

## United Way Blackhawk Region

205 North Main Street, Suite 101  
Janesville, WI 53545-3062  
Tel 608 757.3040  
Fax 608 757.3055  
[LiveUnitedBR.org](http://LiveUnitedBR.org)

United Way  
Blackhawk Region



## MEDIA RELEASE

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For additional information contact:

Mary Fanning-Penny, President & CEO

[mfanning-penny@lubr.org](mailto:mfanning-penny@lubr.org) or (608) 314-8422

## United Way announces COVID-19 Action Fund

(BLACKHAWK REGION) -- The emergence and rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a level of disruption in our lives that none of us could imagine just a short while ago. This public health crisis is driving urgent and unexpected needs in communities across our region, as many face financial uncertainty stemming from efforts to contain the virus: businesses forced to reduce workforce or closing leaving some without incomes, childcare while schools are out of session, food and housing services bracing for new complexities in their work, and health care workers preparing for a surge in patients.

United Way has always been on the front lines for both everyday problems and crises. Today, United Way Blackhawk Region announced a COVID-19 Action Fund to provide flexible resources for local nonprofit organizations working directly with communities in Rock County, Wisconsin and northern Winnebago County, Illinois who are disproportionately impacted by coronavirus and the economic consequences of the outbreak.

When it comes to the COVID-19 pandemic, "We know this crisis is impacting nonprofits in many ways, including an increased demand for services, lost revenue due to closures and cancellations, declines in volunteerism, as well as other unanticipated challenges. The very groups we rely upon to provide critical services are understaffed, under resourced, and may not be able to respond in the way our communities need them to," said United Way Blackhawk Region President and CEO Mary Fanning-Penny. "Nonprofit organizations are doing the very best that they can in tumultuous, uncharted waters."

The volunteer board of directors for United Way Blackhawk Region approved activation of the COVID-19 Action Fund and authorized utilization of \$100,000 in reserve funds to seed it.

United Way Blackhawk Region's Board Chair Al Hulick urged individuals and organizations to also answer a call to action. "Now is the time to double down for our community. Contributing to this Action Fund is one meaningful and collaborative way to direct dollars where they're needed most and will be stewarded responsibly," said Hulick. "United Way is proud to complement the efforts of our partners in health care, public safety, human services and emergency management. We applaud and extend our heartfelt gratitude to every individual and entity selflessly serving our region during this unprecedented situation."

In order to move resources quickly, United Way has implemented a streamlined, online application. The application, as well as a frequently asked questions document detailing eligibility and the funding process, is available at [LiveUnitedBR.org/COVID-19](http://LiveUnitedBR.org/COVID-19). United Way's volunteer-driven Community

Impact Council will oversee all requests to ensure fiscally responsible allocations. Programs awarded funding will be asked to report on outcomes or results, and will be communicated publicly. Anyone interested in making a gift of any size to United Way's COVID-19 Action Fund, please visit [LiveUnitedBR.org/COVID-19](https://LiveUnitedBR.org/COVID-19) or text "GiveCovid" to 41444. Checks made payable to United Way Blackhawk's Region Action Fund may also be mailed to PO Box 2780, Janesville, WI 53547-2780.

Fanning-Penny concluded the announcement by saying, "Establishing this Action Fund is at the heart of United Way's mission to improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities. We are called upon to lead in a way that is most needed and impactful, right now, today."

United Way Blackhawk Region's additional COVID-19 response efforts include directing the public to 211; United Way's 211 is a free, confidential, 24/7 information and referral helpline. The 211 system across Wisconsin is working tirelessly to meet the needs of callers searching for information and support due to the public health emergency. Community members are able to access 211, in order of recommendation, by:

- Texting COVID19 (no hyphen) to **211211** to receive information and county details;
- Visiting the website page [211wisconsin.org/coronavirus](https://211wisconsin.org/coronavirus); and
- Calling 211 for information and referrals. Please note: wait time is longer than usual due to high call demand but specialists will help as soon as available.

In an effort to further address the unique and economic challenges posed by the COVID-19 outbreak, United Way is also promoting safe and virtual volunteer opportunities. Entities in need of volunteers and individuals interested in learning more are encouraged to get connected at: [LiveUnitedBR.org/Volunteer](https://LiveUnitedBR.org/Volunteer).

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### **About United Way Blackhawk Region**

United Way fights for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in every community. We win by Living United, by forging unlikely partnerships and by finding new solutions to old problems; by mobilizing the best resources; and inspiring individuals to join the fight against a common foe, each community's most daunting social crises. United Way Blackhawk Region Lives United against poverty, family violence, hunger and homelessness to name a few, by providing community grants and resources to 53 human services programs at 29 nonprofit agencies in Rock County, Wis. and northern Winnebago County, Ill. More information is available at [LiveUnitedBR.org](https://LiveUnitedBR.org) or engage on social media via [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#).