



**UNITED WAY**  
of Southwestern  
Pennsylvania



# VOLUNTEER TOOLKIT

FOR CORPORATE PARTNERS

# VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Unite your employees and customers in acts of service.



**Companies and individuals rely on United Way** to guide their philanthropic giving and create the greatest good through contributions and volunteerism. By partnering with us, your company and employees will uplift and serve communities where you live and work across Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette and Westmoreland counties.

Volunteer projects engage your employees, show your commitment to social responsibility and create significant community impact. We reserve our most robust experiences for our donors and for companies that partner with or run workplace campaigns to benefit United Way. We also offer existing partners first access to special opportunities. Our Volunteer Engagement team plans and runs each experience and can also design custom volunteer engagement activities that align with your company's values and philanthropic priorities.

Why offer volunteer opportunities to your employees?

- Employees who volunteer have a 27% higher overall job satisfaction rating than those who do not.\*
- People who volunteer through their workplace are twice as likely to recommend their organization to job seekers.\*

Ready to partner with United Way to run a workplace campaign? Contact Janice Sauers, corporate engagement manager, at [janice.sauers@unitedwayswpa.org](mailto:janice.sauers@unitedwayswpa.org) to learn more and get involved.



"Volunteers are essential to our work at Global Links. In 2023, they helped us sort, check and pack the more than 260 tons of high quality, essential medical surplus we rescued from disposal. Whether it is a nebulizer helping a child breathe, a rollator walker providing independence and mobility for a senior or medical supplies enabling a health care worker to treat their patients, every item touched at Global Links makes a huge impact on lives and improves health for all, in 2023 alone, volunteer efforts helped to improve health for nearly 2 million people globally and locally."

— Stacy Bodow, Outreach and Engagement Manager

\*[Philanthropy, Purpose and Professional Development: Why Workplace Volunteer Programs Matter.](#)

# GROUP VOLUNTEER OFFERINGS



**Volunteering is a proven way** to help build trust and comradery and create a culture of philanthropy. United Way offers our corporate partners activities that foster connections among employees and demonstrate your company's commitment to the community. Options include hands-on activities, learning opportunities and on-location programs at our partner agency locations.

## **Packing for Impact** **\$1,500 minimum investment\***

Partner agencies are in need of specific items and United Way's Packing for Impact events meet those needs and maximize impact. We bring volunteerism into your workplace by providing a meaningful activity to help your team make a difference. We identify a partner agency in need and bring all supplies to your office. Each Packing for Impact event begins with a short activity about why these items are needed and how United Way is working to address these needs. Packing for Impact events can be booked around your schedule.

These events are best suited for groups of 10 to 50 volunteers and range from 30 minutes to two hours, depending on the number of kits and the size of your group. Fees cover the purchase materials and our staff time and are based on the number of kits your team prepares. For existing corporate partners, United Way provides all planning and administration free of charge.

For questions about kit packing events, please contact Mark Harrison, manager of volunteer engagement, at [mark.harrison@unitedwayswpa.org](mailto:mark.harrison@unitedwayswpa.org).

"Volunteerism helps us to fulfill our mission of feeding our neighbors, meeting their basic needs, through food pantries, community meals, specialty programs and mobile distributions. We couldn't do this important work without the effort of volunteers. In 2023, the organization served more than 13,000 households, with the help of 5,000 volunteers. Volunteers are truly the heart of the organization and United Way is an essential partner and connector of support to our programs."

— Gina Colosimo, Director of Volunteers,  
Westmoreland Food Bank

**Companies that are not current United Way partners may be charged administrative fees. Availability depends on United Way staff capacity.**

Interested in running a workplace campaign or becoming a United Way partner? Contact Corporate Engagement Manager Janice Sauers at [janice.sauers@unitedwayswpa.org](mailto:janice.sauers@unitedwayswpa.org).

## Packing for Impact offerings

### First Aid Kits



First aid kits provide local youth, families and seniors with basic first aid items such as Band-Aids, antiseptic, gauze and gloves are distributed through local schools and shelters.

### Period Care Kits



Across the country, one-third of adults and almost a quarter of teens struggle to afford period products. These kits provide comfort and dignity and include a variety of menstrual care products such as tampons, pads, hand sanitizer and toiletry bags. Kits are distributed through local schools, shelters and partner agencies.

