

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

Updated May 2025

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 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 or (605) 886-5815.



Facebook: @WatertownUnitedWay



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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.

In January of 2024, Beacon Center had a client referred to us by Child Protection Services. She was very hesitant and reluctant to come into shelter but knew that was her only alternative. When she entered shelter care, her self-esteem was very low, and she was not taking care of her mental health needs. Conversations with her case manager would be very minimal and timid.

By mid-2024, she had completed the requirements to close out her CPS case, we assisted her in locating new employment and she was actively working on her mental health concerns. Her entire demeanor changed in the time she was in the shelter. She was extremely proud of herself for completing what needed to be done to end her involvement with CPS and to transition from shelter care to providing her and her children with an apartment. She ended up sharing her story on a local radio station and giving her case manager a big hug for all her help during her stay at Beacon Center.

The impact of our services and staff follow clients beyond the time they are in shelter.

BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB OF WATERTOWN

As a constant in the community for the last 52 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 art supplies for kids to explore their creativity in the Art Room!

I was quickly introduced to the mentoring program when I first began working at the Boys & Girls Club in 2022. I was able to have my own set of kids who I met with regularly and was matched with a Club member who continues to be matched with me today. When I first began mentoring her, she struggled with behavior issues that often disrupted group activities and made it difficult for her to engage positively with others.

She was one of the smartest kids I worked with and had great potential, but it was clear she needed guidance in channeling that in a constructive way. Early on, we focused on building trust and helping her understand the impact of her actions, while also giving her consistent support and clear expectations. It wasn't an overnight change, but she gradually began to respond—showing more self-awareness, asking for help when she needed it, and learning to work through conflicts more thoughtfully.

Over time, she has made remarkable progress. Her attitude has shifted from resistant to respectful, and she now approaches the Club environment with a positive mindset. Not only has she improved her own behavior, but she is very welcoming to new Club members—offering help, participating enthusiastically, and contributing to a more inclusive and supportive atmosphere. Watching her grow into a great Club member has been one of the most rewarding parts of my mentoring experience.

CODINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY & HERITAGE MUSEUM

Funding is allocated for children's educational programming, which includes art activities, songs, games, and presentations to teach young people about the history of Codington County.

Just \$1 a week can offer programming for 10 children.

The Codington County Heritage Museum has been a fantastic addition to our Summer Kids on Target (KOT) Program at Immaculate Conception School. They consistently come prepared with engaging activities for our group visiting the museum, offering well-rounded cultural history experiences relevant to our region.

CODINGTON COUNTY TREATMENT COURT

The Codington County Treatment Court aims to improve public safety by fostering sober, productive, and law-abiding citizens. It achieves this by holding offenders accountable while providing supervision, treatment, and life skills within a judicial framework.

\$1 a week allows for a participant to earn a treat of their choosing for the good work they have done.

Since its inception in July 2014, the Codington County Treatment Court has seen fifty-six graduates, boasting a 50% graduation rate. Each graduate represents a life transformed, a family member saved, and a step towards a positive, sober lifestyle. The court offers the necessary tools for success.

"The success story of C.J. highlights not only the impact of drug court on an individual but also its ripple effect across the community. C.J. joined the program in November 2022 and graduated in May 2024. At her entry, her children were removed by CPS for the second time, and she faced felony charges in multiple counties. Confronting her substance use disorder, trauma, and behavioral triggers, C.J. became accountable to our team and achieved sobriety and recovery. Her husband, also on his recovery journey, often attended sessions with her. They both earned their 90-day coins at an early birthday meeting, where I was honored to present C.J. with hers. She eagerly embraced every treatment opportunity, seeking knowledge and insight. As a seasoned participant, she helped newer members with their recovery. Regaining full custody of their children, C.J. and her husband brought them to sober events. She is a patient, loving, and insightful mother. Eventually, C.J. became this community's first certified peer recovery support specialist. Although she has since moved to another area, she continues to support our program and maintain contact with the team. I was immensely proud when she represented recovery at a steering committee meeting of community stakeholders. The potential impact of C.J.'s success in our program is limitless."

