



**United Way of South Texas
Celebrates 40 Years of Service**





United Way of South Texas
Serving Hidalgo & Starr Counties

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Back-to-School Shopping Spree



VITA Program



Day of Caring

United Way of South Texas thanks
The Monitor for the publication of this ad.

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Thank You Vantage Bank!
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MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIRMAN



Tyler Stone
Board Chairman

40 years of impact! I find it amazing to think that the United Way of South Texas has been improving the lives of those in need in our community for 40 years now. Reflecting on the changes in our area during that time, we can recall many positive developments but also many challenging times. There were freezes, hurricanes, peso devaluations, major recessions and even a global pandemic. In spite of all of those challenges, our communities have grown larger and stronger, because those people impacted the worst had a community support structure, including the United Way, to help lift them up when they needed it most.

The United Way of South Texas has done immeasurable good for Hidalgo and Starr Counties over the last 40 years and I am truly honored to be even a small part of that success. Currently, the United Way and our partner agencies impact the lives of over 200,000 people every year in our 2-county area. We coordinate

tremendous resources to help our neighbors pursue an education, regain financial stability or improve their health. Over the years, our staff have inspired me with the way they focus their energy, connections and creativity to come up with ways to address the problems of our friends and neighbors.

As our diverse communities continue to grow, the needs of the less fortunate and the opportunities to positively impact people's lives will grow as well. There is nothing more gratifying than knowing you've helped someone in real need and feeling their relief. I'm excited to see the creative solutions that United Way and our community come up with to improve lives over the next 40 years!

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Lilly Lopez-Killelea
United Way
President & CPO

Happy 40th Anniversary to every United Way of South Texas supporter and volunteer!!! United Way volunteer leaders are admirable and eager to help solve community challenges. They share the best of their personal talents every day. This is why we do more, why we always consider new opportunities, and why we work tenaciously to create lasting solutions.

For 40 years, you have given the "best of you" to ensure that the most vulnerable children, adults and seniors in Hidalgo and Starr Counties have access to quality health and human services. In the last decade, your generous support of United Way has allowed us to impact almost 30% of our residents on an annual basis. I hope that you feel as proud as I do!

As I reflect on my tenure with United Way, I am reminded of the thousands of caring local organizations that have and continue to support our critical work. Those that have been part of our

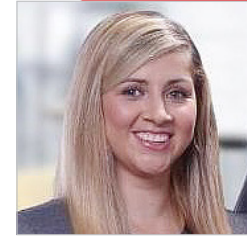
family since the beginning include municipalities and counties, retailers, school districts, non-profits, hospitals, chambers of commerce, federal and state employees, oil and gas and manufacturing companies, small businesses, foundations, private individuals and others. Multiple maquiladoras, auto dealerships, private law and medical offices have also proudly supported the United Way of South Texas.

There is no doubt in my mind that our community will work collectively to rebuild and recover from the challenges of the pandemic. We have so much to be proud of and are grateful for the work done by our passionate non-profit partners and volunteers. My commitment to you is to always look forward, be transparent and unafraid to explore opportunities. I Live United ... join the movement today.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Edna Garcia
Security Service FCU
Strategic Plng. Co-Chair



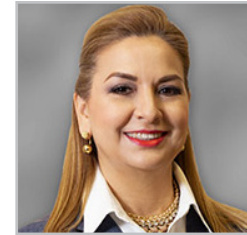
Blanca Villalobos
IBC Bank
Finance Co-Chair



Larry Gonzalez
PlainsCapital Bank
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Gerardo Paz
South Texas FCU
Campaign Co-Chair



Elvira Alonzo
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Lisa Garza
RGV Sector USBP
Fund Distr. Co-Chair



Lisa Killion
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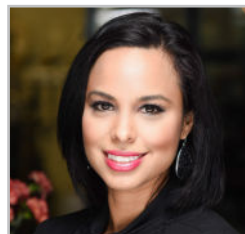
Dr. D'uAndre Drain
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Robert Rosell
BBVA
Bank



Michelle Quiroz
Reserva Coffee
Roasters



Dr. J.A. Gonzalez
McAllen I.S.D.

40 Years of IMPACT





Lee Jones
AEP Texas

With close to 35 years of service to United Way, Lee Jones has demonstrated a rare commitment to his community. Jones has served as a past board chair, a campaign co-chair, a finance chair, and a strategic board chair of United Way of South Texas. In 2017, Jones was honored as a “South Texas Hero” for his service, but in his mind, the real hero is the organization itself.

