



UNITED FOR CENTRAL JERSEY
COMMUNITY REPORT 2022



United Way of Central Jersey

A MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

Dear Friends,

2022 brought changes to our United Way, all of them positive, as we continue our mission of focusing on young children and their families through innovative program initiatives to ensure that all children living in our community attain better educational outcomes and a healthier, brighter and more successful future.

We successfully launched our newest initiative, The Middlesex County Alliance for Child and Family Success. You can read more about the wonderful work the Alliance is doing in this report.

Our Summer STEAM Stars summer learning program began its first year of operation in Jamesburg, offering classes in math, science, technology and related subjects. Program funding has been extended through the summer of 2025.

Ten of our Nurse-Family Partnership moms began a first-time college mentoring program, with five currently pursuing Associate's Degrees at Middlesex College.

Our volunteer programs switched from virtual to in-person. More than 100 volunteers from corporations, businesses and the community engaged in hands-on activities including packing food, painting rooms at non-profit organizations and creating literacy kits, new mom kits and birthday party kits for area preschools, child care centers and our United Way program participants.

Our successful VITA program nearly doubled the number of certified tax preparers, allowing us to assist additional clients with filing federal and state tax returns, prior year and amended returns as well as ITIN applications and renewals. This free service continues year-round, not just during the traditional/peak tax filing season.

And we are continuing that positive momentum for 2023 with the establishment of a physical location for our new Financial Opportunity Center in Perth Amboy, expansion of the Alliance's activities and a new parental education and empowerment program, Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors.

Thank you to everyone who has supported United Way of Central Jersey this past year. Join us in building stronger communities through our current and new programs and initiatives. Call us at 732-247-3727 to find out how you can help or go to our website at www.uwcj.org.

Lawrence P. O'Connell

Lawrence P. O'Connell
Chair, Chief Volunteer Officer

Gloria Aftanski

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President and Chief Professional Officer

VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (VITA)

Individuals and families making \$65,000 or less per year can have their taxes filed for **free** by IRS-certified volunteers through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program. The volunteer-driven program supports nearly 3,000 individuals in Middlesex County and returns an average of \$2 million dollars in refunds, EIT, and Child Care credits for residents. VITA volunteers also assist with ITIN applications and renewals.

IMPACT AT A GLANCE



123
volunteers



\$734,000 saved
in tax prep fees



over \$2 million in
refunds & credits



2,936 total
returns



DIRE

UWCJ has made a multi-year commitment to DIRE-Support Services and DIRE-Legal Services. DIRE assists immigrant families facing issues related to detention, deportation, and other immigration-related circumstances. DIRE operates a hotline available 24/7 for help with immigration crises and long-term support.

In 2022, UWCJ provided funding to DIRE and Asylum Legal Assistance for U Visa (victims of crime) applicants, Special Immigrant Juvenile Visa applicants, Asylum Applicants, Humanitarian Visa applications, Central American Minors Program, Haitian immigrant program, Afghan immigrant program, Ukrainian immigrant program, general admissibility and adjustment of status matters, temporary protected status applicants, and refugees adjusting status.

DIRE-Legal Services was established three years ago, due to the dramatic shortage of legal services for immigrants. DIRE-Legal focuses on asylum and detention cases, Visas, and Special Immigrant Juvenile Visas. They are rapidly expanding to meet the needs of Afghan, Haitian, and Ukrainian clients.

COMING SOON: PERTH AMBOY FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITY CENTER (FOC)

Sometimes a job isn't enough. Even employed families struggle with monthly expenses that exceed their income. A negative monthly cash flow can feel like an uphill battle, leaving families with unpaid bills, utilities, rent, and in need of additional assistance. The Perth Amboy Financial Opportunity Center (FOC), which received a congressional community project grant from Congressman Frank Pallone Jr. (D-6) will work to increase the economic stability of parents by providing an integrated set of three core services:

- 1 - Employment Counseling: One-on-one employment counseling, job readiness and placement, and access to education and training.
- 2 - Income Support: SNAP benefits, housing subsidies, energy assistance, EITC.
- 3 - Financial Coaching: Creating a financial plan, credit report review, developing a household budget, and connecting to financial institutions and products.

The main program components will work together to assist families in leading more sustainable lives. Additional FOC resources and services will include: a career closet, a reading corner for children, a community resource coordinator, ESL classes, Skill-up Middlesex, a computer lab, US Citizen application assistance, test preparation, and tax services.

NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP (NFP)

Nationally acclaimed Nurse Family Partnership specifically targets low income, first time pregnant women, providing comprehensive parenting training and education along with a range of other supportive services from the twelfth week of pregnancy through the child's second birthday. The program, which consists of an intensive schedule of home visits by bachelor-level nurses, has proven successful in both the short and long term by ensuring that babies get a healthier start even before birth, by helping mothers take better care of themselves and by helping children grow to adolescence with fewer problem behaviors.

We also connected mothers in our NFP program with:

- Funds made available by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) for food, formula, cribs, and area transportation.
- Clinical mental health support for the nursing team, individual nurses helping challenging clients as well as the mothers themselves
- College coaching for ten NFP moms, five enrolled at Middlesex College pursuing Associate degrees



IMPACT AT A GLANCE



415
people helped
200 moms, 215 babies



4,000
home visits



PLACE-BASED INITIATIVE AT JFK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN JAMESBURG

United Way of Central Jersey leads John F. Kennedy Elementary School's Early Childhood Council's long-term strategy to best address the early education and development needs of preschool students and their families. Our family advocate stationed at JFK has an active caseload of over 50 families with a wide range of education, development, health, immigration, transportation, and government entitlement hurdles.