COMMUNITY TRANSIT OF WATERTOWN

Community Transit of Watertown/Sisseton, Inc. is committed to providing safe, reliable and courteous public transportation to the counties of Brown, Campbell, Clark, Codington, Day, Deuel, Edmunds, Faulk, Grant, Hamlin, Lincoln, Marshall, McPherson, Roberts and Spink. Public transportation promotes quality of life, livability, self-sufficiency and freedom through mobility.

\$1 a week can... cover the cost of 17 rides in the city of Watertown.

Lizette Strutz, a soft-spoken woman, is navigating addiction recovery. A key step was securing a part-time dispatcher job at Community Transit of Watertown/Sisseton, Inc. She started using the transit service for her appointments and now coordinates rides, enjoying the "controlled chaos."

"This is such a fun place to work, even if it does get a little crazy at times," Strutz said. "The people here are amazing, and I enjoy working with our clients. I can empathize with their needs."

Strutz's journey from addiction involved joining the Brothers and Sisters Behind Bars program. BSBB director Stacy Hendricks praised her achievements, highlighting their focus on breaking addiction chains through healthy relationships and advocacy.

Public transit became essential for Strutz due to a physical injury. CTWSI provided rides for her meetings and Drug Court. Job coach Shahara Roe helped her find employment at CTWSI, where she quickly felt at home.

Managing an operation booking 500 rides daily is challenging, but Strutz is adapting well. Despite limited computer experience, her excellent customer service skills are a great asset.

Personally, Strutz entered Drug Court in January 2024 and is set to graduate in June 2025. Her faith remains strong despite addiction's ups and downs, helping her overcome past guilt.

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 -5th. Girls on the Run is more than running! An independent study of Girls on the Run showed that 97% of participating 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 season.

\$1 a week can... provides a pair of running shoes for a Girls on the Run girl so she can feel successful, achieve her running goals and learn important life skills to build confidence for her future.

"Girls on the Run is so fun! The coaches are so nice too. Even if you aren't sure about the "running" part it is about so much more than running." - GOTR Participant

"It is so rewarding to teach these kids life lessons on friendship and being themselves. It's such a rewarding experience to watch them implement the lessons throughout the season." - GOTR Coach

"The relationships gained in my volunteering for GOTR have been unmeasurable with the girls and the other coaches!! The growth I've been able to witness in the girls has been incredible too!!" -GOTR Coach

"My child really benefited from participating in Girls on the Run. She was excited about going twice a week and looked forward to her time there. I was impressed by the way the coaches were about to engage the group and unify the girls. It was neat to hear about her experience and how the girls would encourage each other. I think that the coaches did an amazing job and were a big part of the success of her experience." - GOTR Parent/Caregiver

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.

\$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.

Troop 54302 from Castlewood, SD, recently had an exciting opportunity to explore the world of robotics at a special workshop hosted by Spartronics. The girls toured the Spartronics facility, learning about the innovative medical devices the company manufactures and how technology plays a critical role in improving healthcare. This behind-the-scenes look inspired the girls as they discovered how engineering can directly impact lives in such meaningful ways.

The fun didn't stop there! The girls had the chance to get hands-on and build their own robots. With guidance from Spartronics' team, the girls learned how to program these robots and saw their creations come to life. It was an incredible learning experience, blending creativity with technology and sparking curiosity in the future engineers and innovators of tomorrow. A big thank you to Spartronics for helping bring STEM to life in such a fun and engaging way!

In 2024, Girl Scouts Dakota Horizons in Watertown served 317 members and engaged 67 adult volunteers.

HUMAN SERVICE AGENCY, SERENITY HILLS & SERENITY COVE

Serenity Hills was established in 1997 as the state's sole halfway house dedicated to individuals with both mental illness and substance dependence. Initially, it was located near Joy Ranch, about ten miles from town, and included a four-bed detox facility. In 2002, the program relocated to the outskirts of town along Highway 20. In 2011, a safe room was introduced to offer a humane environment for those undergoing a mental health crisis for up to 24 hours. By July 2023, we added four new safe rooms, known as Serenity Cove, a regional facility for crisis stabilization. Here, individuals can stay for up to five days during a mental health crisis, in a secure environment, monitored by medical staff and evaluated daily by a qualified mental health professional. We also continue to offer detox assistance for four individuals, now providing each person with a private room and en-suite bathroom.