“The reason I really like United Way is that it’s a local organization, working with a local community that determines its own needs,” said Jones. “I enjoy working with local business partners to raise the funds to address those needs. It’s really a grass-roots organization working to solve issues within our local community.”

Most of the money from the United Way runs through diverse partner agencies, such as The Salvation Army, The American Red Cross, and Palmer Drug Abuse Program, just to name a few. With donor dollars filtering through so many aspects of the community, Jones says a key challenge for United Way is ensuring those dollars are well spent.

“I have always been impressed that the United Way board and staff take financial integrity very seriously,” Jones noted. “The board conducts rigorous audits and reviews, because the last thing we want is to have the money used inappropriately. Without financial integrity, there is no trust.” Jones says AEP Texas has been a long-time United Way supporter because it is “connected” to its communities both literally and figuratively.

“We don’t just run the power lines in the communities we serve, we also live here,” said Jones. “It’s very important for us that we have healthy and safe communities, because it makes it a better place for everybody. Our CEO, Nick Akins, characterized AEP’s commitment to United Way as ‘one company, one community united.’ The COVID pandemic has brought the importance of unity into sharper focus. The times are ever-changing and we have to adapt, and I think United Way has been very adaptable and will continue to be so.”

Mission

To improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of our community to advance the common good.

Vision

Allow all individuals and families to achieve their human potential through Education, Financial Stability, and Healthy lives.

The Evolution of United Way

United Way of South Texas was established in 1981. At a national level, United Way was established in 1887 in Denver, Co. A woman, a priest, two ministers and rabbi got together to help their community and created a movement known today as United Way.

TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN



United Way began as a funding resource for non-profit service providers. The services consisted of raising funds and distributing them to local agencies that make an impact through one contribution.

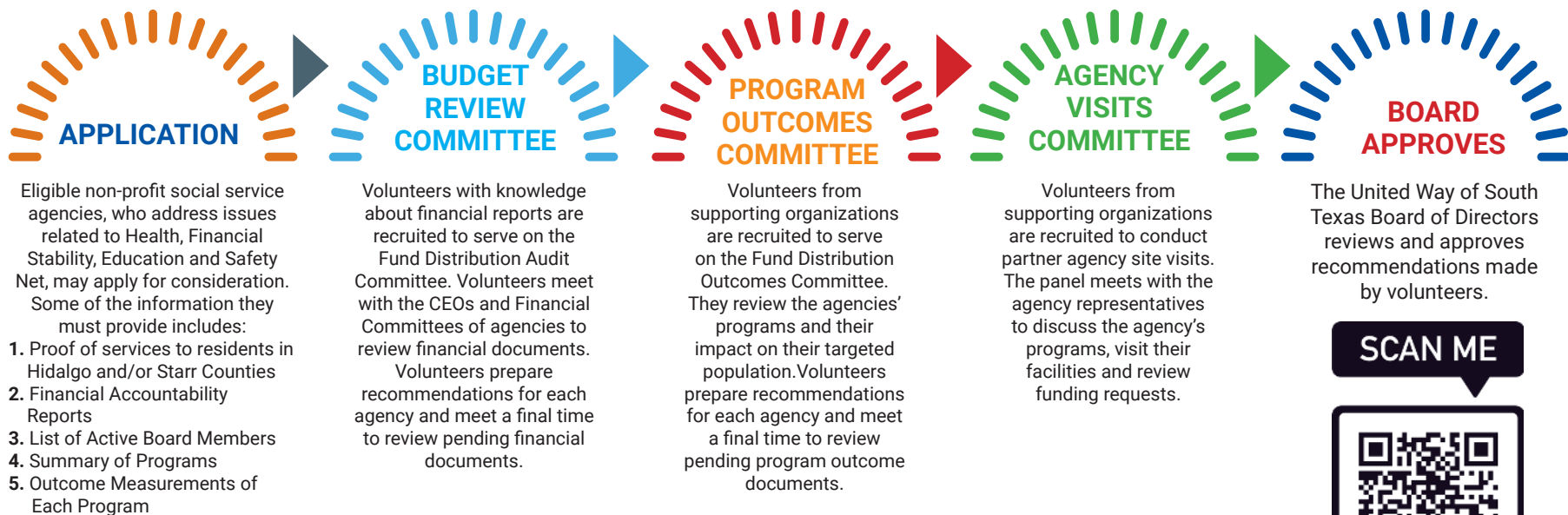
Today, United Way raises funds for specific focus areas including Education, Health, Financial Stability and Safety Net services. Our organization distributes funds to local agencies and other entities that deliver direct client services. We identify gaps in services, problem solve and collaborate with critical partners to create long term solutions. United Way accomplishes this by connecting our community with volunteer opportunities throughout the entire process.