### Hygiene Kits



Help individuals show up with dignity and confidence by providing essential personal care items, such as body wash, deodorant and lotion, these versatile kits are distributed through a wide range of partner agencies, including shelters, schools and agencies serving people experiencing homelessness.

### Out-of-School Time Snack Bags



One out of 10 students in Pennsylvania do not know where their next meal will come from, and 77% of Pennsylvania students qualify for federal nutrition programs primarily offered at school. These snack bags provide students with access to nutritious snacks while not in school and are distributed to local agencies that support youth and through after-school programs across the region.

### Care Kits for First Generation College Students



College retention rates show that first-generation college students do not receive the same support as their peers from more privileged backgrounds. Through our partnership with local higher education institutions, your team can provide a first-generation college student with care packages that include school supplies, comfort items and snacks to fuel study sessions.

### Senior Care Kits



Help older adults in our community gain access to household staples and stimulating activities. Senior care kits include first-aid materials, lip balm and tissues, and stimulating activities such as word searches. These kits are distributed through senior service agencies and assisted living facilities.

### STEAM Kits



These kits provide a hands-on learning activity for students with a combined emphasis on Science, Technology Engineering, Art and Math (STEAM) to support creative thinking. Kits are distributed to schools and agencies serving children across the region. There are a variety of STEAM kits available, each kit includes materials needed for the activity and a book for the child's home library.

Have an idea for a kit not on this list? United Way can help create kits based on the current needs of the community. Please contact Mark Harrison, manager of volunteer engagement, [mark.harrison@unitedwayswpa.org](mailto:mark.harrison@unitedwayswpa.org) for more information.

# UNITED WAY DAYS



## Agency Projects

Take a break from the office and get your team into the community! United Way has a list of projects that our partner agencies need help completing. We will work with you to identify projects from the list that most closely match your needs. Some agency projects have flexible timing, while others have set dates and times. By supporting one of the identified projects, you provide the maximum assistance to the agency.

Past opportunities have included painting and facility maintenance at Glade Run Lutheran Services, packing materials at the Western Pennsylvania Diaper Bank and sorting donations at the Westmoreland Food Bank.

Agency projects are ideal for groups of up to 20 and a limited number of partner agencies can accommodate larger groups. Availability of agency projects is based on what our agency partners need and is not guaranteed. Project coordination for existing United Way partners is provided at no cost for most projects. Some agency projects require a financial investment to cover materials costs. To rally a larger group of volunteers or for projects that serve multiple agencies or locations, please contact Mark Harrison, manager of volunteer engagement, at [mark.harrison@unitedwayswpa.org](mailto:mark.harrison@unitedwayswpa.org). Coordination fees may apply.

## Corporate Intern Projects

A successful internship challenges students and leaves a positive impression of your company's culture and values. United Way provides your interns with opportunities to engage and learn how the nonprofit sector meets the needs of the community. To learn more intern engagement projects, please contact Mark Harrison, manager of volunteer engagement, at [mark.harrison@unitedwayswpa.org](mailto:mark.harrison@unitedwayswpa.org).

## Open Volunteer Events

Having trouble aligning your team's busy schedules to coordinate a group activity? United Way regularly hosts volunteer and engagement events that are free and open to United Way partners. Attendance for United Way's open events is available on a first-come, first-served basis and typically fill quickly. Visit [unitedwayswpa.org](http://unitedwayswpa.org) for upcoming events.

"Giving back grants me a sense of accomplishment in making the community a better place, while meeting new people. I'm very fortunate to work for NextTier Bank, a community bank that encourages our employees to donate and volunteer. Build A Bike, and Tools for Schools kit packing events mean so much because they make a difference for so many families."

— Darla Livermore, Senior Vice President/Director of Human Resource Management, NextTier Bank

# FREE TAX PREP

# BE A TAX PREP HERO

Volunteers Needed For Tax Season.

FREE TAX PREP

Sign up at [swpafreetaxes.org](http://swpafreetaxes.org)



**The Free Tax Prep (FTP) Coalition** is a partnership of nonprofit, education and government organizations operating Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites in southwestern Pennsylvania. Sponsored by United Way and managed by Just Harvest, the coalition organizes VITA tax prep sites at nonprofit and university partners across the region. Every year, hundreds of volunteers help thousands of low-income families access millions of dollars in tax credits and avoid fees. Volunteer tax preparers and greeters are needed for every tax season. All volunteers receive training (15 hours for preparers and three hours for greeters) and commit to three service hours a week during tax season. Shifts are available during the day or evening, on weekdays and weekends. Volunteer registration opens in the fall. For more information, please contact Emily Schmidlapp, manager of moving to financial stability, [emily.schmidlapp@unitedwayswpa.org](mailto:emily.schmidlapp@unitedwayswpa.org).