For just \$1 a week, you can help provide snack packs and to-go bags for clients in the safe room.

I" was born in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, in 1980. My childhood was good, but during my early teens, I fell in with the wrong crowd, seeking acceptance, which led to drug addiction and alcoholism. By age 14, I was in my first of many treatment programs and mental hospitals. This pattern persisted for much of my life, with repeated failures. However, I never gave up, nor did my family. My dad discovered a long-term program called Serenity Hills in Watertown, SD. This place saved me. It taught me a lot about myself, instilling repetition, self-worth, and stabilizing my mental health, among other things. The program offered me glimpses of reality and success I hadn't experienced before, thanks to its longevity.

While there, I met someone who was also an addict, sharing similar life struggles. We recently celebrated 8 years of sobriety. She now works for Serenity Hills as medical staff, using her experiences to help others. I manage a kitchen at a successful restaurant. Four years ago, we bought a house. The achievements keep coming and feel limitless. We have a beautiful 6-year-old daughter named Serenity, a lasting reminder of what Serenity Hills has done for me."

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 it will deter them from participating in high risk behaviors. 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. 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.

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 ICAP school supply program helped up to 20 students in Deuel County. The program provided all necessary tools including all supplies or fees required by the school, computer and student activity fees, and a nice sturdy backpack to carry everything these busy students need to have a successful school year.

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.

Last year ICAP school supply program helped up to 33 students in Hamlin County. The program provided all necessary tools including all supplies or fees required by the school and a nice sturdy backpack to carry everything these busy students need to have a successful school year.

INTERLAKES COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP, HEAD START RENTAL SUPPORT

The ICAP Head Start program offers essential administrative support to low-income children, facilitating their attendance in developmental classes to prepare them for school.

Just \$1 a week can...provide direct services or connect one Head Start individual client to other service providers.

This mother enrolled her first child in Head Start four years ago during a challenging phase in her life. At that time, she and the father decided to separate, prompting him to move out. Feeling lost, she sought help to regain control over her life.

She was encouraged to pursue counseling and medical care to ensure her well-being, enabling her to maintain a healthy lifestyle for herself and her children. Committed to her self-improvement, she frequently sought support, often just for reassurance that she was making the right choices.

After six months of dedication to getting her life back on track, positive changes began to unfold. She successfully engaged in counseling and reconciled with the father of her children. Eventually, they reunited and participated in family counseling.

After a few months, this mother enrolled in college to become a hairstylist. Despite facing challenges, including the birth of another child, she graduated!

Meanwhile, the father secured full-time employment, enabling the family to move into more suitable housing as they could finally afford rent. Once she completed her studies, the mother began working part-time.

They continue to attend counseling, maintain employment, and embrace a healthier lifestyle together.

INTERLAKES COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP, HEAD START SUPPLIES

Locally Raised Funds Support School Supplies for Children

Funds raised within the community provide essential school supplies for children in both Hamlin and Deuel counties, based on lists provided by the schools. During late summer, staff and volunteers gather and distribute these supplies to participating families before the school year begins.

Just \$1 a week can supply two boxes of diapers for the Head Start Pre-Birth to Five Program.

Let me share the story of a single mother who has one child in Early Head Start (EHS) and another in the center. When she enrolled in the Head Start program, she was also participating in a program called Drug Court. This mother faced challenges in managing her commitments across multiple programs. Upon reaching out to Head Start, she discovered that our support extends beyond just the children; we also assist families.

Seeking additional resources to help balance her daily life, she began with her youngest child in Early Head Start. We helped her secure childcare assistance and re-enroll in Medicaid. With the ongoing support from Head Start staff and other programs, she is now on track to graduate from the Drug Court Program.

This mother has made significant progress and requires less assistance, as she has consistently followed the recommendations provided by Head Start and other staff. When her older child reached the appropriate age, he was also enrolled in the Head Start Center. This family is thriving, actively utilizing the program, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle while successfully continuing their other programs.