United Way has always been the most efficient vehicle to give back to our community by supporting and giving hope to our youth, the elderly and those who are going through a rough time.

~ Adrian Villarreal
IBC Bank

Why United Way?

The United Way Fund Distribution Process is a joint effort of the Board, Staff, Volunteers and Agencies, who work to solve issues related to Health, Financial Stability, Education and Safety Net. The Fund Distribution Process gives community representatives the opportunity to learn about the agencies that they support through their United Way dollars. They make recommendations on corrective action plans and funding levels. The process uniquely makes United Way of South Texas and our Partners Extraordinarily Accountable.



SCAN ME



DONATE TODAY!



Joe Vera III
City of McAllen

United Way first impacted Joe Vera's life more than 50 years ago when he was a young Boy Scout growing up in McAllen.

"United Way used to provide funding for us," Vera recalled. "Of course when I was a kid I really didn't appreciate all the things United Way did, but I have since learned that we all have a duty to God, family, our country, and the community. United Way reaches so many of the needs in the community. I think there's no greater gift or gratification that we can get than that of giving to United Way."

As McAllen Assistant City Manager, Vera sees the impact that United Way has across the city, including the Palmer Drug Abuse Program for people fighting addiction, The VITA program which helps people with income tax preparation, and the 2-1-1 program which connects people with the right service for their need. Vera has also witnessed the generosity of McAllen city employees when it comes time to donate to United Way.

"We're proud that the City of McAllen is always in the top tier of givers and the credit goes to all levels of our employees," said Vera. "Fundraising efforts by employers are one true way that all of us can be philanthropists. We can all give, whether you're a custodian, or a cafeteria worker, or whatever. Even just one dollar per pay period can have a big impact when combined with the donations of others."

Vera says he was honored and surprised to have been selected as a "South Texas Hero" for his work with United Way, but says serving with United Way is its own reward.

"Service to United Way is something that has been part of me for many years because I value what United Way does," Vera said.

"Giving back to United Way has always been something special, which is why I enjoy volunteering my time."

Vera believes United Way will continue to play a key role in the community as it moves forward into the next 40 years of its mission. He says anyone who gives to United Way can rest assured that their time and your money are not wasted and will be in the trusted hands of a great staff.

"I think everyone who gives to United Way can't help but have a special feeling in their heart knowing they are giving back to their own community," Vera said. "United Way has been blessed with great administrators. Thelma Garza and Lilly Lopez, and their staff give their all to the organization. Our real strength is the United Way family, and these ladies just exemplify what United Way is all about, which is giving to the community."

Education Initiative



🗨️🗨️ As a longtime advocate and volunteer, I sincerely believe that United Way has made a great impact on meeting needs and changing lives in our area. 🗨️🗨️

~ Dr. Marla Guerra
South Texas I.S.D., Retiree

Education Council

The United Way of South Texas Education Initiative was established in 2007, to support drop-out recovery efforts. Dr. Marla Guerra, retired Superintendent at South Texas I.S.D., served as Co-Chair of the endeavor and worked with staff and representatives from eight local school districts to identify opportunities for United Way to provide funding and volunteer support. Many districts have participated over the years and have offered recommendations that to date, allow counselors the ability to meet basic needs of students. The following are some programs that United Way has supported through the Education Council.

- ✔️ Netbook donations to districts to allow students to complete homework, applications, etc. at home, although they may not have internet access
- ✔️ Volunteer recruitment to assist districts in making home visits to students who are considering returning to school to earn their diploma.
- ✔️ Funding of food pantries at five districts in outlying communities that allow counselors to immediately respond to food insecurity concerns
- ✔️ Utility/Rent/Clothing/Gas Card assistance
- ✔️ Currently, the following school districts represent the Education Council: Edcouch-Elsa I.S.D., La Joya I.S.D., McAllen I.S.D., Mercedes I.S.D., Monte Alto I.S.D., Rio Grande City Grulla I.S.D., Roma I.S.D., and Weslaco I.S.D



Dr. J.A. Gonzalez
McAllen I.S.D.

