

# **WATERTOWN AREA UNITED WAY AGENCY \$1 A WEEK STATEMENTS AND STORY BANK**

Updated May 2024

**LIVE UNITED.**

## **WATERTOWN AREA UNITED WAY SOCIAL MEDIA**

Read through this document to find a \$1 a week statement or success story that touches your heart. Once you find one, share why it was special to you and parts of that story on your own social media. Be sure to share the link

[www.watertownunitedway.org](http://www.watertownunitedway.org) so others can find a story that speaks to them!

Each agency program has its own page and the format is as follows: agency program name, agency description, \$1 a week statement, and success story.

With any questions you are always welcome to contact our office at [director@watertownunitedway.org](mailto:director@watertownunitedway.org) or (605) 886-5815.



**Facebook: @WatertownUnitedWay**



**Instagram: @area\_united57201**



**Twitter: @area\_united**



**YouTube: Watertown Area United Way**



**LinkedIn: Watertown Area United Way**

## UNITED WAY WORLDWIDE

United Ways reach 40+ countries and territories across the globe—from Colombia to Korea . Through our international donor-advised giving fund, we've helped companies, foundations and individuals invest more than \$300 million in good solutions across 110 countries .

United Way makes it easier to make a meaningful difference, whether it's through time, money or by raising one's voice . We're helping corporate partners launch and grow employee volunteerism in key overseas markets . We're connecting people with easy and inspirational volunteer opportunities, staging volunteerism events, creating leadership—development opportunities and helping rising community leaders step into board service.

**But there is more work to do, because change doesn't happen alone. Hope isn't a one-man band. We have one life. To live better, we must LIVE UNITED.**

## UNITED WAY PRIORITY AREAS

United Way Worldwide (UWW) has three main focus areas: Education, Health and Financial Stability. As outlined in the annual public policy agenda, UWW also fights for Health, Nutrition, Education, Financial Stability, and Community Supports at the national level. Locally, Watertown Area United Way supports agency programs and efforts that meet our the needs of Watertown Area residents in one or more of our three priority areas: Education, Health and Financial Stability.





## BEACON CENTER

Provides a 24-hour crisis line (605) 886-4300 or 1-800-660-8014 to victims of abuse, domestic violence shelter, rape crisis services, peer and professional counseling, information and referral, education and training, support groups, and more. Serving Clark, Codington, Deuel, Grant, and Hamlin counties.

**\$1 a week... Every dollar allocated to Beacon Center is used to provide the best possible services to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and human trafficking. The Family Visitation Center clients may incur a small fee, but all DV, SA, stalking and human trafficking victims have no charge for services they receive from Beacon Center. Each dollar may allow a victim to receive counseling, legal assistance/advocacy, medical advocacy, transportation, medical appointments, and case management. We assess each and every individual.**

A woman called looking for help for her and her six children. She had tried to leave her abusive relationship many times. She had fled for what she hoped was the last time and went to stay with a family member. She soon realized that there was just no room for her children and his multiple children. She reached out to us as she was told by a friend we could help. She explained the years of abuse by her husband and how she had fled many times just to go back due to him manipulating her and making her feel guilty about the children. We told her we had plenty of room for her and her children. We explained that we had just remodeled and we had a three-bedroom apartment that would be perfect for her and her children. She came the same day with her children, and we got her and the kids all settled in the room. We helped get them food and any clothing that they were missing.

While she was staying with us, we assisted her in finding housing. As you can imagine, finding a house big enough for six children is a task. She was able to find a big enough house for her and the children. Beacon Center assisted her in paying her deposits as it is very hard to come up with all that money upfront. She was able to get a job while raising six children on her own and work as much as she could to help provide for her family. We are proud to say that everyone is happy and healthy in their new home in an abuse-free environment. Through all the ups and downs of starting your life over she faced her challenges with a grace and dignity that is inspiring. She is a true success.

## BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB OF WATERTOWN

As a constant in the community for the last 50 years, our community has relied on Boys & Girls Club services in many different capacities. The organization has evolved from a juvenile diversion program serving boys out of a vacant downtown store, into a highly visible youth development program, serving youth ages 5 -18 in Watertown and the surrounding communities including youth from Clark, Hamlin and Deuel Counties.

### **\$1 a week can... provides a member with healthy meals & snacks after their school day.**

At the Boys & Girls Club of Watertown, we teach kids and teens the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. Our Healthy Lifestyles programs develop fitness, positive use of leisure time, skills for stress management, appreciation for the environment and social skills. Our programs are developed to increase daily physical activity, teach Club members good nutrition by providing healthy meals and snacks and help them develop healthy relationships.

I started coming to the Club this school year, I am really enjoying the Club so far! I have made so many new friends already and even see my old ones too. By far, my favorite place to hang out is the Teen Games Room. I think playing Jenga is the best thing ever, along with playing Roblox on the computers. I like the Education Center too, I always go there when they are playing with the play-doh. The Gym is super fun, too; volleyball is my favorite thing to play. Oh, and the food? phenomenal! Walking tacos are hands down my favorite meal here! I think the Club has made me a better person, in a lot of ways. That's why I always come. - Ayden J., Age 11

## CODINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Funding used is for children's educational programming. Programming will incorporate art activities, songs, games and presentations to educate youth on the history of Codington County.

**\$1 a week can...provide programming for 10 children.**

The Codington County Heritage Museum has been a wonderful addition to our Summer Kids on Target (KOT) Program at Immaculate Conception School. They are always prepared and ready with activities for our group attending the museum. They provide well rounded activities of Cultural History that relates to our area.

In 2023 Debi Fritz attended our programs weekly with her grandchildren. They had a lovely summer and created some family memories while learning about history. Debi sent us a note that said: Thank you so much for this Summer. The kids really enjoyed the classes. See you next summer.