INTERLAKES COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP, 60S PLUS DINING

60's Plus Dining serves individuals aged 60 and older without regard to income. Services are available at 17 locations in Codington, Clark, Deuel, Hamlin, and Grant counties. Our primary goal is to assist seniors in maintaining optimal health and nutritional status for as long as possible.

\$1 a week can... contribute would provide approximately 10 meals in the 60's 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.

The daughter of one of our Meals on Wheels recipients often expresses how much she appreciates our program. She doesn't live in SD and isn't able to be there for her mother as much as she would like to be. Every month she lets us know that she is grateful for our program and the peace of mind it gives her in knowing that her mother is receiving a nutritionally balanced meal.

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 (133 of 133) will have their income tax returns filed receiving the maximum refunds and credits due to them with no fees charged to them.

An 80-year-old woman living in Watertown owns her home and resides with her unemployed grandson. She receives Social Security and works part time at a local restaurant. Previously, she worked around 30 hours per week, but after a fall last year, she reduced her hours to about 20 per week. I assisted her with her tax return, and she inquired about available assistance programs.

She plans to total her income for the past three months to see if she qualifies for Energy Assistance. She also visited the Codrington County Treasurer's Office to explore eligibility for the Property Tax Freeze Program.

LAKE AREA TECHNICAL COLLEGE, ADULT EDUCATION & LITERACY PROGRAM

Lake Area Technical College's Adult Education & Literacy (AEL) program offers valuable educational opportunities to help adult learners earn a GED, enhance essential skills for postsecondary education or employment, and develop English language proficiency. The AEL Center serves residents of Coddington County and neighboring areas, providing services that include basic literacy skills, adult education refreshers, GED completion, English language acquisition, and work readiness preparation.

\$1 a week can... provide 7 GED Ready Official Practice Tests for our students.

Cali, a single mother and Drug Court participant, joined the LATC AEL program in June 2024. Her goal at the time was to earn her GED and possibly go on to college to major in Drug and Alcohol counseling. Cali had many struggles and responsibilities but was able to attend class twice weekly for the next three months, all while working full-time, to earn her GED in September 2024. In March 2025, Cali was approved by S.D. Dept of Health for a scholarship to attend the Community Health Worker training program. Her tentative date to graduate from Drug Court is June 11, 2025.

LAKE AREA ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Helps extend zoo programs to those who typically lack access. The zoo's on-site and outreach efforts connect with Boys and Girls Club members, at-risk children, nursing homes, individuals with special needs, Watertown schools, and more.

Just \$1 a week can...enable 17 local students to visit Bramble Park Zoo for a field study trip.

Bramble Park Zoo has been integral to Brooklyn's life since her early years, beginning with Zoo School as a toddler. She adored every class and has cherished memories, like touching a penguin named "Bella" at age three. The youth programs sparked her love for the zoo.

As Brooklyn grew, she was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, and anxiety disorder, which brought challenges like understanding social cues, making friends, and feeling like she belonged. When she received a Zoo Crew application from school, I was cautious. As a parent, predicting whether experiences will be positive is tough. Eager to apply, she asked for help with the application. Seeing it as a valuable skill, we completed it together. I hesitated until the last moment, weighing the decision to submit it.

Soon, we learned she was invited for an interview. We practiced etiquette, interview questions, and when to speak or listen. She dressed up and styled her hair nicely. We discussed the honor of being selected for an interview and reassured her that not being chosen would still be a valuable experience. As she left for the interview, she expressed her hopes by saying, "Mom, I'm going to be sad if I don't get it." I prayed for her success the entire time. She emerged with a smile, confident in her performance. We emphasized that it was okay if she wasn't chosen, given the competition for limited spots.

A few days later, an email confirmed she was selected as a 2024 Zoo Crew volunteer. Our excitement and pride for her were immense. I had no idea how transformative this opportunity would be for Brooklyn.

During her time as a volunteer, she gained extensive knowledge about animals and herself. Zoo Crew instilled a sense of pride and responsibility in her. She eagerly shared her experiences and took her role seriously. The end of summer marked the end of her position, which saddened her.