Success in life begins with a quality education, and yet, thousands of children across South Texas lack the basic support they need to strengthen their literacy, stay on track in school, and find a career. It's United Way's efforts to help these children that have made McAllen ISD Superintendent Dr. J.A. Gonzalez a passionate supporter of the cause.

"United Way is an organization that aims at ensuring individuals and their families achieve their full human potential," Dr. Gonzalez said. "United Way does that by providing support around education, financial stability, and living a healthy lifestyle, and I think that has had a profound impact on our community."

Dr. Gonzalez is in his first year as a United Way of South Texas board member, but he has been an avid contributor to the organization throughout his 25-year career in education. United Way, he says, "breaks down barriers," helping children and their families get back on their feet, giving them the one thing they need most – hope.

"From an education standpoint, United Way does a tremendous job with its homework assistance programs," Dr. Gonzalez explained. "They do a phenomenal job in the area of school dropout recovery programs, retention programs, and also GED programs. Those are the ones that come to mind from an educational standpoint. From a health standpoint, I think things like substance abuse counseling for community members and support for children who are victims of child abuse are very important. United Way also provides prenatal education, and that's also very important for our community."

Now in his sixth year as head of McAllen schools, Dr. Gonzalez says one of the things he is most proud of is the way the district's faculty and staff have rallied around the United Way cause.

"McAllen ISD has earned the Golden Apple Award from United Way of South Texas three years in a row," Dr. Gonzalez noted. "The award is presented annually to the school district that raises the most money, and we're committed to the cause because we know that United Way is always giving back. I'm very proud of our faculty and staff for that."

Dr. Gonzalez encourages everyone to support United Way of South Texas as it celebrates its 40th anniversary, saying it's a way to pay forward the help and support that everyone receives at some point in their life.

"I know people have heard this before, but 'to give is to receive,'" said Dr. Gonzalez. "So the more that you help people the more that comes back to you. We should all help others as often as we can, and that's what United Way does.

If we can do that collectively as a community then we'll all be better for it."



Back-to-School “In Style” Shopping Spree

Since 1996, United Way’s Back-to-School “In Style” Shopping Spree has provided school attire, personal hygiene items and school supplies to 150 Junior High students. Counselors select children from families with the most financial challenges. Over 200 volunteers participate as Shopping Buddies on an annual basis. The annual event is co-sponsored by Target, who donates the backpacks and school supplies. Each child receives \$150 to purchase school clothing and hygiene products. School Districts that support United Way in Hidalgo and Starr Counties participate on a rotating basis. United Way has invested \$298,500 to support this program.

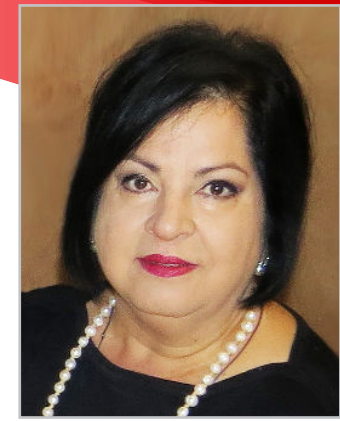


Youth Leadership Program

United Way’s Youth Leadership Program empowers Juniors and Freshmen with leadership skills, soft skills, volunteer opportunities and financial literacy training. School counselors identify Freshmen to participate as mentees and Juniors volunteer as mentors. In the past three years, 276 students have benefited from the program at Weslaco I.S.D. and Mercedes I.S.D. McAllen I.S.D. will launch their program this fall. Students attend thirteen sessions that focus on leadership, communication, mental health awareness, financial literacy, community service and career opportunities. United Way has invested \$88,000 in this Initiative.

Day of Caring

United Way launched Day of Caring - Project “FreshStart” in 2011 to provide school supplies for high school Freshmen. Since the start of this project, UWST has invested, \$262,661 for 29,500 Freshmen across 16 school districts in Hidalgo & Starr Counties. Every year, over 225 volunteers gather to assemble bags of school supplies.



Cynthia Fuentes
Starr County

Cynthia Fuentes has been involved with United Way of South Texas for so long that she has lost count of exactly how long, but she estimates she has been a volunteer and donor for roughly 20 years. Fuentes says one of the main reasons she is passionate about United Way is that it touches many lives in many different ways.

“They provide food for the food pantry,” Fuentes began as she struggled to remember all of United Way-funded programs. “They also do the emergency food program. They provide clothing, school supplies, and free income tax preparation services. They provide funding for victims of domestic violence, and blankets in the winter for our elderly in nursing homes. They do so much for our community.”

One of Fuentes’ favorite programs is a shopping spree program in which 30 of the county’s poorest children (15 from Roma and 15 from Rio Grande City) are allotted \$150 each to buy new clothing and school supplies at the beginning of the school year. In alternating years when the program is funded, she serves as a “shopping buddy” to help the children pick out their items. That includes everything from shoes, to pants, to shirts, and even toiletries.

“It just breaks your heart,” Fuentes explained. “A lot of times they don’t even know their size because they have been getting hand me downs their whole life. They have never been able to go out and buy clothing for themselves. That has left a lasting impression to me that in this day and age we still have these children living around us in our community. United Way partners with Target and Target opens their store before it is open to the public. It’s just a joy to see these kids buy just about everything they need to start school.”

Fuentes says no one United Way program is more important than another. She also loves the fact that money raised in the community stays in the community. She believes it’s important for everyone to give what they can, because it touches the lives of so many people in so many different ways.

Key Events in Our 40 Year History



Thelma Garza
Retired United Way President

Thelma Garza served as United Way of South Texas President for 26 years over a 30-year span before her retirement in 2019. Prior to that tenure, she served with United Way of Coastal Bend (Corpus Christi) for nine years. "Joining United Way of South Texas was one of the best decisions I ever made," said Garza. "I loved working for the people in our two-county area, and working with the volunteers, and the pillars of the community who believe in the work that the organization does." Garza reflected on some of the major accomplishments of her tenure, including the doubling of campaign funds over her first ten years in office. The agency's number two accomplishment, she said, was the board of directors' ability to align community leaders with organizational goals. Garza also noted United Way of South Texas' ability to reach out to people in the community for input. "Having our finger on the pulse of the entire community is a major difference between this organization and others," said Garza. "Others are focused on whatever their particular mission is. The mission of United Way is a little broader than that, in that you're looking at the entire community from different perspectives with the help of its partner agencies and its board of directors so that it's not focused on just one particular program or service." Another accomplishment under Garza's tenure was the establishment of 2-1-1, or the Community Council of the Rio Grande Valley. The information and referral program that helps connect callers with community service programs and their eligibility requirements. The service eventually spun off to be its own 501, C-3 non-profit organization. Looking forward to the next 40 years, Garza said she hopes United Way of South Texas continues recruiting and training community leaders in order to canvass more of the community as far as meeting people's needs. "To me, that's the most important function of the organization," Garza noted. "It's to continue recruiting the right people to look at what is most important to the residents of our region. I'm very proud of the organization and all of the work that the staff and the board of directors have done and I hope that they continue to do well. Passion from all the people engaged in this organization is what makes it move forward and be more effective, and I think recruiting the right people and educating them on how we can make a difference in the community is essential. Also, we never give up!"



Pictured above: Nancy Rios and Jim Collins, Rioco Partners

For someone who has been involved in United Way for 30 years, it is a great way for anyone of us to donate to an organization that helps people in need. It is even more important now in these difficult times.

~ Mike Perez
City Manager, Weslaco, TX



Pictured above: Bill Stocker, owner of Palace Cleaners and founding member of the United Way.

The organization was founded and named United Way of McAllen by local community members, including Bill Stocker, owner of Palace Cleaners. Until 2008, United Way conducted business out of the Chase tower in McAllen, previously known as Texas Commerce Bank.

The Board officially leads the expansion of the organization's services into Starr County.

The agency's name changes to United Way of South Texas. Day of Caring Emergency Food & Shelter Program

Transportation Vouchers Program

Education Council

United Way's New Home

Youth Leadership Initiative

1979

1995

1997

2005

2010

2013

2017

1981

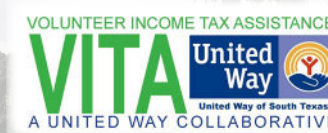
The agency's name changes to United Way of Hidalgo County.

1996

United Way established the Information and Referral Program in the RGV. With one simple phone call, by dialing 2-1-1, people in search of critical services such as food, shelter, child care, jobs, or mental health programs, can access information and referral assistance that is available to everyone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The Back-to-School "In Style" Shopping Spree was established in 1996.