## CODINGTON COUNTY DRUG COURT

The Codington County Drug Court works to enhance public safety with the goal of developing sober, productive, law-abiding citizens by holding the offender accountable while providing supervision, treatment and life skills in a judicial setting.

**\$1 a week can... allow for one item from the Dollar Store for one participant as incentive for complying to the rules of Drug Court for that week.**

The Codington County Drug Court has had thirty-four graduates since inception, July 2014. The graduation rate for our Drug Court is 46%. For every one graduate, is one more life helped, one more father, mother, son, daughter saved for a family. We have given them the tools to succeed a positive, sober lifestyle.

"We have a recent graduate from drug court whom I will identify as K.P. When K.P. graduated from drug court, he wore a T-shirt that had the Serenity Prayer on it. I couldn't imagine a more fitting illustration of the progress he made in drug court. K.P. is a co-parent of two children. When he started drug court, he had alienated his family, he had a difficult time co-parenting his children and his life was a shambles. When K.P. graduated drug court, the mother of his children and his kids were there to help him celebrate. K.P. had established a strong relationship with Watertown's recovery community. He had a good job and steady employment. He was especially close with his mother and had done much to repair that relationship. One of the lessons K.P. taught me as a drug court judge was to be careful not to expect our clients to be strong all of the time. I had to learn to do a better job of supporting clients when they struggle. When a client makes me a better drug court judge, I cannot underestimate the effect that has on the success of our entire program. In addition, the idea that we have made life better for his children and can do what we can to break the cycle of addiction for another generation means more than I can say. K.P. found his support and his serenity through his time in the drug court program. I am very proud of his success." - Judge Means



## CODINGTON COUNTY SEARCH & RESCUE

Provides a trained team of volunteers ready for search and dive rescue or for recovery of persons and evidence, and promotion of water safety.

**\$1 a week can... train Search & Rescue volunteers to be safe and to save lives (i.e. open water diving, advance open water diving, ice diving, rescue diving, certifications, and re-certifications).**

Throughout the past years CCSAR has responded to numerous ice rescues, ice recoveries, ice and open water dives, open water search and rescues and land search and rescues. CCSAR makes it a priority to finish each mission no matter the what the mission may bring. On each mission, SDGFP Officers have always observed CCSAR members push themselves until the mission is complete. CCSAR doesn't give up as whatever the circumstance, a quick response, rescue or recovery is needed. CCSAR has strived to update equipment and train that can help in any situation throughout the years to benefit rescue and recovery time. CCSAR is on first name basis with GFP staff and is willing to visit and train on any needs when requested.

CCSAR works cooperatively with Officers for the quickest and best outcomes. All staff on the CCSAR team are always professional and understand working together is the top priority to complete each mission. CCSAR team works closely alongside SDGFP each year at Lake Kampeska to assist and provide extra help, Lake Kampeska hosts on the water parties, which brings hundreds of boats and users to a small area. CCSAR staff and Officers work diligently to try and provide the safest water for lake visitors and users. CCSAR makes sure not only the safety of the public, but also providing safety for all SDGFP Officers involved.

It would take a long time to explain all the missions CCSAR has completed in the last 5 years alone, but it is always known to SDGFP Officers that when circumstance happens, their team will be responding. No matter what the outcome, Officers working with CCSAR team members know that the utmost professionalism and ability to bring the best outcome will be on scene.

It is with all these reasons and many more the South Dakota Conservation Officers Association awarded the Codington County Search and Rescue with Cooperator of the Year Award.

Wildlife Conservation Officer Zachary Thomsen

## COMMUNITY TRANSIT OF WATERTOWN

Provides dependable, affordable public transportation to the people in the Watertown area as they travel to meet their needs for shopping, medical appointments, employment opportunities, educational, nutritional, and recreational purposes.

**\$1 a week can...contribute to 17 rides a year for someone who is in a financial need.**

Life is difficult and for those who become entangled in the life of addiction it can seem even more overwhelming. Brothers and Sisters Behind Bars is an organization dedicated to helping those individuals know they are not alone and there is always hope for breaking free from the cycle of addiction. BSBB wants those in their program to feel loved, supported, understood, and challenged to pursue mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health so that they can become productive members of their community.

Dawn Kraemer is a member of the BSBB program who we consider a success story in the making. The 35-year-old mother of four came to the program in the fall of 2023 with a long history of addiction, which forced her to spend much of her adult life in and out of jails and prisons. Kraemer's success has caught the eye of many. She will graduate from Phase III of Drug Court in June, has managed to excel in her employment endeavors, removed herself from a BSBB house to an apartment of her own, has become a volunteer at other businesses and remained sober along the way. Her biggest reward will be having her three youngest children join her in Watertown once school is out.

"I was tired of being what I was, and I wanted my family back," said Kraemer. "I have been able to learn who I am as a sober person again. I have been reintroduced to God and am learning to believe in myself again." She credits much of the success in turning her life in a positive direction to the Drug Court, BSBB and Watertown Community Transit for getting her to and from appointments, work, training and anywhere else she needed to be.

BSBB provided us the tools to help ourselves and the transit has been a life saver. Drug Court has provided a lot of support and helped me realize I can have the things I want."

## EAST CENTRAL CASA (COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES)

CASA seeks to promote and protect the best interest of abused and neglected children involved in court proceedings through the advocacy efforts of trained dedicated, passionate volunteers.

