How Newly Formed Heart of Indiana United Way Will Deepen its Impact
Jenni Marsh, President & CEO of Heart of Indiana United Way

Heart of Indiana United Way was recently formed by combining United Way of Delaware, Henry and Randolph Counties with United Way of Madison County (also serving Fayette County) to transform and improve more lives in Indiana. Jenni Marsh, President & CEO of Heart of Indiana United Way, provides context around the new organization and its intended impact in the five counties it serves.

Q: What is United Way? How does Heart of Indiana United Way fit into the larger organization?

A: United Way is a global nonprofit network fighting for the education, health and financial stability of every person in every community. Heart of Indiana United Way is a regional United Way working across five counties to bring people, organizations, and communities together to provide resources and solutions locally to our most pressing issues.

Q: How did Heart of Indiana United Way come to be?

A: About four years ago, several Indiana United Ways came together to deepen our impact. We worked with board members to make sure the idea of merging was a good one for each local United Way. Throughout the process, United Way of Delaware, Henry and Randolph Counties and United Way of Madison County (also serving Fayette County) discovered great synergy between staff and board members. We publicly launched as Heart of Indiana United Way in July.

Q: What does your organization focus on in the communities you serve?

A: Nearly half of the families in our region are struggling, unable to make ends meet despite working. Our work focuses on engaging the community in volunteering, raising money, and strategically investing resources into programs and initiatives that put children, adults and families on the path to lifelong success and stability. There is a focus on health, as we work to strengthen connections with health care providers and ensure that everyone in our community has access to health care.

Q: Why is your organization the 'heart' of Indiana?

A: While families struggling to meet their basic needs transcend the boundaries of county lines, so does the culture of neighbors helping neighbors. Individuals across our region have
generous hearts and find ways to give back to their communities. Hoosiers' heart for service and giving back is an inspiration and what Heart of Indiana aspires to be.

**Q: What does it mean to "Live United?"**

**A:** It means inclusivity. Everyone has a role to play in making our communities stronger; every person in our community must have a voice, be heard, and fought for. COVID showed us that disparity is abundant in our communities, and there is work to do. For every person to thrive, we must live better; we must live united.

**Q: Where does the money donated to your organization go? Are there types of organizations Heart of Indiana United Way focuses on funding?**

**A:** When you donate and give, you help create opportunities for thousands of lives across the region to realize a way out of poverty for themselves and their children. We work in partnership with local nonprofits to make grants which reflect local communities’ needs. We invest in a range of programming that puts children and families on a pathway out of poverty, including United Way’s own strategic initiatives, such as THRIVE and Grade Level Reading.

**Q: How important are individual and corporate donors to your mission?**

**A:** They are transforming lives. Single moms are pursuing their education to have better job opportunities because of our donors. More kids under the age of five have access to books in their home. Families are enrolling in health benefits and accessing health services. Volunteers are preparing taxes for low-income households and weatherizing homes for those struggling to pay their utility bills. Thanks to our donors, we can make these and many other life-transforming opportunities available.

**Q: How does Heart of Indiana United Way tackle anti-racism?**

**A:** When your tagline is “LIVE UNITED,” you must embrace every person in every community. That’s why diversity, equity and inclusion are at the center of our work. We cannot help people achieve what they hope for in their local communities if there is systemic racism or classism. We work to include people from all walks of life when we listen to community members and develop our plans for how we can most impactfully transform lives locally. To end inequity and injustice, we believe you must have tough conversations. We do not shy away from them—often we convene them.

**Q: What is Heart of Indiana United Way’s Day of Action?**

**A:** On Sept. 2 in Delaware County, hundreds of volunteers come together for a single day of service to help people and nonprofits. They will pack snacks for school children, prepare literacy kits for young readers and their families, and serve at local nonprofits to help them catch up on on-site projects. Henry County is in the process of scheduling and planning their annual Day of Caring which will take place this fall. In early November, Madison County’s annual volunteer service day, “Operation Weatherization,” will take place, bringing volunteers together to help people with their homes in anticipation of winter.

To learn more about the newly formed Heart of Indiana United Way and its initiatives, visit [www.heartofindianaunitedway.org](http://www.heartofindianaunitedway.org).