

NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Ken Toll
(517) 796-5128
ktoll@uwjackson.org

UNITED WAY OF JACKSON COUNTY SETS BOLD VISION TO END POVERTY, BUILD FINANCIALLY STABLE HOUSEHOLDS

*Long-Term Goal Revealed as Campaign Prepares Kickoff
With Upcoming Cardboard Boat Race*

JACKSON, Michigan [Sept. 7, 2016] – United Way of Jackson County today announced a bold vision and goal to end poverty by helping struggling households become financially stable.

“The common thread in every social issue we face in Jackson County is financial instability—people in poverty or one unexpected bill away from poverty,” said Ken Toll, President and CEO of United Way of Jackson County (UWJC).

“We’ve seen time and time again that when the people of Jackson County rally around issues, we can solve them. So our vision and goal are rooted in a shared effort to change conditions for thousands of Jackson County residents,” Toll added.

Community-Level Vision and Goal

The vision was developed by United Way and the Financial Stability Coalition, a group of volunteers representing nonprofits throughout Jackson County. The vision reads: *We will be a community rich in opportunities to eliminate poverty and allow all people to achieve financial stability and success.*

Toll said the vision is especially meaningful to the 41 percent of Jackson County households that are in poverty or struggle to make ends meet, according to the 2014 ALICE Report commissioned by the Michigan Association of United Ways.

“Nearly 25,000 households in our county can’t count on enough resources to feed their families, pay their rent, or know if they’ll be forced to choose between heat and medicine,” Toll said. “We believe no one should have to make those choices. That’s why we’re determined to work across all sectors to give every resident the opportunity for a better life.”

Toll cited three major drivers of UWJC’s new financial stability focus:

- the 2014 ALICE Report, which detailed the plight of people in poverty or near poverty, known as ALICE (Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed);
- a 2014 UWJC survey that found links to poverty and ALICE in the top seven social concerns cited in responses;
- the success of community coalitions in addressing other social issues—notably Cradle2Career in education, and Health Improvement Organization in health.

Toll said a collective effort in financial stability will gather expertise, resources and partners to drive strategies that help people move away from poverty or economic risk. While United Way will continue to work in key strategic areas—education, income, health, and supports such as basic needs—it will focus programs, initiatives and financial support on efforts that help people achieve financial stability.

“As we continue to partner in education, income, health and supports, we’ll be looking at how those partnerships create opportunities to eliminate poverty and promote financial stability,” Toll explained.

A financially stable household has enough income to meet basic needs – food, shelter, health care and other daily expenses – plus enough to set aside savings for potential loss of income or a financial crisis; has the knowledge to manage budget and credit; and has the ability to purchase an asset (education, housing, transportation, etc.).

To measure progress, United Way set a nine-year goal: *Help 5,000 Jackson County residents develop a path to financial success by 2025*. Toll said that goal gives UWJC and its partners a specific, measurable target that, when achieved, represents a major step toward making the vision real.

UWJC launches its annual fundraising campaign this week. Toll said support for United Way will be crucial to achieving the goal and vision.

“Financial gifts give our efforts the fuel they need to succeed,” said Toll. “Jackson County is a generous community. We’re grateful for the support that makes our work possible.”

To find out more about United Way and make a contribution, go to www.uwjackson.org.

What Floats Your Cardboard Boat? Race Sets Sail Sept. 9

United Way of Jackson County launches its annual campaign on Friday, Sept. 9, with a community event now in its fifth year. What Floats Your Cardboard Boat? Race is a competition among local businesses, schools, government organizations, nonprofits and other groups pitting homemade cardboard boats in races on the urban fishery pond at Cascade Falls Park. The event is free, open to all, and the public is invited to take part by voting for their favorite. Food, music and boat displays take place throughout the afternoon. Competition begins at 4 p.m.

#

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 toward a vision of a community rich in opportunities to eliminate poverty and allow all people to achieve financial stability and success. Visit our website at www.uwjackson.org, or follow us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram.