County University of Wisconsin Extension, the Healthy Minds for Lincoln County program was eliminated. Fortunately, some of their efforts were picked up by the Lincoln County Health Department and some of the people involved in the previous Healthy Minds program. Not all initiatives have continued. However, a youth group from Merrill High School called the RAISE YOUR VOICE CLUB is holding a Raise Your Voice for Mental Health Walk. The club's mission is to raise mental health issues awareness, advocate for change, share resources and support for others. This walk is held in partnership with National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) Northwoods. The Awareness Walk is Sunday, May 7th, 2023, at the Merrill Area Recreation Center (MARC), 1100 MARC Drive, Merrill. Registration at 11:30 a.m., walk at 1:00 p.m. Consider donating to this worthy cause. Enjoy the walk, silent auction (ends at 1 p.m.), yard games, face painting, entertainment, and concessions.

Merrill Area United Way has fulfilled its annual obligation to United Way Worldwide by submitting our reports for United Way Worldwide Membership Certification and another report named Data Base II. We have met the standards, plus complied with United Way Worldwide directives, to ensure impact in our three major areas of: Health, Education, Basic Needs/Income.

The Merrill United Way Board Planning and Goal Setting Session is April 19<sup>th</sup>. We will assess progress, look at changing trends, and set a plan and goals to continue our organization's growth and development. The Board strives to meet the ongoing, changing needs of the community. Soon the Board members will start the spring/summer agency visits.

You make a difference when you support the Merrill Area United Way. If you want to donate, please send your check to Merrill Area United Way, P O Box 813, Merrill, WI 54452. Donations stay local. For more information about Merrill Area United Way visit our website at [merrillareaunitedway.org](http://merrillareaunitedway.org) or email [Delores.Olsen@merrillareaunitedway.org](mailto:Delores.Olsen@merrillareaunitedway.org).