



UNITED WAY
Southern Maine

PROGRAMS PORTFOLIO

FISCAL YEAR 2027



Nadine, a participant in the Early Education Workforce Continuum program.

United Way of Southern Maine is a community problem solver. We bring people, resources, and partners together to help ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) households move toward greater financial security.

In addition to investing in local nonprofits, we lead programs that address critical community challenges – from strengthening early childhood education and operating 211 Maine to helping families improve their financial well-being and access to health care. Guided by data and community input, we develop solutions that make a lasting difference.

Support for our Community Impact Fund gives us the flexibility to respond, innovate, and lead where help is needed most.



Opportunities to explore the child care field

Mitigation of common barriers to entry in training programs

Training and certification to become a teaching assistant

Continued training to support career growth

Incubating new child care businesses

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION WORKFORCE CONTINUUM

Growing the Workforce Behind the Workforce

Affordable early learning opportunities depend on a strong child care workforce. United Way's Early Childhood Education Workforce Continuum recruits, trains, and supports child care educators while helping entrepreneurs open child care businesses across Southern Maine.

Removing Barriers to Entry: Accessible pathways into the profession, paired with practical support like transportation, child care, language assistance, and stipends.

Supporting Educators in the Field: Training and professional development opportunities that help educators build skills and advance their careers.

Launching Child Care Businesses: Resources and guidance that help aspiring entrepreneurs open child care businesses and expand access to care across Southern Maine.



Erika was living in a hotel, dreaming of a rewarding job caring for children. United Way helped Erika overcome common barriers, so she could receive essential training and credentials, and now Erika has a fulfilling job with a local, high-quality child care provider. **Erika's Story:** uwsme.org/erika

CA\$H GREATER PORTLAND

Fueling Financial Security Across Our Community

One in three Southern Maine households struggles to afford basic necessities. CA\$H (Creating Assets, Savings, and Hope) Greater Portland helps families keep more of what they earn and build long-term financial stability.

For more than 20 years, CA\$H Greater Portland has provided free tax preparation through in-person, virtual, self-service, and Scan-and-Go options. More than 100 IRS-certified volunteers prepare returns each year.

Beyond tax preparation, financial education sessions help participants set goals, address financial challenges, and strengthen their financial future.

CA\$H is designed to be accessible to all. The program offers multilingual support, professional interpreters, an ASL Tax Day, and services that are accessible to older adults, people with disabilities, and English language learners.

When surveyed, **56% of CA\$H Greater Portland clients** indicated that they could not withstand an emergency expense of \$400.

Those same clients left with an **average refund of \$1,600** and resources to help set them on a path to achieve long-term financial stability.

2026 TAX SEASON IN REVIEW

1,200+

tax returns completed and filed for free

\$1.9M

in tax refunds returned to community members

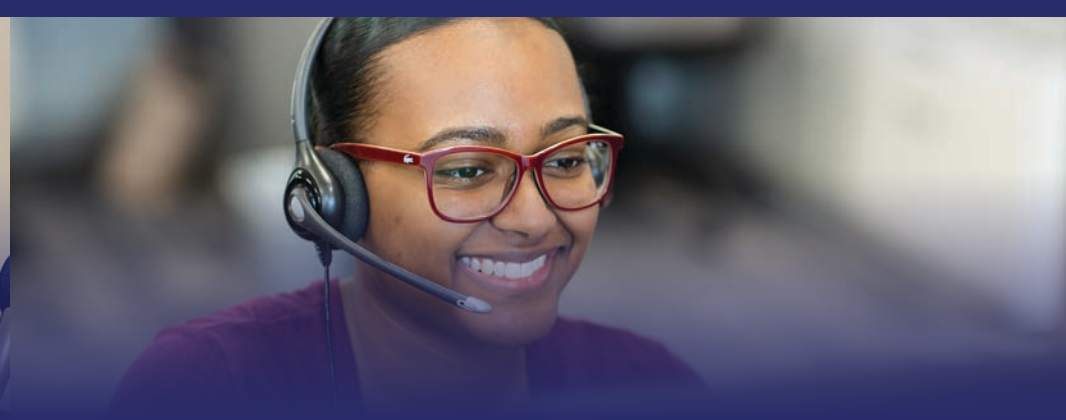
\$480K

saved in tax preparation fees

20+

years serving the community in Southern Maine

CA\$H
GREATER
PORTLAND



READING BUDDIES

Sparkling a Love of Reading and Closing Literacy Gaps

Early literacy is critical to long-term academic success. Reading Buddies helps elementary school students build reading skills, confidence, and a love of learning.

The program pairs trained volunteers with students across Southern Maine for weekly one-on-one and small-group reading sessions. Through consistent encouragement and individualized support, volunteers help strengthen literacy skills while building meaningful relationships.

Reading Buddies also creates opportunities for community members to make a difference in local schools. By bringing generations together through reading, the program helps children grow as learners while providing meaningful social connection opportunities for older Mainers in the community.

"I HAVE SEEN GROWTH IN THEIR SKILLS, THEIR CONFIDENCE, AND THEIR ENTHUSIASM. MY JOB IS TO HELP MAKE READING FUN!"
READING BUDDIES VOLUNTEER

211 MAINE

Connecting People to the Help They Need When It Matters Most

When people face challenges, finding the right help can be overwhelming. 211 Maine connects individuals and families across the state to critical health and human services when they need them most.

Available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, 211 Maine provides free, confidential assistance by phone, text, and online. Trained specialists connect people to resources such as food assistance, housing and shelter, utility support, and mental health services.

With multilingual support and a continually updated resource database, 211 Maine helps people quickly find the services they need while helping identify unmet needs across Maine communities.



