

INVESTMENTS IN MERRIMACK VALLEY

Investing in Solutions for Merrimack Valley This year, United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley will invest **\$2.4 million in operating support, initiatives and other grants to Merrimack Valley organizations.** This marks a **32 percent increase** in funding this year over last, and will ensure that more children enter school ready to learn, more youth have the support they need to graduate with options for the future and more families are able to attain financial stability.

Mass 2-1-1 and Emergency Basic Needs



Help should never be more than one phone call away. United Way's Mass 2-1-1 hotline is a free service designed to simplify the process of finding

government benefits and services, non-profit organizations, support groups, job training programs, volunteer opportunities, donation programs, and other local resources. Stirred by the troubled economy, 3,576 calls for assistance from Merrimack Valley were answered by United Way's 2-1-1 helpline in the last year.

United Way also invested \$417,200 to respond to significant increases in the number of residents, including many in Merrimack Valley in financial crisis due to the recession. Catholic Charities, The Salvation Army, The American Red Cross, Community Teamwork, Inc. of Lowell and the Merrimack Valley Food Bank partnered with United Way by providing direct financial assistance to Merrimack Valley residents in financial crisis.

Raising a Reader



Across academic research, third-grade reading levels are considered a direct indicator of whether children will succeed in

school and graduate on time. In Lawrence, however, 66% of third-grade children are reading below grade-level. In Lowell, that number is 67%.

In 2010, United Way led a ground-breaking collaboration between public schools systems in Merrimack Valley and local nonprofits. Through the collaboration, organizations like Girls Inc. and Greater Lawrence Community Action Council were funded to work in collaboration with public schools, sharing curriculum and creating enriching learning experiences for children through fun activities. The effort placed particular focus on reducing summer learning loss by integrating literacy activities and staff training into summer programs.

United Way also partnered with IBM to bring 16 new "Young Explorer" computers to the Murkland School in Lowell. Each computer is equipped with award-winning educational software to help children ages 3-7 learn and explore concepts in math, science and language.

GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER. LIVE UNITED®



**United Way
of Massachusetts Bay
and Merrimack Valley**

Housing First



Housing First is a philosophy of service delivery wherein homeless individuals and families move into permanent housing as

quickly as possible with limited stays in the homeless service system, or avoid shelter stays altogether. This is based on the premise that homeless individuals and families are more responsive to interventions and support once they are in permanent housing. United Way investments will expand the work of agencies using the *Housing First* approach or enable agencies to shift their homelessness services in this direction.

United Way invested \$50,000 into Community Teamwork, Inc. of Lowell to enable the organization to serve an additional 30 families and 30 individuals and to continue to provide support as needed to the 60 clients served in the last year. Community Teamwork has seen improvement in their “success” rates (people remaining housed or being rapidly re-housed), and they attribute this to the more intensive assessment, service plan, and casework.

The Math, Science and Technology initiative



United Way’s Math, Science and Technology initiative (MSTi) is a community partnership that engages kids in the sciences

through hands-on learning in afterschool programs and at local science and tech companies. The initiative has grown significantly in recent years, doubling its size over two years to engage 1,300 youth in Greater Boston and Merrimack Valley. MSTi also evolved from engaging 8-12-year-olds to, this year, engaging kids from kindergarten up through 12th grade. In 2010, United Way honored MSTi participant Sabrina Sahyouni, 12, of Lawrence as Young Scientist of the year, and the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Billerica as Science Club of the year.

Tax Preparation for Working Families



In 2010, United Way invested \$30,000 to fund free tax preparation at four sites in Lawrence, in an effort to help more

residents file for their Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a refundable federal income tax credit for low-income working individuals and families.

Studies show that approximately 60% of the Lawrence population is potentially eligible to claim EITC, yet an estimated \$5.2 million in tax credits is unclaimed each year. In addition, reports show that 83.5% of those who are eligible and claim EITC paid the additional expense of a paid preparer, when their returns could have been prepared for free at the four sites in Lawrence. Last year, United Way helped 884 Lawrence families claim \$1.5 million in refunds including \$568,000 in EITC. The EITC effort is part of United Way’s larger strategy to improve financial stability among individuals and families in Merrimack Valley.

Summer Experiences in Greater Lowell (SEGL)



The primary focus of Summer Experiences in Greater Lowell (SEGL) is to generate resources to support quality summer programs that offer youth ages 6 through 16

opportunities for skill development, growth and new experiences in a creative and fun environment. The initiative provides approximately \$100,000 to 13 Greater Lowell agencies for summer programming. The agencies who received funding included the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Billerica, Inc., the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell, Inc., the Caleb House, Girls Incorporated of Greater Lowell, Greater Lowell Family YMCA, Light of Cambodian Children, Inc., the Lowell Community Health Center, Merrimack Repertory Theatre, the Paul Center for Learning and Recreation, Inc., the Revolving Museum (TRM), the United Teen Equality Center, Inc. (UTEC) and YWCA of Greater Lowell. Last summer, through SEGL, more than 3,000 children participated in quality programs, developing leadership, social and academic skills that will empower them for life.



Boston
51 Sleeper Street
Boston, MA 02210-1208
617.624.8000
Fax: 617.624.9114

Lowell
59 Lowes Way, Ste. 203
Lowell, MA 01851-5150
978.656.5000
Fax: 978.656.5014

United Way
of Massachusetts Bay
and Merrimack Valley
supportunitedway.org