**\$1 a week can... allow us to provide children with items that provide a sense of value, importance, and normalcy by celebrating birthdays, first days of school, graduation, or for any day that warrants a little something extra.**

A 14- year-old girl and her sister were removed from their father due to neglect, alcoholism and abandonment. The mother had a stroke and was placed out of state for care and unable to care for her daughters. These girls had not seen or spoke to their mother for six months. When CASA was assigned to the case the volunteer set-up weekly zoom calls between mom and the girls through the facility social worker and this young teen was able to see her mom's face. Eventually CASA was able to do an in-person visit with mom and the girls. The teen told her CASA volunteer "Without you I would be afraid, You have made sure I got to see my mom, even though it scares and hurts me to see her like that. It makes me feel better knowing she is alive. I can hug her and tell her to get better". As the family worked toward reunification with father and he made huge strides, CASA was able to pay for a weekend in the hotel so dad could begin to re-establish a bond with his girls. Dad sent CASA an email thanking them and he said, "I never knew my girls. I always left everything to their mom and was selfish. Thank you for helping me play with them this weekend. This is the beginning of something beautiful I would have missed without CASA".

## EMBE, GIRLS ON THE RUN

Girls on the Run is an afterschool program, serving girls in grades 3rd -6th. Girls on the Run inspires girls to be joyful, healthy, and confident using a fun, experience-based curriculum which creatively integrates running.

**\$1 a week can... provide a healthy snack for a girl, these snacks are needed to provide fuel for the girls for their 75-minute session.**

Girls on the Run is more than running! An independent study of Girls on the Run showed that 97% of participating GOTR girls said they learned critical life skills including conflict resolution, helping others or making intentional decisions; 85% of participating girls improved in confidence, caring, competence, character development or connection to others: and a 40% increase in physical activity among girls who were least active at the start of the GOTR season.

Through Girls on the Run, our participants learn about how to be a good friend and resolve conflicts with their peers. One key step is to learn about effective communication. the girls learn a strategy on how to clearly communicate their feelings to others when they feel an uncomfortable emotion such as hurt, sad, upset, frustrated etc. especially when friends or peers made them feel these emotions. They use four phrases, 'I feel....when you...because.... I would like you to....' We were conducting this lesson at practice. The girls learned the phrases and played a running game to help them practice how to use these phrases in different situations.

We came to the end of practice and the girls were gathering their things to leave. Our coach heard a commotion in the hall way. Two girls were messing around teasing and joking with each other. One girl told the other to stop that she wasn't having fun any more. She ended up getting really upset and stomping away. The girl who was left was also upset because she said she didn't mean to make her friend mad. Then another GOTR girl came up to her and said you can use "I feel...when you...because...I would like for you to..." to talk to your friend and apologize. That other girls offered to go with her and they went to together to talk to the girl.

This is a simple story but it is these skills and moments that show the true power of our program and how important it is for girls to learn these critical life skills.

## GIRL SCOUTS DAKOTA HORIZONS

Girls in K-12th grades discover their leadership potential as they make the world a better place through community service projects improving the quality of life in the Watertown Area. Find out more about the Girl Scout Leadership at [www.gsdakotahorizons.org](http://www.gsdakotahorizons.org).

**\$1 a week can... provide a girl needing financial assistance the chance to belong to Girl Scouts, the world's largest organization dedicated to building girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place. Your donation will help cover the cost of membership dues, learning materials and other program essentials.**

Today more than ever girls need connection, support and a sense of belonging. The Girl Scout Leadership Experience Program fills a gap in after-school and summer youth programs, spurred largely by a growing demand for our services as we collaborate with schools and other youth-serving organizations in the Watertown Area.

For the past several years, Girl Scouts - Dakota Horizons has partnered with the Boys and Girls Club of Watertown. According to Liz Christianson, Executive Director, there are many benefits in working together. "The Boys & Girls Club has a successful partnership in collaborating with the Girls Scouts Dakota Horizons organization to execute programs which support our similar missions. In the past, Girl Scouts has brought innovative programming into the Club during our normal youth service hours. Club members participate in hands-on learning activities with Girl Scout staff members, who serve as positive role models to our youth. Club members immensely enjoy the activities and time spent with Girl Scouts programming. The activities provided by Girl Scouts give our youth a chance to explore and prepare for their future careers. Girls and their families in the community of Watertown are positively impacted by the Girl Scouts program."

In the Watertown area, more than 200 girls in kindergarten through 12th grades are discovering their talents by participating in the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.

## HUMAN SERVICE AGENCY, SERENITY HILLS

Serenity Hills is a Community Support Provider and Community Behavioral Health Center with a mission to provide high quality human services that enable people to develop their fullest potential while maintaining the highest standard of ethical and fiscal responsibility. Serenity Hills aims to provide the best care possible to assist individuals to become sober and begin a life of recovery. In calendar year 2023, We provided this service to 64 individuals.

### **\$1 a week can... help provide snack packs for clients in the safe room.**

An individual was once heavily addicted to methamphetamine and alcohol. He had spent over half his life in prison/detention for drug/alcohol crimes. He came to Serenity Hills several years ago to learn how to cope with addiction and mental illness. After completing the program, he left Serenity Hills and eventually the entire care of HSA.

In July 2023, he was brought to our safe room by law enforcement because he was demonstrating symptoms of unregulated mental illness. He stayed in our safe room for 24-48 hours and received care to address his psychotic symptoms. He denied substance use and our providers were able to ascertain if he was detoxing. At that time, this individual had not been seen by any HSA provider for about a year.

However, we were able to keep him with us while he got back on his medication, and now he is doing much better. We engaged him in case management and therapy services, and he continued to see his psychiatric provider for medication management. He participates in programming, lives on his own, and has a stable job washing dishes.

During a conversation with our staff, he became tearful and shared how proud he is of himself and couldn't believe he is at this point. He said that had we not had the safe rooms to keep him and get him stabilized during his moment of crisis, we might not have been able to turn his life around.