That summer, Brooklyn experienced a profound change. She felt included and valued, thanks to the staff's kindness and belief in her potential. She developed skills in time management and punctuality, and, most importantly, she gained self-confidence. As her mom, my gratitude toward the Bramble Park Zoo staff and Jaime Stricker is boundless for the incredible opportunity they provided my daughter.

The Bramble Park Zoo staff made an unimaginable impact on my child's life last summer, showcasing what an extraordinary asset they are to Watertown!

LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES, CENTER FOR FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The Center for Financial Resources offers a variety of services to help consumers find solutions to their financial concerns, including financial counseling, debt management programs, financial education programs, bankruptcy counseling, student loan counseling, and housing counseling and education.

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

A client reached out to CFR for help. As a full-time student working part-time, he faced financial difficulties. By the time he made his appointment, his situation had become critical—he lacked even the funds to buy groceries.

During the meeting with his counselor, the client shared his struggles. He had reduced his working hours due to classes, which allowed him to cover rent and some expenses, but left little for food. Although his parents assisted with living costs and part of his tuition, he hesitated to seek further help. The counselor provided resources to address his immediate food needs and encouraged him to apply for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). They also discussed creating a crisis budget to focus on essential expenses temporarily until his situation improved.

With an upcoming school break, the client could increase his work hours, leading to discussions about larger expenses and planning strategies. This enabled him to set a financial goal for earnings during the break. The counselor supplied budget worksheets and guided the client in budgeting and expense tracking.

As he progressed, the client began using budget spreadsheets to monitor his expenses and adjust his spending accordingly. He also planned to seek a different summer job that would require less travel and reduce gas costs.

At their final meeting, the client reported successfully managing his budget and decided to save any extra money for an emergency fund to help him through the semester. With food stocked at home and a clear financial plan for the spring, summer, and the next school year, he felt significantly less stressed. He intends to continue working with the counselor as needed but is now confident in his ability to navigate his immediate challenges and future planning.

SALVATION ARMY OF WATERTOWN

In 2024, The Salvation Army of Watertown made significant progress in supporting the community through food assistance, financial aid, and social services, despite ongoing challenges.

We expanded food assistance, serving over 2200 Food boxes families through weekly pantry services and holiday food baskets. Rising food costs and supply issues remain a challenge. Emergency financial aid was provided to over 600 households, a 15% increase, though demand still exceeds available funding.

We served 289 students in receiving school supplies. Our Sandwich Ministry outreach expanded, serving over 100 elderly individuals with meal deliveries and social support.

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

James, a retired veteran who faced eviction after unexpected medical expenses drained his savings. With nowhere else to turn, he sought help from The Salvation Army. Through our emergency financial aid program, we covered part of his past-due rent and connected him with long-term support resources. This assistance prevented him from becoming homeless and gave him the stability needed to recover financially. James's story exemplifies how timely financial support can be life-changing for individuals facing sudden hardships.

SCOUTING AMERICA- SIOUX COUNCIL

For over 115 years, Scouting America (legally known as the Boy Scouts of America) has provided values-based programs that help young individuals develop character, leadership, citizenship, and lifelong learning skills. Rooted in the principles of the Scout Oath and Law, our programs empower youth to cultivate academic competence, ethical decision-making, confidence, and a strong sense of civic responsibility—skills that last well beyond adolescence.

A \$1 a week provides a scout shirt for a youth with limited resources.

My Scouting journey began when my son, Joey, was in first grade. He was eager to join Scouts, and I stepped up as a Tiger Cub coordinator. What began as a way to support my child has turned into a lifelong commitment—one that has now lasted over 25 years. I've had the honor of guiding both of my children through the program, and during this time, I discovered a second family and a source of strength during some of the most challenging moments of my life.

As a Scoutmaster, I was tasked with planning and leading troop meetings every other Monday. This consistent purpose, along with the joy of working with the Scouts, provided me with focus and direction while I navigated personal challenges. I came to realize that Scouting was not only benefiting the kids—it was helping me as well. Scouting is about community, leadership, and resilience, impacting the lives of youth, leaders, and families in profound ways.

