



United Way of  
Southwestern Pennsylvania

# UNITED WAY VOLUNTEER AND ENGAGEMENT PORTFOLIO



# INTRODUCTION TO VOLUNTEERISM

Your organization's dedication to community service is backed up by its strong United Way workplace campaign. Through your employees' generous participation, the lives of people across our region are positively impacted. Let us help you find a volunteer project that engages your employees, demonstrates your commitment to social responsibility, and impacts the community in significant ways. We'll work with you to identify your goals, timing, and areas of interest to create the ideal opportunity for your team.

Last year, United Way helped over 100 corporate groups engage over 4,000 employees in volunteer efforts that support families and individuals in our region.

"The best of both worlds is exactly what I receive when First National Bank and United Way team up!

I love doing volunteer events where I am able to benefit the community, serve a greater need, plus develop deeper relationships with my FNB teammates. And the absolute best feeling is when they ask me 'when are we doing another United Way volunteer project or event together'. That's what it is all about! ." — *Monica*

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If you are interested in more information contact Wendy Koch, Senior Director of Regional Engagement, at: [Wendy.Koch@unitedwayswpa.org](mailto:Wendy.Koch@unitedwayswpa.org).  
United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania serves Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, and Westmoreland Counties.



# DAY OF CARING

## IN THE OFFICE

Packing kits with coworkers is a great way to bring volunteerism into the workspace and boost company morale while making a difference. Our team will bring all supplies to your office. We will start the volunteer project with an engagement activity, so your employees gain a better understanding of how they are impacting the community, then pack the kits.

### Weekend Food Bags for Children

Weekend food bags are designed to ensure children do not go hungry over the weekends or in times away from school by providing easy to make meal and snacks..

- Volunteers will pack weekend food bags that include single serve breakfasts, lunches, and snacks.
- Weekend food bags are distributed to school and United Way agency partners.

*\$1,100 minimum investment for 10 volunteers, total investment and number of kits packed is dependent on total volunteers to provide the most impactful experience*

"The weekend food bags are a huge help for the children and families that we work with, as many are still struggling financially. Thank you for helping us support their immediate needs!" – Melanie, His Place Ministries

### STEM Kits

Curiosity naturally blooms in children and United Way wants to make sure every child has the chance to experiment and explore by providing hands-on learning opportunities.

- Volunteers will prepare and assemble STEM kits for children.
- Each kit will have all the materials a child needs to participate in the STEM activity. Kits are distributed to various United Way agency partners for use.

*\$800 minimum investment for 10 volunteers, total investment and number of kits packed dependent on total volunteers to provide the most impactful experience*

### Lesson Plan Kits

The Lesson Plan program allows companies to make a small investment in a local school and provide their employees with an in-office and in classroom volunteer experience.

- Volunteers will prepare and assemble lesson plan kits that include a book and an accompanying activity for kindergartens and first graders.
- United Way will help you identify a school partner based on proximity to your company's headquarters as well as the schools with the most pressing needs.
- Company representatives will also have the opportunity, when available, to join the classroom to read one of the new book titles to the students.

*\$1,500 minimum investment, school partners are pre-schools or elementary schools*



# DAY OF CARING (CONT.)

## IN THE COMMUNITY

Let's get out of the office and into the community. United Way will work with a partner agency that aligns with your company's passions. Past opportunities have included painting at Glade Run Lutheran Services, packing materials at the Western PA Diaper Bank, and sorting donations at the Westmoreland Food Bank.

*Budget need depends on project and agency, ideal for groups up to 25 volunteers, but it not always required.*

"At Glade Run, volunteer groups are vital to our ability to provide essential, life supporting services. While the work may not always be glamorous, it ensures that the children, adults and families we serve have beautiful and peaceful surroundings in which to heal and grow. Whether they are painting our miles of pasture fences, making improvements to our therapeutic animal and horticulture program, setting up for an event, or preparing bulk mailings, volunteer groups provide services that create more time and opportunities for our staff to serve those in need. We truly could not do our work without them!" — *Sheila Talarico, VP, Development & External Affairs*

We can work to customize a volunteer project that fits your group's needs. If you have a group larger than 25 volunteers, or would like to discuss other options, please email [wendy.koch@unitedwayswpa.org](mailto:wendy.koch@unitedwayswpa.org).



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# THE POVERTY SPIRAL

## Here's the Scenario

Every day, thousands of our neighbors who live on the edge of poverty face decisions with enormous consequences. Good choices are rarely obvious, and it's often a case of one step forward, two steps back.

The Poverty Spiral Simulation offers your team a chance for a unique bonding activity while they gain a deeper understanding of how families in our community struggle to meet basic needs. Your employees have made generous donations to make United Way's work possible, so we want to give them valuable insight on how vital their support is for the lives of so many.

Organizations who have already participated say it had a tremendous impact on their employees and really brought their team together in a meaningful, positive way.