## HUMAN SERVICE AGENCY, WATERTOWN HEALTHY YOUTH PROJECT SUCCESS

Project SUCCESS (Schools Using Coordinated Community Efforts to Strengthen Students) is a school-based prevention program, implemented in the Watertown Middle and High schools, to prevent and reduce substance abuse and other high-risk youth social issues.

**\$1 a week can...be invested in school-based substance abuse prevention programs has the potential to save up to \$18 in costs related to treatment of substance use disorders.** So your \$1 a week actually becomes \$18 a week for prevention services; which is a \$936 investment a year for the future of our Watertown youth and community. Your dollar a week is going to impact the lives of at least 12 young people. Your dollar a week will give students FREE access to another helping professional on campus, who will help them make better choices, develop healthy coping skills, build resilience and to provide them with the opportunities to become successful and thriving community members.

Research tells us, that if students have goals (whether short term or long term) and feel they belong and/or involved in activities that deter participation in high-risk behaviors. In 2021, almost 70% of Watertown students in grades 7-12 reported that teens choose not to drink or use drugs because they know it can impact their future choices.

In 2023 according to the Prides Survey, almost 70% of Watertown students in grades 7-12 reported that teens choose not to drink or use drugs because they know it can impact their future choices. We are starting to see an increase With Project SUCCESS. We provide positive opportunities for students to be involved (such as WHS Arrow Ambassadors and WMS PEEPs) and/or find activities that may be a good fit for them (connecting them to school and/or community programs, activities, etc) because we know the impact and importance of that student engagement. Kids want to know where they fit in.

Being in a group has helped me a lot. It gives me a way to express myself and be heard. Michelle (WHS Project SUCCESS coordinator) also helps a lot. She's like a safe place when you need one the most. I'm able to say what I want without being judged. Michelle has helped me with many things, she was the reason I got a job. She helped with my application. Overall group (Coping Skill group) is just a positive space to be yourself.

- Watertown High School Student

## INTERLAKES COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP, DELTA DENTAL MOBILE

Funding from the United Way provides needed dental care at no charge to underserved children ages 0 to 21 who do not have access to a dentist or dental care.

**\$1 a week can... provide 65% of the cost of one appointment on the dental care mobile.**

One hundred percent of children aged 0-21 (34 of 34) attending the Dental Care Mobile will maintain overall wellness by having access to dental care. One family that came to see us at the dental mobile had 6 children ranging in ages from 4-14 and Mom was very grateful to be able to bring them in all at once for cleanings. Her three oldest needed follow up care and were able to get that done on the bus. She said she might not have been able to get appointments for all in the same day at a dental office and definitely would not have been able to afford to pay for them all to get an exam at the same time. She is very thankful for the dental mobile to be able to come to Watertown. Her twin boys are also HS students and that is how she heard about it.



## **INTERLAKES COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP, DEUEL SCHOOL SUPPLIES**

The project will allow children in Deuel County to participate fully in their educational activities.

**\$1 a week can... provide school supplies for two students in Deuel County.**

100% of children living in Deuel County that need assistance with School Supplies will receive those supplies.

Last year we worked with a family of two children (1st and 5th grade) who live with their grandmother. Their grandfather had been diagnosed with cancer early that spring and passed away late that summer. The grandmother was forced to take time off work to care for her husband. By the time August came around, the family was in great need and dealing with a big loss.

Our school supply program assisted the family with school supplies, a backpack and water bottle. The grandmother was grateful for our program and has remained in contact with CSW to talk about how the family is doing.

## INTERLAKES COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP, HAMLIN SCHOOL SUPPLIES

The project will allow children in Hamlin County to participate fully in their educational activities.

**\$1 a week can... provide school supplies for two students in Hamlin County.**

100% of children living in Hamlin County that need assistance with School Supplies will receive those supplies.

A family of 6 with very limited income was able to utilize the school supply program for all four of their children minimizing the financial shortfall for the family while maximizing the opportunities for the children to learn without impacting the family budget.

## **INTERLAKES COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP, HEAD START RENT SUPPORT**

Provides administrative support to the ICAP Head Start program serving low-income children allowing children to attend development classes enabling them to be prepared for school.

### **\$1 a week can... provide direct services or linkages to other service providers for one Head Start individual client.**

One-hundred percent of Head Start Families that participate in the program will make measurable progress toward stabilizing their families and move closer to self-sufficiency and their children will be ready for school. There is a family we have worked with in Early Head Start and Head Start where mom was a single mom with dad in and out of the home. While we were going into the home with Early Head Start, mom disclosed that she was going to not have visits for a while as she needed to go into treatment for substance abuse addiction. She asked that we hold her spot so she could continue with the program after she got out. When mom returned to town, she held her home visits on a regular basis and commented that having the consistency and knowing someone who would be coming in to her house contributed to helping her stay sober. She signed her child up for Head Start and with one going to school all day, she was able to look for a job to help pay her bills. With the support of EHS coming into the home and HS for the other during the day this mom was able to continue to work on staying sober. She has found a job and is consistent with her work schedule.

## INTERLAKES COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP, HEAD START SUPPLIES

Locally raised funds provide school supplies needed by children from both Hamlin and Deuel counties using the school provided lists. Staff and volunteers bundle supplies and provide them to participating families in late summer before school starts.

### **\$1 a week can... provide 2 boxes of diapers for the Head Start Pre-Birth to Five Program.**

100% of Head Start children will be provided the needed supplies to fully engage in child development activities at the Head Start center.

We have a family that is in the Head Start center. The family is a foster care/kinship care situation. Grandma and grandpa got custody of 3 siblings. Grandma came into our office wanting any help she could get for her granddaughter. The granddaughter came into the kinship situation not being able walk, only crawl, not talking and only drinking a gallon of milk a day, having not been exposed to solid foods. She was 4 years old. We were able to enroll the child in our Head Start center. Since she has been in school with the support of the teachers, the little girl is walking, using 3-word sentences and is able to express her wants and needs. The teachers exposed her to a variety of food options, and she is eating solids and trying new foods on a regular basis. The little girl is also progressing in academic skills and is recognizing and writing letters.