In 1996, United Way launched the RGV Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) and the State Employee Charitable Campaign (SECC). These campaigns give employees the opportunity to designate donations to eligible charities (local, state, and international) through payroll deduction. United Way administered the CFC for 20 years. To date, United Way continues to administer the SECC.



United Way celebrates 40 years of Community Impact in Hidalgo and Starr Counties

SCAN ME



Pictured L to R: RGV CFC Board- Melody Vasquez, SSA; Veronica Ortega, SBA; Lisa Garza, DHS OBP; Ruby De La Garza, USDA OPPE; Gil Aldaz, Retired DHS CBP, Ruben Valdez, DHS CBP; Ed Loya, TSA.



Pictured L to R: RGV SECC Board- Hope Noble, TDCJ; Cassandra Leal, UTRGV; Carla Lopez, UTRGV; Lizette Moreno, STC; Carmen Amaya, DPS; Gus Salinas, DFPS; Aurora Morales, TXDoT.

The place where people helping people meets with people investing their money with a non-profit that insists on transparency and accountability is United Way of South Texas

~ Jeanette Ahlenius
Wayland Baptist University

HEALTH & SAFETY NET



Spirit of Christmas

A collaboration between United Way and The Monitor to help families in need during the holidays. The program began as the 12 Days of Christmas in 2020 and ran through 2013; it was then reestablished as the Spirit of Christmas in 2019. Over \$519,000 plus donations that range from mobile homes to clothing, has been distributed to local families from designated private community donations. Over 275 families have been impacted. Reporters from The Monitor visit with the families and document their stories, which may deal with illness, loss of home or family members, and other extenuating circumstances.



SingleCare RX Card

United Way and SingleCare collaborate to provide free prescription discount cards that require no enrollment or activation. Eligible clients, insured and uninsured, save an average of 42% on their medications. Families saved \$293,570 last year.



Baby Box Distribution

Between 2017 – 2020, 358 mothers received a “Baby Box”, along with training on the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). The self-contained sleep spaces have been shown to increase infant safety by reducing (SIDS). United Way worked with partner agencies to identify clients and distributed boxes with literature on safe sleeping practices.

Transportation Vouchers

United Way of South Texas distributes transportation vouchers at no cost to eligible clients through local non-profits. \$91,547 was invested from 2018-2020. United Way partners with the City of McAllen to provide transportation to clients who are eligible for the vouchers.



United Way's New Home 2013 Groundbreaking Ceremony



The Collins Foundation, Cook Foundation, City of McAllen, IBC Bank, AEP Foundation, City of Mission, Wells Fargo Foundation, City of Roma, Strake Foundation, Max & Alma Siporin Endowment, Atlas, Hall & Rodriguez, LLP and D. Wilson Construction Co. were the first to support United Way of South Texas' Capital Fund Drive in 2013. A Facilities' Committee embarked on plans for the new building in 2011, which included: Steve Ahlenius, McAllen Chamber of Commerce, Joe Vera, III, City of McAllen, Ruben Plata, Texas National Bank, Dr. Marla Guerra, Retired Superintendent, South Texas I.S.D., Ismael Moran, Jim Deuser, JC Penney Retiree, Chris Martinez, AT&T, Danny Aguilar, KRGV TV 5, Adrian Villarreal, I.B.C. Bank and Thelma M. Garza, retired President/C.P.O. of UWST. Their vision was to build a space to not only accommodate staff members and hundreds of volunteers, but to also allow other partner non-profits and company supporters access to a conference space. Three incubator offices were added and are available for start-up non-profit agencies, who may occupy office space temporarily.

●● Magic Valley Electric Cooperative employees gladly give to United Way of South Texas because they provide support to various non-profit organizations to lend a helping hand to those who need it. ●●

~ John Herrera

Magic Valley Electric Cooperative



Victor Canales
Starr County

Victor Canales remembers seeing the familiar United Way fundraising thermometer at a local bank when he was just a kid. However, it wasn't until he got involved with the organization about 12 to 15 years ago that he fully understood what United Way was all about. "The start of my love affair with United Way was at the 'Day of Caring' that we had way back when," Canales said. "We replaced, refinished, and painted some bleachers at our county park baseball field. United Way also put together 15 teams of volunteers who went out and fixed up several dilapidated homes belonging to elderly residents in our community. It was the first time I had seen anything of that magnitude, and I witnessed the selflessness on the part of the volunteers in our community."

As Starr County Attorney, Canales oversees the Starr County Victims of Domestic Violence Assistance Program. The program for abused children and spouses does get government funding, but Canales says it's not enough to meet the need.