Since 2009, our 3,545 Free Tax Prep Coalition volunteers in southwestern Pennsylvania have prepared 120,450 returns, generating \$199 million in refunds and saving taxpayers \$26.9 million in tax prep fees.



# ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES



**In addition to meaningful volunteer opportunities** for your employees, United Way offers additional educational programs that increase understanding of community needs and how nonprofit agencies in our region are rising to these challenges.

## 211 Experience

Get an exclusive look into the work of our 211 team in action. You'll learn about the significant needs of our neighbors and the resources made available to them when they contact 211. Listen live as 211's trained resource navigators answer real calls and respond with empathy and care. To see upcoming 211 Experience dates and to register, please visit [unitedwayswpa.org](https://unitedwayswpa.org).

## Agency Tours

United Way's agency partners across our five-county region help all members of our community live to their fullest potential. Throughout the year, United Way offers opportunities to visit some of these agencies to learn more about how they help people and their connection to United Way. For upcoming tour dates, please contact Allaina Wagner, volunteer engagement coordinator, at [allaina.wagner@unitedwayswpa.org](mailto:allaina.wagner@unitedwayswpa.org).

"I'm a longtime United Way financial supporter and volunteered as a local operating board member for Butler and Armstrong. This provided me the opportunity to understand the agencies working to serve those needs. I highly recommend listening in at a United Way 211 contact center to hear first-hand how the United Way connects our neighbors in need with the health and human service providers 24 hours a day, every day of the year. 211 Resource Navigators field calls with professionalism and empathy and the experience is truly eye-opening."

— John Perock, Nuclear Fuel Engineering Operations  
Director, Westinghouse Electric Company

# ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES



## Mini-Engagement Activities

These 20-to-30-minute activities engage your employees around the issues facing people and families across our region and simulate conditions related to United Way's investment priorities of meeting basic needs, moving to financial stability and building for success in school and life. Each can be paired with any of volunteer project.

**Outcomes in Action.** Outcomes in Action is a matching activity that shows participants the many community programs and issues in our community that United Way works to address. The activity challenges participants to understand challenges and match them with solutions that their contributions make possible.

**Tough Choices.** Tough Choices simulates what too many members of our community experience every day managing a household on a low income. It is a simplified look at the difficult budgeting decisions people face, and how unexpected expenses can cause financial instability. Participants are faced with income constraints and must allocate their budget -represented through pieces of candy- to each of the expense categories listed on the activity sheet. It's challenging, compelling and eye-opening and a great opportunity to generate understanding and empathy.

**SNAP Gap.** The SNAP Gap brings attention to the barriers that individuals who rely on these food assistance face on a regular basis. Participants shop for a day's worth of groceries and can only spend the average household SNAP benefit. It shows the difficulty too many of our neighbors face getting enough food for their families.

**United Way Trivia.** This interactive game engages your employees around issues facing families and communities in southwestern Pennsylvania and shows how programs supported by United Way are addressing them.

For more information on any engagement activity, please contact Allaina Wagner, volunteer engagement coordinator, at [allaina.wagner@unitedwayswpa.org](mailto:allaina.wagner@unitedwayswpa.org).

"I volunteer because I see the positive impact my colleagues and I make when we join together. Kindness is needed to touch hearts and meet the needs of others. I strive to instill a culture of giving through service because volunteering together builds camaraderie while also helping the communities where we live!"

— LaDawn Yesheo, Chief Risk Officer, S&T Bank



# POVERTY SPIRAL



**For people who are financially secure**, it can be hard to understand the impact of seemingly impossible choices faced by people who don't earn enough, despite working, to meet their basic needs. The Poverty Spiral Simulation, created with the Mentoring Partnership, is fashioned as a board game and challenges players to choose how they would act if placed in a variety of real-world situations. Good choices are rarely obvious, and it's often a case of one step forward, two steps back. The Poverty Spiral offers your team a deeper understanding of the realities that our neighbors face every day and how their contributions to United Way are making a difference.

Organizations who have taken part in the Poverty Spiral say it has tremendous impact on their employees and has brought their team together in a meaningful, positive way, fostering empathy and creating real connections around issues they might not otherwise discuss.