## INTERLAKES COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP, SIXTIES PLUS DINING

Sixties Plus Dining assists individuals aged 60 and older, without regard to income, to maintain optimal health and nutritional status. Services are available at 25 locations in Codington, Clark, Deuel, Hamlin, and Grant counties.

**\$1 a week can... contribute would provide approximately 10 meals in the Sixties Plus Dining Program.**

Proper Nutrition will enable 100% of individuals to maintain physical health and independence, allowing them to live in their own homes. We can feed 1 senior for an entire year for less than it costs for 1 visit to the hospital or 1 week in a nursing home.

We serve a lady on one of the Home Delivery routes that has been in the hospital 3 times in the last year. She calls when she gets home and says the only reason she can come home is because we bring her a meal at noon. She said she doesn't have anyone in town and depends on us. Because of our program, she is able to stay in her own home.

There's also a couple that's been getting frozen meal deliveries in the Watertown area for the past 4 years. To start, the meals were nice to have on hand when his wife didn't want to cook. About 9 months ago they found out that his wife has uterine cancer and 3 months ago the doctor found breast cancer. He tells me every time I see him that he is so thankful for our meals because without them they wouldn't be getting the nutrition they need. He doesn't cook and his wife is unable to cook at this point in her recovery.

## INTERLAKES COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP, VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE

VITA is a free program to help low and middle-income workers have their Federal and State personal income taxes prepared and filed electronically at no cost. VITA also ensures that workers receive all the tax credits to which they are entitled.

**\$1 a week can... provide partial assistance (80%) for income tax filing assistance for individuals.**

100 percent of eligible VITA participants (176 of 176) will have their income tax returns filed receiving the maximum refunds and credits due to them with no fees charged to them. This year, a client came in needing her tax returns filed. She is from Clark. She is in her 80's and works part time for the assistant living home in Clark. Her son is disabled and lives with her full time. She is a widow and owns her home in Clark. In addition to doing her tax return, we did a Weatherization Application and Home Rehab Application.

## LAKE AREA TECHNICAL COLLEGE, ADULT EDUCATION & LITERACY PROGRAM

Offers services to residents of Codington and surrounding counties in order to meet educational needs. Services include in person tutoring for basic literacy skills, adult brush up, GED completion and workforce readiness.

### **\$1 a week can... provide 13 GED Ready Official Practice Tests for our students.**

In September of 2023, Shawna Tennant embarked on a journey to obtain her GED certification. Shawna's decision was motivated by her ambition to acquire a medical aid license. The position requires a high school diploma or a GED certification.

As a single mother who works full-time, Shawna recognized that obtaining her GED was a crucial step in achieving her career goals. Despite feeling uncertain about her math skills, Shawna was determined to succeed and remained committed to attending her classes regularly. She works night shifts and comes to study during the day, sometimes right after work. Her hard work paid off when she recently passed her GED Math practice test.

Encouraged by her success, she is now scheduled to take the actual exam, and she is confident that she will pass it. Shawna's journey is a testament to the power of hard work and determination in achieving one's goals. The significance and impact of Adult Education in both the South Dakota workforce and the Watertown community cannot be overstated. Shawna's accomplishments stand as a testament to this reality. She exemplifies the positive impact of adult education on career development and community engagement.

## LAKE AREA ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Helps bring zoo programs to those who don't normally have the opportunity. The zoo's on-site and outreach programming reaches Boys and Girls Club members, children at risk, nursing homes, those with special needs, Watertown schools, and more.

**\$1 a week can...provide 17 local students a field study trip to the Bramble Park Zoo.**



## LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES, BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

LSS Behavior Health Services provides mental health counseling for people of all ages. LSS accepts Medicaid, Medicare and most insurance, and our sliding fee scale makes counseling affordable.

### **\$1 a week can... support a counseling session using a sliding fee scale at Lutheran Social Services.**

A single, middle-aged empty nester sought LSS Behavioral Health Services, utilizing the sliding fee scale. She was experiencing depression and anxiety connected to a number of life changes, which included diagnosed autoimmune disease diagnoses. The physical diagnoses necessitated she resign from a successful and fulfilling professional job and also imposed limitations on the client's ability to participate in extracurricular activities she had once enjoyed. These significant lifestyle changes combined with living alone after her children had grown resulted in increased loneliness, fear sadness, and hopelessness.

Through therapeutic intervention, this client was able to recognize grief as the root of her emotional suffering due to multiple consequential losses (career, identity, financial standing and mobility). With the guidance of a therapist, the client was empowered to grieve and learn to accept the life changes. Acceptance lowered the client's overall stress, reducing physical health flare-ups and enabled the client to develop new ways to experience joy. Because of the drastic change in income, counseling would not have been possible without the use of the sliding fee scale. Therapy provided the support, clarity, understanding and permission to grieve during a very difficult time.

## LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES, CENTER FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES

The LSS Center for Financial Resources provides financial, housing and home buyer counseling and education, and debt management, provided by certified credit and housing counselors.

**\$1 a week can... allow two people will be able to attend a financial literacy class through videoconferencing to help them learn options available for student loan repayment.**

A client came in after being referred by a local community partner. She was very concerned about her old collection debt and her poor credit rating. She had a dream of having a retirement account, but that was not possible given her current financial state.