"Were it not for the funding that United Way provides, this program would not exist," Canales explained. "United Way funding helps provide counseling. It provides education on how to break the cycle of violence. We also buy supplies for them, including sanitary napkins, toothbrushes, disposal diapers, undergarments, and used clothing. United Way is literally a lifeline for people in very desperate circumstances."

Canales describes United Way as an expression of the goodness of the people of Starr County, because it is all about local people helping local people.

"The level of support that we have for each other in Starr County is just incredible," Canales said. "I want to offer a wonderful round of congratulations to Lilly and her staff at United Way, and also to Thelma. I am so happy and so proud of the organization, especially coming out of this pandemic. They have been able to weather the storm, and it's a tremendous reflection of the leadership that they have. I'm excited for the future. United Way has been a tremendous supporter of Starr County and we want to give that love right back to them."

Financial Stability

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program


The VITA program is an IRS initiative administered by United Way of South Texas in Hidalgo and Starr Counties. The program is designed to help families, who earn \$60,000 or less, prepare their income tax returns at no cost. On average, over 3,700 families benefit every year and collectively save \$740,000 that is reinvested in our economy. United Way thanks the following for donating space to administer the program since 2011: City of McAllen, UTRGV, South Texas College, Roma I.S.D., City of Rio Grande City, La Joya I.S.D., City of Mission, Goodwill Industries, PSJA I.S.D., Weslaco I.S.D., Calvary Baptist Church, McAllen Housing Authority, McAllen I.S.D., Monte Alto I.S.D., Edcouch-Elsa I.S.D., Affordable Homes of South TX, and South Texas I.S.D.



Latina Hope

A collaboration with the McAllen Chamber of Commerce to support women entrepreneurs and their microbusinesses. Wells Fargo is the primary co-sponsor of this initiative, along with Calvary Baptist Church, who host the monthly sessions. Participants network on a monthly basis, which allows them to share best practices. They also learn about budgeting, marketing a successful enterprise and how to prepare a business plan. A United Way COVID grant also provided e-commerce training to clients, over a twelve-month period.



United Way of South Texas is the leading non-profit organization in accountability and innovation. If you desire to impact our local communities, United Way of South Texas is the first and the last place to start. 

~ Steve Ahlenius
McAllen Chamber of Commerce



Edna Garcia
Security Service FCU

Edna Garcia of Security Service Federal Credit Union has been a United Way of South Texas board member since 2014. In that time, she has been board chair twice, campaign co-chair twice, finance chair, and she currently serves as strategic planning chair. Her long-term dedication earned her the 2020 South Texas Hero Award.

"When you do something you enjoy you don't feel like you have to be rewarded," Garcia said of the distinction. "Just having the opportunity to serve others, and make an impact in the community is rewarding enough. United Way is so engaged with the community. I love the concept of pooling donations from different donors, and putting them all together to make the biggest impact. I think it's a wonderful concept."

Garcia says accountability is one big reason she chose to dedicate her time to United Way.

"I saw that United Way has this great reputation for the way it vets the agencies," Garcia said. "We review their financials to make sure that they are actually serving and impacting lives in the counties that they serve. So for me there's that trust that our dollars are being well-spent. It gives us great confidence in the agencies that we partner with."

United Way's Back-to-School shopping spree is one of Garcia's favorite programs. The program provides money for clothing and school supplies to the most-needy of students, and Garcia says she has been deeply moved by the generosity of students who barely have enough for themselves.

As Garcia reflected on the impact that United Way of South Texas has had on Hidalgo and Starr counties over the last 40 years, she wanted to convey her thanks to all the donors, her fellow board members and the staff of United Way for making it all possible. "I love that my fellow board members are so passionate about United Way's mission," Garcia mused. "I also love the passion from the United Way staff and volunteers. Being able to interact with them is very fulfilling for me. After 40 years, you can imagine all the lives that United Way has touched. I feel our team really cares about the work we're doing, and we're hoping to be around for many more years. To me, 40 years is just the beginning!"

Former Partner Agencies & Community Impact Grant Recipients

In addition to funding United Way partner agencies on an annual basis, United Way may offer grant opportunities to non-profit organizations who provide unduplicated programs in one of United Way's focus areas. The funding opportunities are available when United Way records better than expected pledge collections for a Campaign.

