

UNITED WAY

TALKING POINTS



Who is United Way?

United Way of Santa Barbara is a local nonprofit organization that has provided children, adults, and families with community services and resources since 1923. Today, United Way creates partnerships and programs that help our community. United Way works year-round, utilizing a network of strategic partnerships with over 200 public and private partner organizations, to help thousands of Santa Barbara County residents annually.

Key messages

- **United Way is local. 100% of your gift to United Way stays in our county.**
- United Way is focused on improving education, crisis response and recovery, and financial stability.
- United Way is 95 years old and has decades of expertise in responding to challenges.
- United Way leverages volunteers, community organizations, corporate leaders, and more to expand the impact in our community.
- United Way supports our community in times of disaster and crisis, such as the Thomas Fire and resulting mudslides and the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Educational challenges in our local community

- 54% of students on Santa Barbara County did not meet the standard in English Language Arts (CAASPP 2021).
- 68% of economically disadvantaged students in Santa Barbara County did not meet the standards in English Language Arts (CAASPP 2021).
- 78% of economically disadvantaged 3rd grade students in Santa Barbara County did not meet standards in English Language Arts (CAASPP 2021).

Local United Way programs that help our community

When you give to United Way, you are supporting a network of programs and partnerships that serve local children, adults, and families. *Some* of these programs include:

- **Fun in the Sun** – 350 youth improve their academic and behavioral/social skills, instead of falling behind, through this summer learning program. The program also serves 200+ parents. 100% of youth participants improved their literacy skills last year.
- **Early Learning Success Institutes**– early education programming helps at risk 4–6-year-olds master basic academic skills for success in school. On average, students gain between 45% - 50% in their social emotional and academic skills (data currently being assessed).
- **United Learning Center**– free tutoring center for local k-6 students. On average, program participants demonstrated an improvement of 2.3 reading grade levels—a true indicator of the power of in-person learning. Students improved in the areas of phonological awareness, word decoding, and sight word mastery.
- **United for Financial Empowerment** – 2,800+ low/moderate-income families and individuals receive free tax preparation assistance and access to savings accounts. In 2021, this program helped bring \$1.7 million in tax refunds back to these local residents.
- **Crisis Response and Recovery** – identifies gaps, challenges, and unmet needs across the county, establish committed networks of leaders and organizations and invest in,

create, and lead new collaborative strategies and programs that directly support families, organizations, and school districts in need.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why should I give to United Way?

Through direct services, programs, funding, volunteer development, and leveraging local partnerships, United Way of Santa Barbara County creates lasting, meaningful solutions to community problems. Our approach engages the entire community and addresses multi-faceted issues with best-in-class programs and services.

Will my gift stay in my community?

Yes! 100% of donations given directly to United Way of Santa Barbara County support local programs and services. Our programs cover Santa Barbara County extending from Carpinteria up to Santa Ynez Valley. Within this region we prioritize areas where we can do the most effective work that aligns with our mission.

Does United Way help with crisis response and disaster relief?

In addition to the programs United Way offers to county residents year-round, we also help our community in times of disaster and crisis.

- Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic United Way is leading a countywide collaborative with members of the Foundation Roundtable to provide assistance to individuals and families as well as organizations actively engaged in assistance efforts for members of the community affected by the pandemic.
- 100% of all donations to this fund are given to affected individuals and families, as well as the organizations serving them.
- United Way has raised or managed over \$44 million to support households in need since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

How United Way is held accountable?

Our most valuable asset is the trust and confidence people have in our ability to help the Santa Barbara County community. We are audited each year by an independent accounting firm to ensure we are in compliance with generally accepted accounting procedures, regulations, and laws. All program and funding decisions are made with approval by our Board of Directors. We are a member of the Better Business Bureau and receive high marks from Charity Navigator. To ensure transparency, we publish our annual impact report, audited financial statements, and IRS 990 on our website.

What are United Way's operating costs?

According to the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance, a nonprofit's overhead should not exceed 35%. Our fundraising overhead is 16%. All other operating costs go to program operation and support. We keep our expenses low through a commitment to low operating costs, organizational efficiency, volunteer participation, and in-kind services. In addition to supporting our best-in-class programs, our overhead expenses enable us to distribute donor-designated contributions to other outside nonprofit organizations. Please note that America's three leading sources of information about charities – Better Business Bureau, GuideStar, and Charity Navigator – believe that overhead is a “poor measure of a charity's performance.” When evaluating nonprofits, it is good to consider transparency, governance, leadership, and results. For more information, please visit www.overheadmyth.com.

Can I designate my gift?

Yes. In an effort to maximize our community impact and foster collaboration and partnership, United Way allows donors to specify a particular focus area, program, or outside nonprofit organization as the designated target of their donation. While we encourage donors to give an undesignated gift that can be used where the need is greatest across our county, we do honor all designation requests.

Why is United Way taking a % of my gift if I designate it elsewhere?

No administration fee applies to undesignated donations to United Way of Santa Barbara County. United Way is committed to minimizing fees charged to process donations. However, we do charge a fee of 13.3% to process donations made to outside organizations. This fee covers all United Way costs associated with fundraising and processing the contribution. This allows those organizations to focus on their core mission and reduce their fundraising and processing expenses. We process donations to many outside organizations. Costs include staffing to collect required documentation from each organization, enter pledges, process payments, and remit payments.

What services do you offer in Northern Santa Barbara County?

While our territory only extends to Santa Ynez Valley, we work very closely with our partner, United Way of Northern Santa Barbara County, to ensure residents in the northern parts of our county have access to United Way services and resources. To learn more about United Way of Northern Santa Barbara County's impact, please visit www.liveunitedsbc.org/.