The client met with their counselor to establish her financial goals, which included paying off debt, improving her credit score and establishing a savings account. The counselor gave her clear, manageable action steps to take after each session. The counselor also coached the client on contacting the collecting agency. Then the client worked with their counselor on budgeting and tracking expenses. The client was able to figure out how much she had to work with in a given pay period to ensure she could cover monthly expenses and pay towards the collection debt. This empowered the client and she was able to see the immediate results of working extra hours. Motivated by the progress, she was able to quickly payoff the collection debt.

Next, she had questions about building her credit so her counselor coached her on best practices for using a credit card and some red flags to watch for. Each time the client came back, her counselor provided validation that she was taking steps in the right direction. This validation encouraged the client to continue making progress.

At their last meeting, the client reported she had extra money left over at the end of the month for the first time ever! Not only that, but she also opened and started to build a savings fund. In addition, she started contributing to her employer's 401k retirement plan. She was even able to realize her long-time goal of going skydiving, without worrying about the cost because she had been watching her income and expenses and knew she could afford it. She continues to work on increasing her credit score by using a credit card for small purchases and making on-time payments. She has been able to reduce impulse spending and she feels in control. Through the guidance of her financial counselor, she has realized her dream of having retirement savings and is confident in her ability to set and achieve new financial goals in the future.

## SALVATION ARMY OF WATERTOWN

Operates the food pantry, provides lodging and meals to the homeless, assists travelers, provides clothing and household items, plays a vital role in disaster restoration and response, and offers character-building programs and music programs.

**\$1 a week can... provide a meal for one person within our feeding program or 52 meals in one year.**

A client entered the Pathway of Hope program after being injured at work. She found herself no longer able to do the things she was used to doing and facing a lot of medical challenges. She had a difficult time writing and needed a lot of assistance filling out forms and applying for disability. She worked with our case manager and was able to establish a payment plan to pay off some outstanding tickets, as well as establish a monthly budget to follow. Through this process she was able to start a small savings account for her and her family.

## SIoux COUNCIL BOYS SCOUTS

For 114 years, Scouting programs have instilled in youth the values found in the Scout Oath and Law. Scouting helps youth develop academic skills, self-confidence, ethics, leadership skills, and citizenship skills that influence their adult lives.

Sioux Council, Boy Scouts of America's vision is to prepare every eligible youth in America to become a responsible, participating citizen and leader who is guided by the Scout Oath and Law.

**\$1 a week will allow two low-income Cub Scouts to participate in a one-day summer camp program experience.**

Brian was introduced to Boy Scouts when he was 11 years old and earned his Eagle Rank in 1991. He remembered the many adventures of camping at Lewis and Clark Scout Reservation. Those memories encouraged him to sign his son up in the first Grade with pack 319 out of Jefferson Elementary. On that first sign-up night not only did my son become a Cub Scout he became a Den Leader for his son's Den. His son crossed over in the 5th grade to Troop 209. After a year with the Troop, I was recruited to be the Scoutmaster. Our time with the Troop includes adventures to summer camp, canoeing, exploring different merit badges, service projects and so much more. It has been an amazing time.

Recently, Brian's daughter became interested in joining a Scouts BSA Troop, and can proudly say she has recently joined Troop 8g. Her first camp out was in March of this year and on the drive home said "I'm sure glad that I decided to give Scouts a try, I really had fun." Those of you with teenagers know how hard it is to get that much feedback!

Having the opportunity to share a program Brian grew up with his children is important to him. We know the skills he learned as a kid in Boy Scouts has helped advance his life and now both his son and daughter have the same opportunity.

## WATERTOWN AREA PEOPLE AGAINST CHILD HUNGER (PACH)

The Watertown Area PACH (People Against Child Hunger) Program works with school staff to provide complimentary snacks and meals to students who may need an additional food resource over weekends during the school year.

### **\$1 a week can... provide 9 PACH bags for 9 youth in need.**

Our success story each year is being able to continue our program and provide the additional food resources to families who need it. You will see the impact this has on these families from some of the survey responses below.

- "As a foster parent, I see it instill a sense of security in kids who come to me from extreme food insecure homes. Physical fighting over food is not uncommon in these kids; even after coming to my home that is full of unlimited food. The bags make kids who never could trust food to be available feel safe. I appreciate knowing that kids in the community have at least a day or two every week where they may not worry about getting fed."

- "In times when we were broke and starving it gave us food to eat."

- "It really helped during the summer, we as a family have been going through a rough patch. Knowing we had meals coming, really helped provide for us during that time was when it was extremely needed. It helped put food into their tummies that I couldn't do at the moment."

- "Just a lot of gratitude. Thank you so much! You're amazing, appreciated, and loved. When winter comes and we cannot leave the house or hours at work get cut, it is a blessing to have these bags. What isn't used it donated and paid forward to those in need. No waste in this home."

- "With medical bills piling up and the economy/money on the rise, it helps us get from paycheck to paycheck."

- "Good program. Helps make ends meet. Thank you!"

## WATERTOWN AREA SWIM CLUB

Helps children develop life skills through swimming. Scholarships are provided to children/families who cannot afford the coaching fees. Funds are also used to help cover the cost of home meet fees for all Watertown Swim Club participants.

**\$1 a week can... pay for 1 month of swimming on swim team for a swimmer.**

Watertown Area Swim Club helps swimmers to not only become good swimmers, but also teaches the kids life skills. We teach kids to set goals and to work hard to attain them. Swim team teaches that everything doesn't always go the way you want it to and that you can only control how you train and perform in your lane. Swim team teaches keeping things in perspective.

"Thank you, United Way, for helping provide a scholarship for my child to be on the swim team. My child is 11 years old and has been on the swim team for 2 years. She has improved so much with her swimming and her confidence has grown also. She attended the state swim meet this past winter and was in the top 8 swimmers for the state of South Dakota in her age group.