## What you will do

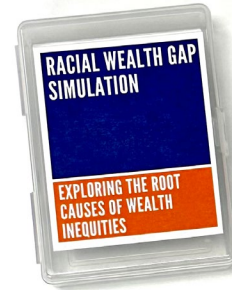
- The simulation runs for 90 minutes and requires a minimum of 10 participants.
- In teams of six, participants will be assigned a profile of an individual experiencing financial difficulty.
- Participants move their tokens based on decisions they make in attempt to navigate the spiral.

## What the outcome will be

- Bring teams together by stimulating meaningful conversation between co-workers about issues affecting our community.
- Inspire employees to use a more informed lens of empathy when they encounter people experiencing poverty, both in and beyond the workplace.

For more information or to schedule a simulation, please contact Allaina Wagner, volunteer engagement coordinator, at [allaina.wagner@unitedwayswpa.org](mailto:allaina.wagner@unitedwayswpa.org).

# RACIAL WEALTH GAP



**The first step to addressing inequities is to understand the underlying factors** that have created them in the first place. You may be surprised to discover that many laws and policies put in place to advance our society have made it more difficult for people of color to access housing, employment and capital, resulting in a wide racial wealth gap apparent in cities and towns across our region and our nation. This racial wealth gap affects health, life expectancy and upward mobility. Black individuals and families, for example, have lower rates of homeownership as compared to white families and are less able to accumulate wealth and pass it from one generation to the next. This harms individuals and families and takes an enormous toll on our national economy and the sustainability of our communities.

## What you will do

- The simulation lasts two hours and requires a minimum of 10 participants.
- Participants will learn about 13 policies and practices that have contributed to the racial wealth gap and some of the work that is being done to address this wide gap.

## How it works

A trained United Way staff member leads the simulation for the group as participants accumulate or lose tokens representing wealth. This simulation has been designed to challenge assumptions and stimulate discussion of how past policies and practices continue to have real-world consequences in our community. For maximum impact, the simulation should be hosted in person, however it can be facilitated virtually.

To find out more information or to schedule a one-of-a-kind experience for your group, please contact Allaina Wagner, volunteer engagement coordinator at [allaina.wagner@unitedwayswpa.org](mailto:allaina.wagner@unitedwayswpa.org).

## What people are saying about this simulation:

"This interactive simulation provides a deeper understanding and allows for an open dialogue with others, which may spark engagement for policy changes targeting inequality." — John

"One thing that surprised me is the extent to which the economic gaps created by these policies persist to this day." — Sylena

"While some people believe racism is a thing of the past, this simulation makes clear that relatively recent governmental have continued to affect Black families negatively." — Suzanne

# COLLECTION DRIVES

**United Way's agency partners** have a year-round need for supplies. You can help by hosting a collection drive for essential items that make life easier for our neighbors. United Way makes it simple by giving you suggested items to collect and posters and other communication tools to support your drive.

To learn more or schedule a collection drive with your team or family, please contact Elisha Serotta, volunteer coordinator, at [elisha.serotta@unitedwayswpa.org](mailto:elisha.serotta@unitedwayswpa.org).

Below are some items commonly requested by our partner agencies.

## Classroom supplies

- Class packs of markers.
- Paint (tempera, watercolor, acrylic).
- Construction paper.
- Butcher paper.
- Paint brushes.
- Air-dry clay.
- Hand sanitizer.
- Cleaning wipes.
- Whiteboard markers.
- Box of tissues.

## New caregiver supplies

- Diapers of all sizes.
- Baby wipes.
- Diaper rash cream.
- Petroleum jelly.



"Last year Western Pennsylvania Diaper Bank was able to help more than 15,000 families with the support from volunteers. Volunteers have always been a crucial part of the Diaper Bank since our beginning. We greatly appreciate all that volunteers do and continue to do to help us get over 3 million products out to families in need annually."

— Cathy Battle, Executive Director and Co-Founder,  
Western Pennsylvania Diaper Bank

## Cleaning supplies

- Paper towels.
- Floor cleaner.
- Laundry detergent.
- Dish soap.
- Sponges.
- Dishwasher detergent.
- Cleaning wipes.
- Multi-purpose cleaner.
- Trash bags.

## Winter gear supplies

- Scarves.
- Gloves.
- Mittens.
- Warm Socks.
- Hats.
- Hand warmers.