Thank you for your support of United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania. By helping foster empathy and creating a real connection with others, you're helping make this a stronger community for us all.



## What You Will Be Doing

- Simulation takes 90 minutes.
- In teams of 6, participants will be assigned a profile of an individual who is struggling financially.
- Participants will move their tokens based on decisions they make in attempt to navigate the spiral.

## Here Are Our Goals

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



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SOUTHWESTERN PA

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# RACIAL WEALTH GAP

## THE RACIAL WEALTH GAP IN THE UNITED STATES

United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania believes the first step to addressing inequities is understanding 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, in reality, contributed to disenfranchising people of color in terms of housing, employment and access to capital.

These policies and practices have created a wide racial wealth gap, the impact of which we can see in our cities and towns around Southwestern Pennsylvania, and our country at large. The racial wealth disparity that these policies and practices have created impact health, life expectancy, and access to upward mobility. We can see the impacts of the wealth gap on Black individuals and families in the redlining of our cities, the lower rates of Black homeownership compared to White families, and the lack of wealth accumulated and passed down from one generation to the next. It also takes an enormous toll on our nation's economic capacity and the sustainability of our communities.

### The Simulation

To help elevate the discussion and build shared understanding of the facts, United Way introduces this highly engaging simulation designed for individuals and groups in our community. Together, your group will learn about 13 policies and practices that have contributed to the racial wealth gap, as well as 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 – either virtually or in-person – 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. The simulation takes a minimum of 90 minutes and has been designed for groups of up to 48 people.

### Knowledge Helps Close the Gap

To find out more about the Racial Wealth Gap Simulator and schedule the one-of-a-kind experience for your group or workplace, please contact Wendy Koch at [wendy.koch@unitedwayswpa.org](mailto:wendy.koch@unitedwayswpa.org).



#### What are people 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 decisions have continued to affect Black families negatively." - Suzanne



The Racial Wealth Gap Simulator is presented by United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania based on an original program designed by Bread for the World.



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# DIY COLLECTION DRIVES

United Way's agency partners have a need for supplies all year long. Those who are struggling often lack everyday essentials that many of us take for granted. You can help by hosting a collection drive of essential items that can help make life easier for others in our region. United Way makes it simple by giving you suggested items to collect and posters and other communication tools to use. To get started, visit our online toolkit: [uwsdpa.org/collection-drive-toolkit](https://uwsdpa.org/collection-drive-toolkit)

Below are the current items in highest need in our area.

**HYGIENE DRIVE** - Help individuals feel or look their best by providing essential personal care, such as body wash, deodorant and lotion.

**HOUSEHOLD CLEANING DRIVE** - Help families keep their homes clean and safe by providing essential home-care supplies, such as floor cleaner, Clorox wipes and paper towels.

**DIAPER DRIVE** - Help support new moms by providing basic needs for their new babies, including diapers and wipes.

**PRE-SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE** - Help set up preschool aged children for success as they begin their educational journey with items such as Play-Doh, alphabet stamps and new children's books.

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE** - Help prepare local kids for success in school by giving them the tools that will help them succeed, such as crayons, notebooks and pencils.

**BOOK DRIVE** – Help early learners build their home libraries by collecting new books highlighting inclusivity and social emotional learning. United Way will provide a list of suggested books to collect.

For full instructions and tools to share your collection drive effort, please visit our online toolkit here: [uwsdpa.org/collection-drive-toolkit](https://uwsdpa.org/collection-drive-toolkit).



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# ANNUAL EVENTS

United Way needs volunteers throughout the year to support annual events.

## **BIG BOOK DROP (April)**

Volunteers sort and pack nearly 30,000 books that will be distributed to school and agency partners across the region to help kids start their home libraries. This is a multi-day volunteer opportunity that is open to all.

## **UNITED WAY MEAL KIT PACKING EVENT (May)**

Volunteers assist with packing and distributing nearly 2,000 meal kits to local families. The meal kits provide all food and recipes to feed a family of four over a weekend. This is a multi-day volunteer opportunity that is open to all.

## **BUILD-A-BIKE (June)**

Volunteers gather for three days to build 300 bikes that are distributed to agency partners across Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, and Westmoreland counties. This volunteer opportunity is exclusive to select corporate partners.

## **TOOLS FOR SCHOOLS (August)**

Volunteers pack 10,000 school supply kits that will be distributed to Pre-K through second grade students. This is a multi-day volunteer opportunity that is open to all.

## **WEEK OF CARING (September)**

Volunteers assist staff at local agencies throughout Allegheny, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, and Westmoreland counties. Week of Caring is an opportunity to connect corporations, individuals, and families with community organizations to engage in a variety of volunteer opportunities. This is a multi-day volunteer opportunity that is open to all.



United Way is seeking funding for these volunteer events.  
If you are interested, please reach out to [wendy.koch@unitedwayswpa.org](mailto:wendy.koch@unitedwayswpa.org).



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