We are very proud of her and just wanted United Way to know that we appreciate the help financially as it would be difficult for our family to come up with the funds every month for her to keep swimming." - Letter for Swim Club Parent

## WATERTOWN BASEBALL ASSOCIATION

By providing quality coaching, well maintained fields, equipment and transportation, and the opportunity to participate and compete in a challenging schedule, this agency provides youth in Watertown and the surrounding area with a positive environment and the opportunity to develop baseball skills.

**\$1 a week can... would equate to one of our Junior/Teener League teams getting uniform tops for the season.**

While every year our biggest success story is that we never turn anyone away from participating in our baseball program, this last season had another major accomplishment. We held our very first Hall of Fame banquet where we inducted four former players-contributors and one team into the newly created Watertown Baseball Hall of Fame. We had a committee of community members vote for the inductees after nominations from the community were completed. We then held a banquet and ceremony for the inductees, which doubled as a fundraiser for the WBA. The idea of the Hall of Fame banquet was to recognize past players and contributors who have gone through the Watertown baseball program in the hopes of building a strong baseball tradition in Watertown.

The success of the newly created Watertown Baseball Hall of Fame could clearly be seen at our banquet we had to honor the inductees. The public attendance and support the WBA received was tremendous. Not only did baseball enthusiasts show up for the banquet, other members of the community, who knew the inductees, were in attendance as well to show their support. The event turned into our biggest fundraiser of the year – all while building a brand and bolstering the strong baseball tradition we have in Watertown.

## WATERTOWN FIGURE SKATING CLUB

The program supports skaters ages 3 – 18 from Codington and surrounding counties. Teaching skaters the fundamentals of ice skating with progressive curriculum promotes health while building self-confidence and skills.

**\$1 a week can... provide financial scholarships for 2 children to attend entry level skating lessons.**

Our Learn to Skate United Way scholarship program helped a very shy little girl break out of her shell and build strength as well.

Jocelyn and her three siblings were unable to take Learn to Skate Lessons until we began offering United Way scholarships.

Jocelyn struggled with being shy and detachment issues. It was a struggle to get her on the ice when she began. Our coaches worked very closely with Jocelyn trying to get her to let go, gain confidence and skate. On week three she let go of her brother and skated by herself. She started chatting with other kids and by the end of the season, didn't care if she was the only one from her family on the ice. She made friends and had confidence.

Jocelyn is also very small in size so struggled with endurance and leg strength. By skating weekly on her own, we could see Jocelyn becoming stronger and stronger each week.



## **WATERTOWN FIRE RESCUE, COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION PROGRAM**

Provides early warning for residents on fire and carbon monoxide emergencies, allowing for safe evacuation. Early evacuation decreases the risk of death and injury. Funding from United Way will help with the goal of covering the entire city of Watertown with these, life-saving warning systems.

### **\$1 a week can... buy 3 smoke alarms or 2 carbon monoxide detectors.**

Smoke alarms were present in three-quarters (74 percent) of the reported home fires in 2014–2018. Almost three out of five home fire deaths were caused by fires in properties with no smoke alarms (41 percent) or smoke alarms that failed to operate (16 percent).

Watertown Fire Rescue Started the Smoke Detector Program in 2015. After this first year one of the homes we installed smoke detectors in, had a fire. It was wintertime and the home was a trailer house which had one of the doors sealed up to keep the winter elements out. The fire started in the early morning hours while a large family was asleep. The detector awoke a family, and all made it out safe. If the trailer would not have had a working smoke detector the fire could have been very tragic. With result like this after the first year we realized how important this program is and we need to expand and continue with the Smoke alarm program.

In 2023, WFR was called for carbon monoxide alarm going off at 0230 am.

Upon arrival all 4 people living in the home were standing outside next to their home saying they have two CO alarms in the house, and both are alarming. WFR used a 5 gas meter to test for CO and other potential chemicals. CO readings were found to be in over 1000 ppm and could have had a tragic event if it wasn't for the CO alarms. WFR found the cause was an old furnace that had a crack in the heat exchanger and was causing CO to be released into the home, rather than being expelled through the chimney.

## WATERTOWN LAKER HOCKEY ASSOCIATION

Provides youth, an opportunity for recreational and competitive skating, and helps develop hockey skills in a fun and exciting environment along with teaching lifelong lessons. Funds received are used to provide scholarships to those children/families that may not otherwise be able to participate.

**\$1 a week can... provide equipment rental to one play for the season.**

The Watertown Hockey Association partnership with Watertown Area United Way helps provide the opportunity for Watertown youth to enjoy the sport of hockey. The partnership provides scholarships for players who qualify financially. The partnership also helps to provide youth hockey equipment at reduced or free rates to any who qualify.

Watertown Hockey Association purchases hockey gear, in partnership with WAUW, that can be used/rented for the hockey season. Any equipment that is not rented is stored until it is needed later. One of the events that is hosted by Watertown Hockey Association through USA Hockey is Try Hockey For Free. This is a one hour event that is held one day in the fall and one day in the spring. Normally, the turnout for the event is 20-25 skaters between the ages of 3-9. The skaters come a little early and with the help of hockey family volunteers, they get full hockey gear on and skate with older hockey players for an hour. All the gear is provided by WHA. This spring, however, the number of skaters that arrived for Try Hockey For Free was close to 100! It was AMAZING. Every skater had all the equipment needed to safely be on the ice. There would have been no way to get equipment on all those skaters if it was not for the financial help of the United Way in helping to purchase gear.

## WATERTOWN LACROSSE CLUB

Watertown Lacrosse Club is in its ninth season. Our program started with just a handful of players and has steadily grown every year since. We are a member of the Northern Plains Lacrosse League and field teams in six different divisions (Coed U10, Coed U12, Boys U14, Boys JV, Girls Varsity and Boys Varsity). We continue to grow and become more competitive every year.