Over the years, I have witnessed numerous Scouts grow through the program—both boys and girls who began as shy or uncertain individuals and blossomed into confident leaders and even Eagle Scouts. The challenges and adventures that Scouting offers—whether through outdoor activities, service projects, or leadership roles—truly shape these young people for the better.

The 2025–2026 Scouting year has been filled with unforgettable moments: racing Pinewood Derby cars, cleaning up roadside ditches, crafting, and even hosting a turtle race challenge! Some of our best experiences have been the simplest—playing games at the park, hiking trails, building campfires, and making s'mores or Dutch oven desserts. These moments forge lasting memories, cultivate friendships, and impart life skills in a way that only Scouting can.

If I didn't believe in the importance of Scouting, I wouldn't still be here. Yet, I continue to witness firsthand the positive impact Scouting has on youth—and on the adults who accompany them. It's more than just a program; it's a way of life, a community, and a support system. I am proud to be a part of it.

Lori Bucholtz - Committee Chair of Pack 19 Clear Lake, SD

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 PACH food bags to about 9 students.

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.

"Amazing program. My kids look forward to PACH bags. They love the snacks being a single Mom of 2 adult kids and 4 school-age ones it is one less worry for me when PACH arrives."

"Awesome program for the community. The boys enjoy the snacks. They are always hungry and I can't keep enough food at home."

"Gives peace of mind to know there is food available."

"Helps provide snacks and food between paychecks."

"Helps provide snacks on the weekends and vegetables for meals."

"I will be forever grateful for the PACH program."

"It helps with not only a snack after school but also a balanced meal at night. I am very grateful for this program."

"We needed milk and bread and it was getting expensive so the coupons helped out. We don't have to spend as much money on groceries."

"When grocery prices keep rising, we don't always have enough to get through the month, this helps ensure I can feed my children. 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 two months 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.

"Our daughter started swim team this past summer at the age of 11. She has worked very hard to learn how to swim all the strokes correctly and this past winter season she qualified to swim at that state meet. The swim team gives the swimmers an incentive to practice hard and achieve their goals like getting state qualifying times. We are so proud of her and so grateful to United Way for providing the scholarship so that she could be part of the swim team. Thank you so much for making the team scholarship available. It's very much appreciated." - Letter for Swim Club Parent

WATERTOWN BASEBALL ASSOCIATION

By offering quality coaching, well-maintained fields, equipment, transportation, and the chance to engage in a competitive schedule, this agency creates a positive environment for youth in Watertown and the surrounding areas to develop their baseball skills.

A \$1 a week....can provide financial assistance to individuals who might otherwise miss out on this opportunity.

Each year, our greatest achievement is that we never turn anyone away from our baseball program. However, this past season brought another significant milestone: we hosted our inaugural Hall of Fame banquet, during which we inducted four former players-contributors and one team into the newly established Watertown Baseball Hall of Fame. A committee of community members voted on the inductees following nominations from the public. The banquet included a ceremony for the inductees and served as a fundraiser for the WBA. The purpose of the Hall of Fame banquet was to honor past players and contributors from the Watertown baseball program, with the goal of fostering a strong baseball tradition in the area.

The success of the Watertown Baseball Hall of Fame was evident during the banquet we organized to celebrate the inductees. The turnout and support for the WBA were remarkable. Not only did baseball fans attend, but many community members who knew the inductees also came to show their support. The event became our most successful fundraiser of the year, all while enhancing our brand and strengthening the rich baseball tradition in Watertown.

WATERTOWN CARES: 612 FLATS

Through providing temporary housing and financial resources, Watertown Cares helps people move from a financial crisis to financial stability. Housing is a foundational component of addressing Social Determinants of Health. Assisting with a long-term housing solution allows individuals and families to focus on other needs which include health, education, and social needs.

\$1 a week can... Provide 3 people with their vital records necessary for employment and housing; Provide pillows for 13 individuals.

In May 2024, a pregnant single mother of seven lost her job, leading to homelessness and forcing her family to live in a camper without basic utilities. With no stable housing or family support, they struggled to survive, often relying on public restrooms and sleeping in their vehicle during the harsh South Dakota winter.

