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2015 LOBBY DAY IN SPRINGFIELD

UNITED WAY OF ILLINOIS

2014–2015 Annual Report

PHOTO BY DANIEL SCHWEN

United Way of Illinois

*"**United Way of Illinois (UWI)** is a statewide association of 52 local organizations that create lasting community change by helping children and youth succeed in school, promoting financial stability and family independence and improving people's health."*

Dear United Way of Illinois Members and Friends,

As a statewide organization, United Way of Illinois promotes a public policy agenda that enhances and leverages our funding, our knowledge base, and our role as a convener of health and human service stakeholders. It pleases me to report that our collective efforts, led by more than 50 local United Ways, have raised and distributed in excess of $110 million to providers who serve the most vulnerable Illinoisans. We thank all of our donors and constituents for helping "move the needle" on a variety of fronts in 2015.

This past year we've been grounded in our mission to advance the common good through public policy. We have worked cooperatively to enhance and strengthen our communities by focusing on four core areas: Education, Income, Health, and Community Strengthening. Our public policy efforts are designed to help shape legislative and governmental decisions in a way that will maximize the impact of public and private funds spent in these four areas and improve lives across the state.

Our Annual Lobby Day in Springfield was an important highlight of this past year given how much is at stake related to our statewide human services infrastructure. We met with key leadership in both the House and the Senate, as well as with the new Governor and several members of his Executive Staff. Our message to them was twofold:

- The health and human service sector needs to be a high priority in their discussions about the State budget; and
- Our network of local United Ways, with its strong focus on data and outcomes, can and should be a valuable partner in helping craft efficient and effective plans, programs, and budgets as difficult priority decisions are made.

We believe that our message and offer of assistance was heard, understood, and appreciated, and we are eager and well prepared to contribute.

As with all advocacy efforts, we are not done yet. While 2015 was a great year, we need to keep pressing and working for more results in 2016. I thank all who contributed to our cause in 2015, and I challenge us all to be even more "united" in 2016 as we GIVE, ADVOCATE, and VOLUNTEER to help make a real difference in the lives of so many in our state.

Mark R. Burton

Mark R. Burton, C.P.M.
Chairman
United Way of Illinois

United Way of Illinois

ADVANCING THE COMMON GOOD THROUGH PUBLIC POLICY

Our 2014–2015 Public Policy Agenda focused on four key areas:

EDUCATION: | LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE SUCCESS

Illinois' competitiveness in a global economy depends upon academic achievement. To succeed, students must enter school ready to learn and navigate the transitions to high school, post-secondary study and work.

To ensure children receive a quality education and stay in school through graduation, United Way of Illinois will:

- Advocate to make high-quality, affordable early-learning opportunities available to all children
- Promote partnerships that support family engagement and community-based involvement to improve student academic achievement
- Support comprehensive and consistent assessment and measurement standards from Pre-K through high school graduation

SUCCESS: The newly created Attendance Commission at the State Board of Education represents a victory on two fronts: UWI advocacy efforts helped secure passage of the Commission, and a representative from United Way will serve on the Commission. The Commission is charged with studying chronic absenteeism and recommending strategies to prevent it.

INCOME: | FOSTERING STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH FINANCIAL STABILITY

Financial stability has taken on greater importance for many Illinoisans as our economy rebounds. Households that are financially stable and have sufficient income to support their families create a stronger community and economy.

To ensure families and individuals have the resources they need to achieve financial stability, United Way of Illinois will:

- Foster increased access to work support programs and streamlined processes for critical public benefits
- Promote strengthening of financial literacy programs to help individuals avoid financial hardship and develop economic security

SUCCESS: UWI advocacy efforts helped build bipartisan support for a bill to increase Illinois' Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) from 10% of the federal EITC to 20% over five years. Doubling the state's EITC will lift more families out of poverty and stimulate local economies. Also due to UWI advocacy, the state Department of Revenue added a link to MyFreeTaxes on its website. MyFreeTaxes offers free online filing for low-income residents.

HEALTH: | PREVENTING CHRONIC DISEASE AND ENSURING ACCESS TO CARE

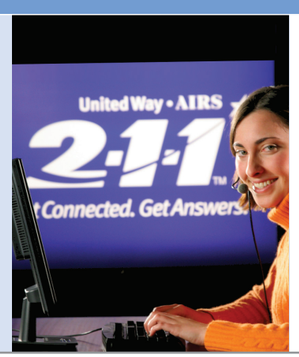
Access to healthcare is the key to ensuring Illinoisans can lead healthy lives. Receiving healthcare early in life and throughout adulthood is an important way to prevent obesity and chronic diseases that are becoming more prevalent today.

To ensure families and individuals are able to live healthy lives, United Way of Illinois will:

- Support access to healthcare by connecting people to affordable, comprehensive health services
- Combat preventable chronic disease through the promotion of strategies that support wellness and healthy lifestyles

SUCCESS: More than 347,300 Illinoisans enrolled or re-enrolled in a health care plan for 2015 through the state's health insurance marketplace, a 60 percent increase in enrollment from 2014. Another 572,100 Illinoisans gained health coverage through Medicaid in 2015. UWI supported the expansion of Medicaid to adults without children and the expansion of private health coverage, both key components of the Affordable Care Act.

COMMUNITY STRENGTHENING: | BUILDING CAPACITY TO ADVANCE THE COMMON GOOD



Much like roads, hospitals and schools, community services are part of our state's vital public infrastructure that must be maintained and strengthened. In order to continue advancing the common good, we must make sure the state has a well-managed and highly coordinated network of community services.

To ensure Illinois has the essential services that protect public health and safety, revitalize local economies and enhance learning, United Way of Illinois will:

- Advocate for a state budget that preserves an appropriate level of investment in Illinois' health and human services
- Promote fair, efficient and transparent contracting practices between service providers and government funders
- Support efforts to reduce unnecessary state administrative burdens on human service providers and their programs
- Enhance community resources that ensure a seamless infrastructure of health and human service support for those in need

SUCCESS: 2-1-1 Illinois expanded to 33 counties in 2014, bringing the number of counties with service to 53. In addition, 98 out of 102 counties in the state are covered by a service agreement with a 2-1-1 call center. UWI has supported 2-1-1 since its inception because of the important role the non-emergency telephone number plays in connecting people with essential community information and services.