**\$1 a week provides one varsity player a 20% discount on registration fees or a box of lacrosse balls for practice for the entire organization.**

As we see our players grow and mature as athletes throughout the season and over a period of years while in our program. We see the smiles and achievements on their faces when they find success and overcome adversity. We believe the greatest testament to a successful program is when our players and parents begin to actively recruit others to join our program.

Two years ago, we decided to have a Girls Varsity Division. In the past the girls always joined the boys' teams. The younger divisions have always been coed. We had a handful of girls who had to move up a division and were going to quit because they were not interested in playing in the Boys Varsity Division due to the physicality. We decided we would start a Girls Varsity team. At the time we did not have enough girls to field a team, however, the girls we did have started recruiting heavily. We put the word out within our organization and had a great response. We started with five girls and ended up with a team of twelve girls. We currently have 25 girls rostered and have added a girls JV Division as well as fielding a girls Varsity division again.

United Way funding goes into our general account and is used for anything the Club may need to purchase such as equipment (nets, backstops, balls, uniforms, etc.) and operational purposes. Most importantly, we use United Way funds to provide scholarships to families in need to either reduce or completely waive the registration fee. In 2023, we have provided 16 players with assistance for registration fees. So far this year (2024) we have provided assistance for 10 players.

## **WATERTOWN PARKS AND RECREATION, YOUTH BASEBALL/SOFTBALL**

Building character, this program teaches lifelong skills and abilities to children. Registration Fees for the program are kept as low as possible with funding from the United Way.

**\$1 a week can... provide 15 participants a league shirt.**

Every participant in the Park & Rec Youth Baseball/Softball program learns the fundamentals of the game and the life skills that go along with playing sports. Sportsmanship, teamwork, kindness, being part of a team, competitiveness and hard work are all traits youth will learn while playing this great game. There was a coaches training sessions provided for any volunteer coaches to make sure that the core values of youth sports were upheld.

Volunteer Coaching is very needed in our program, and we have a dedicated coach who loves the opportunity we offer through our program. The quality time he not only gets to spend with his own son but with the other players on his team makes it the highlight of his season. But, coaching his son's team offers a number of things from building friendships, building skills and confidence, to just the enjoyment of playing baseball in a safe recreational setting.

## WATERTOWN PARKS AND RECREATION, ADULT/SENIOR ACTIVITIES

Provides innovative, physical, educational, and social activities for seniors and adults 50 plus years of age. Funding received helps with equipment supplies and staffing.

**\$1 a week can... provide one senior citizen with the ability to participate in a variety of programs throughout the year at the Senior Activities Center.** In fact that \$1.00 would include covering the cost for a Wii Bowling League, Pool League, Shuffleboard League, Dart League, Bean Bag League, Line Dancing Classes and two special one day tournaments during the calendar year. That is a lot of programs that just \$1.00 a week covers, that makes a huge difference in the life of a senior citizen.

Adult/Senior Activities provides over 70 different programs to adults and seniors of all ages. Each activity provides a fun and safe way to interact with others no matter their age. There has been a steady number of participants, despite COVID. More adults/seniors are finding their independence to join for the active/social aspect.

Ryan Anthony, who resides outside of Watertown, is in a wheelchair. Ryan is an avid pickleball player who played in our Veteran's Day Pickleball Tournament in November 2023. With Ryan's disability, being able to participate in activities are somewhat slim because of this and funds are low. With United Way funds, it allows each individual to participate in these types of leagues for a very affordable price per individual. It was only \$45.00 to participate in the all day tournament, which each player could play up to 18 games that day. Ryan was able to make the tournament and play! It was such an amazing and rewarding experience watching someone in a wheelchair play America's most popular game, and his opponents were even cheering him on! Over the years of doing senior activities, you see that on a daily basis, but when this happens for younger adults, you realize how big of an impact recreational opportunities are for such a wide array of individuals in the Watertown area and surrounding communities.

## WATERTOWN YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION

Funds received provide scholarships to those who may not have the resources to participate. WYSA provides a positive environment and promotes health, exercise, and good character; builds teamwork and socialization and helps each player to reach their desired potential.

**\$1 a week can... cover 75% of the registration fee for a child to play and experience the fun of soccer.**

WYSA's goal is to provide all kids regardless of income, ability, or background the opportunity to play soccer. WYSA makes every attempt to keep registration fees low but sometimes families are not able to afford any type of fee. This is where we are excited to offer those individuals the opportunity to participate free of charge because of the generous donation of the United Way. A portion of our United Way dollars goes to supporting those who cannot support themselves.

When families suffer a financial hardship, for many families and youth activities tend to be one of the first items cut when money is tight. When funds are limited, we rely even more on the support of the United Way so we are able to support our families with scholarship monies to ensure the kiddos have an opportunity to participate in a team activity, get necessary exercise and even more so now than ever, needed positive social interaction with their peers.

"We have had a family move into the Watertown community with very limited resources but they had the avenue to place one child into the rec program but not enough for both. The family applied for a scholarship which was granted at full coverage for the program cost allowing the children to participate in the program. This allowed the family to engage in the community and get settled in. The children came back the following season and the family was able to pay for a partial program as they were able to get on their feet ." - Mother of WYSA Youth

## CONTACT INFORMATION

**Watertown Area United Way**

**818 South Broadway, Suite 100, Watertown, SD 57201**

**P.O. Box 283, Watertown, SD 57201**

**[www.watertownunitedway.org](http://www.watertownunitedway.org)**

**[director@watertownunitedway.org](mailto:director@watertownunitedway.org)**

**(605) 886-5815**

**Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

**To find dates when the office will be closed visit [www.watertownunitedway.org/events-calendar](http://www.watertownunitedway.org/events-calendar).**