211 MAINE IN 2025 BY THE NUMBERS

33,208
referrals for utilities assistance

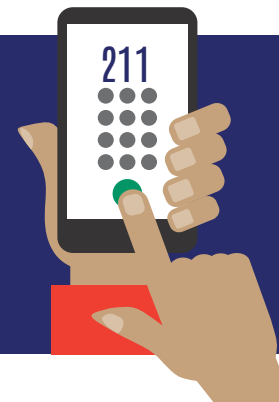
21,718
referrals for housing assistance

13,934
referrals for mental health and substance use disorder assistance

9,678
referrals for healthcare assistance

7,277
referrals for individual, family, and community support assistance

DIAL 211
(OR 866-811-5695)
TEXT YOUR
ZIP CODE TO 898-211
VISIT 211MAINE.ORG



Across 14 schools,

100%

of students participating in Reading Buddies saw literacy growth based on standardized assessments in 2025.





READ AWAY

Strengthening Family Bonds Through Reading and Healing Connections Across Distance

One in 13 Maine children has a parent who is currently or has been incarcerated during their lifetime—the highest rate in New England. Separation can strain family relationships during a critical stage of a child’s development. Read Away helps children stay connected with incarcerated parents through the shared experience of reading.

In partnership with the Maine Correctional Center, the Southern Maine Women’s Reentry Center, and Through These Doors, mothers and grandmothers record themselves reading children’s books aloud. Each recording is paired with the book, toys, and educational materials and then mailed to the child as a special care package.

By creating meaningful connections between children and caregivers, Read Away helps strengthen family relationships, support early literacy, and reduce the challenges of separation. The program also supports parent well-being and family stability by reinforcing connections that can ease the transition home.

“THIS PROGRAM HAS KEPT ME MORE CONNECTED WITH MY KIDS. WHEN WE TALK ON THE PHONE, WE TALK ABOUT THE BOOKS. IT FEELS GOOD TO HAVE SOMETHING TO CONNECT ON WITH MY KIDS WHILE I’M HERE.”

READ AWAY PARTICIPANT

“I’M VERY GRATEFUL FOR THE PROGRAM. TO BE ABLE TO REACH OUT TO MY FAMILY AND MY GRANDCHILDREN HAS BEEN AN AMAZING EXPERIENCE, AND I KNOW THEY LOVE IT AS WELL. THIS PROGRAM HAS CHANGED PEOPLE’S LIVES.”

READ AWAY PARTICIPANT

Last year,
163
videos were
recorded of 37
mothers and
grandmothers
reading for 50
young family
members.

100%
of participants
who responded to
a survey indicated
that Read Away
has increased
their feelings of
connectedness
with their family.

READ AWAY

ALICE INNOVATION LAB

Innovating Solutions for ALICE Households and Expanding Economic Opportunity

ALICE households are the backbone of Southern Maine’s workforce, yet many struggle to achieve financial stability despite working hard. A new pilot program, the ALICE Innovation Lab brings together employers, service providers, public partners, and people with lived experience to develop and test solutions that improve economic opportunity.

Building on years of research and community input, the Lab identifies barriers facing ALICE households, pilots promising ideas, and expands approaches that show results. One example is the Employer Toolkit, developed by an Employer Advisory Group of local business leaders. The toolkit offers practical strategies that help employers better recruit, retain, and support ALICE workers while strengthening their organizations and communities.

United Way convenes partners, fosters collaboration, and helps turn ideas into action, creating innovative, real-world solutions that support ALICE households and expand opportunity across Southern Maine.

In March 2025, United Way hosted the *Support Beyond the Paycheck: Strengthening Your ALICE Workforce* summit, where 40 employers shared strategies to improve employee retention, satisfaction, and workplace stability.

Read our ALICE Workplace Toolkit at uwsme.org/alicetoolkit.





A single transportation setback can quickly become a housing, employment, or financial crisis.

TRANSPORTATION IS OPPORTUNITY

Reliable transportation is the key to:

GETTING TO WORK AND
MAINTAINING INCOME

ACCESSING HEALTH CARE AND
NECESSARY TREATMENT

REACHING CHILD CARE AND
SCHOOL FOR YOUR CHILDREN

ATTENDING WORKFORCE
TRAINING AND EDUCATION
PROGRAMS

ACCESSING FOOD AND
ESSENTIAL SERVICES

FINDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING
WITH A REASONABLE COMMUTE

KEEP ME MOVING

Removing Transportation Barriers and Keeping Families Moving Forward

Reliable transportation is essential for getting to work, accessing health care, supporting children, and meeting daily needs. Keep ME Moving helps ALICE households overcome unexpected transportation setbacks before they become larger financial challenges.

The program provides emergency assistance for eligible households facing urgent needs, including vehicle repairs, public transportation costs, and driver's education expenses. By responding quickly, Keep ME Moving helps people stay connected to work, school, child care, medical appointments, and other essential services.

Working with cross-sector community partners across Maine, the program uses a streamlined process to ensure help reaches people when they need it most. By providing timely support when unexpected transportation challenges arise, Keep ME Moving helps prevent short-term setbacks from disrupting work, school, health care access, and other critical aspects of daily life.

United Way of Southern Maine's programs are just one way we address community challenges. We also invest in a strong network of nonprofit partners and community collaborations working every day to improve lives across Southern Maine.

Through our Community Investment Process, we support 64 programs and collaborations across 43 partner organizations advancing youth opportunity, healthy communities, financial security, and community resilience.

Together, our investments and United Way-led programs help meet immediate needs, address long-term challenges, and create opportunities for thousands of people across Southern Maine.

UNITED IS THE WAY TO A THRIVING SOUTHERN MAINE



UNITED WAY
Southern Maine

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