

United Way

Advancing the Common Good

United Way is working to advance the common good by focusing on education, income and health. These are the building blocks for a good life—a quality education that leads to a stable job, enough income to support a family through retirement, and good health.

For millions of hard-working families, the basic ingredients for a good life are increasingly beyond reach. Almost one in four working parents don't earn enough to provide for their families. An alarming 25 percent of teenagers will not graduate on time, imperiling their chances to make a successful transition to adulthood. Only one in three adults can be considered healthy, based on risk factor data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Our nation can't accept these conditions. We need to challenge our systems—to create opportunities for a better life for everyone. To move more aggressively in this direction, United Way drew on research and sought input from a broad range of partners to gauge where progress has—and has not—been made. This information is the foundation for these Goals for the Common Good.

By 2018, we as a nation must:

- Cut by half the number of young people who drop out of high school
- Cut by half the number of working lower-income families that lack financial stability
- Increase by a third the number of youths and adults who are healthy and avoid risky behaviors

This work requires real collaboration—individuals, parents, neighbors, nonprofits, big businesses, small businesses, elected officials, academia, the faith community, the labor movement and the media. Working together, we can accomplish things that no organization, no individual and no government can accomplish on its own.

EDUCATION—Helping children and youth achieve their potential through education by focusing on

- School readiness
- Academic achievement
- Productive and engaged young adults

Destination: Graduation

In Dallas County, Texas, **more than 40 percent of freshmen will not graduate high school on time—or at all.**

Through Destination: Graduation, United Way of Metropolitan Dallas aims to help youth on the path toward a productive future by preparing them for college. The program combines an emphasis on completing high school with encouraging students to pursue further education. It prepares students for academic success by **teaching them studying and test-taking strategies**—as well as offering **mentoring and counseling**. Another component **helps parents interact with teachers and administrators**, learn about college entrance requirements and **communicate with their teens about school issues**.

The program began in one high school in 2005. During its first year, participating students **increased their Preliminary SAT scores by an average of 120 points**, which brought many over the critical 1000 scoring mark. **They**

advanced to the next grade level at a rate that was 19 percent higher than their peers. Parents swelled the membership of the PTA and initiated a monthly breakfast with the principal. By 2007, Destination: Graduation had expanded to five high schools.

INCOME—Promoting Financial Stability and Independence by focusing on

- Achieving greater financial stability
- Increasing income
- Building savings
- Gaining and sustaining financial assets for long-term stability

Saving for the Future

Across King County, Washington, **more than one in five people don't make a living wage.**

United Way of King County is connecting qualified individuals with an IDA program, a matched savings plan where a **qualified person can build savings for the down payment on a home, starting a business or continuing education.** Investors are required to attend **classes to increase financial skills**, giving them tools for success in the future. Soon-to-be **homeowners learn how to avoid predatory lenders** and to maintain their homes, future business owners devise a business plan and those seeking schooling plot a career path.

As of December 2007, **850 King County residents have opened accounts, 128 have purchased homes, 43 are paying for a college education and 85 have started small businesses.** With a steady income, better educational and health opportunities are available, creating a more stable living situation.

HEALTH—Improving people's health by focusing on

- Maternal health and infant wellbeing
- Basic health care coverage and prevention
- Healthy youth and adults

Bright Smiles

Tooth decay is the most common chronic childhood disease, often leading to the destruction of teeth, speech problems, difficulty learning, psychological problems, and **51 million hours of missed school each year.** Studies show that **80 percent of tooth decay is found in just 25 percent of children, mostly from low-income families.**

To address this, Greater Twin Cities United Way partnered with the community to begin Bright Smiles, providing oral health education, support and dental care targeted towards new immigrant, refugee, minority and low-income households with children five and under. Through United Way and a collaboration of community partners, **Bright Smiles reaches out to children and families with education, screening, and low or no cost dental care.**

In its pilot year, Bright Smiles **educated nearly 4,000 parents/caregivers** and their children on preventive dental hygiene practices; **provided 266 uninsured children with fluoride varnishes** and **180 uninsured children with dental care visits.** It has since expanded to several new communities and expects even better results in the future.

Read more about United Way's Bold Goals for America at www.liveunited.org/goals.