



United Way
of Jackson County
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NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Kriss Giannetti
517-841-2148 or 517-784-0511
kgiannetti@uwjackson.org

JACKSON COMPANIES, UNITED WAY PUT UP \$75,000 AS COMMUNITY CHALLENGE GRANTS FOR ENERGIZING EDUCATION *Consumers Energy, Industrial Steel Treating Join in Support of Literacy Initiative*

JACKSON, Michigan [Dec. 7, 2015] – Two Jackson-based companies, [Industrial Steel Treating](#) and [Consumers Energy](#), joined with United Way of Jackson County to contribute a total of \$75,000 to provide a three-for-one match for community donations to Energizing Education.

Each company gave \$25,000, adding to a \$25,000 matching fund by United Way, according to Ken Toll, president and CEO of United Way of Jackson County. Energizing Education, a child literacy and family engagement initiative, is a program of the local United Way.

“Consumers Energy and Industrial Steel Treating show what it means to live united for our community and our children,” Toll said. “Their commitment through Energizing Education is changing kids’ lives. We’re deeply grateful for this amazing and generous support.”

With the matching funds in place, every dollar given to EE during its current fundraiser will be matched with a dollar from each company’s grant and the United Way fund – that is, three dollars for every dollar contributed, up to the total of \$75,000.

“At this time of year, many people are looking at their options for charitable giving. With this opportunity to quadruple your impact, we hope donors will support Energizing Education,” said Toll.

EE kicked off the fundraiser in November. According to Kriss Giannetti, program manager, an unexpected decline in state dollars to Jackson County schools prompted the campaign.

Energizing Education released a video, “Get Energized! The Case for Energizing Education,” that includes testimonials from school administrators, teachers, mentors, parents and children. The video can be viewed on websites for [Energizing Education](#), [United Way of Jackson County](#) and on [YouTube](#). Also, EE is mailing brochures to area households describing the positive impact of the program.

“We have an immediate need for funds to cover books, materials, training and family engagement through the current year,” said Giannetti. “We also need support to bridge us to a more sustainable model for long term growth.”

A partner with Cradle 2 Career, Energizing Education is part of the continuum of learning in Jackson County schools. It focuses on reading proficiency and family engagement for students in kindergarten through third grade. EE uses a two-pronged approach: volunteer mentors, coached by a literacy specialist in the schools and working one-on-one with students in reading, writing and vocabulary in half-hour sessions twice a week; and family nights that help families take an active role in their children’s education.

According to Giannetti, 99 percent of EE students increased their reading proficiency at least one level in 2014-15. The average increase was 6.82 reading levels. In addition, 154 volunteer mentors invested 1,442 hours in EE students, and family night programs at six participating schools engaged 8,821 adults and children.

Educational and career success increase financial stability, which in turn impacts a community’s economic strength and quality of life, Giannetti added.

Energizing Education began in 2012 with a challenge match grant of \$125,000 from the Consumers Energy Foundation. Initially piloted at Jackson Public Schools’ Frost Elementary, today EE operates in seven schools across the county and aims to reach all schools in Jackson County that are interested.

About United Way of Jackson County

United Way of Jackson County is *Connecting Our Community for the Common Good* by mobilizing people, organizations and funds to drive programs that help children succeed in school, make sure families are financially stable, and help people achieve good health. Visit our website at www.uwjackson.org, or follow us on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

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