In 2022 this initiative also facilitated parent workshops, community events, ESL classes, an Early Childhood Council, a Thanksgiving food distribution, Yoga in the Park, a dental workshop and supported two borough food pantries.

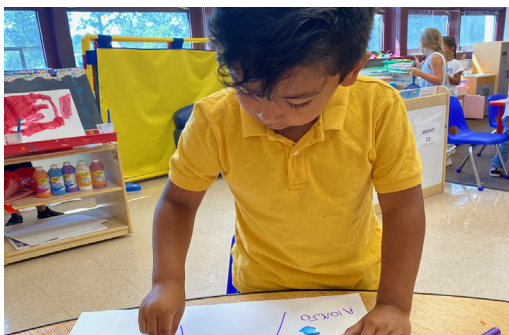


SUMMER STEAM STARS

We are combating summer learning loss at John F. Kennedy Elementary School in Jamesburg. UWCJ has received Community Project funding from Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-12) for a Summer STEAM Stars project. Our STEAM Stars – preschool and kindergarten students – attended classes in math, science, technology, reading and related subjects. The learning continues at home with toolkits shared with their parents

In 2022, its first year; the STEAM Stars program:

- provided classes for 90+ preschool and kindergarten students.
- 30 additional students participated in an afterschool program.
- UWCJ-facilitated parent workshops.
- Provided age-appropriate home libraries designed for preschoolers and kindergarteners.





PARENCHILD+ (PC+)

ParentChild+ Family Child Care program is a free professional development program designed to support home-based child care providers in their role of helping young children prepare for school and life success. UWCJ's educational specialist visits providers twice a week for 24 weeks to help train them in the program model, and provides all materials, including books, related activity guides and educational toys. The positive effects continue through childhood into adolescence, with PC+ graduates from low-income families having a 20-30% greater chance of graduating high school compared with their socioeconomically equivalent peers.

IMPACT AT A GLANCE



60
children



720
visits with
providers



720
books distributed

UNITED FOR FAMILIES

MIDDLESEX COUNTY ALLIANCE FOR CHILD & FAMILY SUCCESS

A 2021 needs assessment conducted by UWCJ highlighted the urgent need for the Middlesex County Alliance for Child & Family Success. The assessment emphasized that Middlesex County families with children aged 0-5 were unaware of available services, afraid to utilize them because of their immigration status, and/or had difficulty navigating the currently fragmented service system. As a result of fear and confusion, families lacked proper connection support and resources. The Alliance is a community resource line that creates pathways for families to obtain the resources and support needed to have prosperous lives.

Since launching in April 2022, the Alliance took 517 calls;

- 91% were female
- 29% were undocumented
- 21% reside in Perth Amboy
- 20% reside in New Brunswick
- 66% were Hispanic
- 56% had annual incomes below \$29,000



IMPACT AT A GLANCE

59% of calls were for safety and financial stability

40% of calls were for food/health/safety

26% of calls were for housing

LEADERSHIP, PARTNERS, AND ENGAGEMENT

WOMEN UNITED

Women United is a global growing force of 70,000+ women dedicated to lifting up communities, creating lasting change, and building a world of opportunity by bringing people together and solving community-wide problems.

In 2022, UWCJ's Women United hosted the 3rd annual Legislative Breakfast with Congressman Frank Pallone, Assemblywoman Yvonne Lopez and Perth Amboy Mayor Helmin Caba.



VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

Large groups of 30+ volunteers, most from area corporations, participated in packaging food, literacy kits, birthday bags, new mom kits, diaper packs, virtual reading and more!

Combined with UWCJ Board and Committee members, VITA volunteers and Women United, that's over 4,000 hours annually with a value of over \$133,000.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES & MEMBERSHIPS

- New Jersey Department of Children and Families Universal Newborn Home Visiting Advisory Council
- Middlesex County Human Services Advisory Council (HSAC)
- HSAC Executive Committee, HSAC Planning Committee, HSAC Child Care Committee
- Middlesex County Workforce Development Board (WDB)
- WDB Executive Committee, WDB Literacy Committee
- New Brunswick Tomorrow (NBT)
- NBT Executive and Finance Committees
- ACNJ Think Babies Workgroups: Home Visiting, Child Care
- Family Success Institute (FSI) Board of Directors
- FSI Learning Community
- New Jersey Early Care and Education Alliance
- Coming Home of Middlesex: Payroll Processing and HR; financial consulting

BOARD MEMBERS

Officers

Lawrence P. O'Connell, Chair, Chief Volunteer Officer
Lee F. Livingston, First Vice Chair
Sol Heckelman, Ed.D. Vice Chair, Community Investment
Gary Karlin, Treasurer

Board Members

Geraldine L. Cochran, Ph.D.
Muriel Grimmatt
Ainsworth Kiffin
Jane Leal
Thomas S. McDonough
Giselle Mudge
Stu Schwartz
Chris Van der Stad
Maurice Williams

MIDDLESEX COUNTY ALLIANCE
FOR CHILD AND FAMILY SUCCESS



Little Hands, Big Futures



United Way of Central Jersey