Everything changed on January 17, 2025, when they moved into 612 Flats, Watertown Cares' emergency housing. There, they found safety, stability, and access to supportive services. With a temporary address and renewed hope, the mother secured employment.

Through intensive case management and the Rapid Rehousing program, she transitioned into permanent housing. On April 11, 2025, the family moved into their own furnished apartment, with rent support covering the critical first months.

Now, they have a safe, stable home and the support needed to build a brighter future—one rooted in resilience and the power of a second chance.

WATERTOWN FIGURE SKATING CLUB

This program caters to boys and girls from pre-school through college and adulthood, encompassing elementary, intermediate, middle, and high school levels. It emphasizes health, exercise, accountability, dedication, and learning. We strictly follow the US Figure Skating SafeSport guidelines, ensuring our club is a secure environment for children.

For just \$1 a week, you can help provide financial scholarships for two children to attend entry-level skating lessons.

Sisters Averie and Alayna joined this season's Learn to Skate Program thanks to our United Way tuition scholarship. Through their dedication, both girls advanced to higher levels, gaining strength, self-confidence, and a solid foundation in skating skills.

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... provide 2 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 LACROSSE CLUB

Watertown Lacrosse Club is in its tenth season. Our program started the same year as the Sioux Falls and Aberdeen lacrosse programs with the hopes of bringing lacrosse to the state of SD. 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 eight different divisions (Coed U10, Boys U12, Boys U14, Boys Varsity, Girls U12, Girls JV and Girls Varsity).

\$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.

Last season (2024), which was year three since our Girls Varsity team had been established they won the League Championship! This was an incredible feat! They beat a team that they have never won against to make it into the Championship game. They went undefeated for the weekend and took home the Championship! There is not one single player/athlete to list as a success story, but our entire girls team as a whole.

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

This program equips children with lifelong skills and abilities. Thanks to funding from the United Way, registration fees are kept as affordable as possible.

For just \$1 a week, you can provide 15 participants with a league shirt.

Every child in the Park & Rec Youth Baseball/Softball program gains a solid understanding of the game's fundamentals along with essential life skills associated with sports. Participants will learn valuable traits such as sportsmanship, teamwork, kindness, collaboration, competitiveness, and diligence while enjoying this wonderful game. Additionally, training sessions have been organized for volunteer coaches to ensure that the core values of youth sports are consistently upheld.

WATERTOWN PARKS AND RECREATION, ADULT/SENIOR ACTIVITIES

Watertown Parks and Recreation - Adult/Senior Activities offers 70 diverse programs, leagues, and events tailored for adults and seniors of all ages. Each activity creates a fun and safe environment for social interaction, regardless of age. An increasing number of adults and seniors are embracing their independence by participating in our programs for the active and social experience they provide.

For just \$1 a week, you can support a senior citizen's access to a range of programs throughout the year. This small contribution covers the cost of participating in leagues such as Wii Bowling, Pool, Shuffleboard, Dart, and Cornhole. Adults can choose from a variety of programs for an affordable annual fee of \$52.

Derek Berning, who relocated to Watertown a few years ago, is a father of two daughters. Initially unfamiliar with the community beyond his full-time job, Derek sought out recreational leagues for social engagement. Balancing the challenges of supporting his daughters, maintaining a full-time job, and attending school full-time, he needed a way to unwind socially, physically, and financially. Joining an adult basketball league led him to also participate in a wiffleball team and eventually a softball team. The financial structure of these leagues was manageable for him, and with support from United Way funding helping reduce participant costs, Derek enjoyed recreational sports 1-2 times a week for 40 weeks a year for under \$150. This experience allowed his daughters to also engage in Watertown Parks & Recreation's youth leagues, where they built friendships. Thanks to United Way funding, youth program fees remain affordable.

Derek has fostered meaningful relationships with many of his peers and has even become an official for Watertown Parks and Recreation. This role ties into health, education, and financial stability. Refereeing helps him stay fit, provides continuous learning opportunities in rules and skills, and serves as a great source of extra income for his education and to support his daughters' activities.

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

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.