Former Partner Agencies

(This list includes several Former Partner Agencies)

Boys & Girls Club of Alamo
Boys & Girls Club of Weslaco
Donna Little League
Food Bank of the RGV
McAllen Literacy Center

2001-2002

National Kidney Foundation
Texas A&M Foundation
Valley Initiative for Development and Advancement

2005-2006

Community Council of the RGV
McAllen Chamber and Rio Grande Regional
Hospital-Diabetes Testing Project
La Grulla Food Pantry
Edcouch Elsa-Actions of Hope
La Joya Youth Center

2010-2014

Faith Communities of RGV
Pharr Literacy Center
Children's Defense Fund-RGV
Vision Academy
Buckner Foundation
Dentists Who Care
Big Brothers Big Sisters of America
Starr County Grants
City of Roma Parks & Recreation
Roma I.S.D.
City of RGC-Blanket Program for the Elderly
Starr County-Food Pantries & Food Program for the Elderly

Emergency Disaster Assistance

- American Red Cross, South TX Chapter
- The Salvation Army
- Food Bank of the RGV
- Hidalgo County

1995-2000

El Milagro Clinic
Community Council RGV "211"
211 Blanket Program
Edcouch-Elsa I.S.D. Bee Health Clinic

2003

Community Council of the RGV
Catholic Pastoral Services
Holy Family Services Birth Center
Options, Inc.
San Juan Youth Center
Texas Extension Education Association

2007-2009

La Joya Youth Center
Community Council of the RGV
Dress for Success
Advocacy Resource Center for Housing
Mid-Valley Boys & Girls Club
The Abriendo Puertas Parental Communication Initiative, INC
Consumer Credit Counseling
Children's Defense Fund-RGV

2015-2021

Palmview Youth Center
Rio Grande Valley Literacy Center
Good Samaritan Community Services
Habitat for Humanity
South Texas Juvenile Diabetes Association
Valley AIDS Council
VOAD-Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters
Comfort House
Starr County Grants
City of Roma Parks & Recreation
Roma I.S.D.
City of RGC-Blanket Program for the Elderly
Starr County-Food Pantries & Food Program for the Elderly



Freddy Mata

Boys and Girls Club of Pharr-San Juan

Freddy Mata literally personifies the transformative power of United Way of South Texas and its support of agencies like the Boys and Girls Club of Pharr-San Juan. As a child, Mata grew up living in a housing authority apartment with a single mom who had to work two jobs to support her four children. He still remembers the morning when a volunteer showed up to shuttle children to the Boys and Girls Club, so he and his siblings decided to try it out.

"From the first day, we enjoyed going to the Boys and Girls Club, so we kept going back day after day," Mata recalled. "The Boys and Girls Club became our safe haven. I credit them for saving different aspects of my life. They kept me clean, as far as staying off drugs. They kept me safe. They kept me from going down the wrong path. The Boys and Girls Club even gave me my brain, so to speak, because they helped me with my homework. I was able to complete it so the following day, no matter what happened at home or in my personal life, I felt good about myself, because I submitted my homework and it was complete."

Mata was seven years old when he started going to the Boys and Girls Club. At age 15, he became a volunteer at the club. At 17, he got his first job there. Then, in 2007, he became the CEO of the Boys and Girls Club of Pharr-San Juan.

"I was a client first, but now, working at Boys and Girls Club, I have a deeper understanding of the impact that United Way makes," said Mata. "Honestly, with United Way's help, the Boys and Girls Club saved my life. They took us off the streets, and put us in a safe facility with caring adults that supervised us, and engaged with us with good programs."

To this day, he continues to support United Way through bi-weekly payroll deductions. "If you can only donate five dollars, then please donate that five dollars," said Mata. "A lot of little donations add up to benefit the United Way family. When employees of every school district, every police and fire department, every Target and HEB, whether it's one dollar or 20 dollars, when we all give, it adds up, and it stays right here in the community!"

UNITED WAY PARTNER AGENCIES

United Way proudly supports twenty Partner Agencies that deliver critical services to families in Hidalgo and Starr Counties. We thank their staff, board members and volunteers for their commitment to help empower individuals and offer assistance during extraordinarily challenging periods.



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS

Boys & Girls Clubs of Edinburg
Boys & Girls Club of McAllen
Boys & Girls Club of Mission
Boys & Girls Club of Pharr/San Juan



Starr County Victims of Domestic Violence Program



American Red Cross



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA
RIO GRANDE COUNCIL



GreenPath
financial wellness



girl scouts



SILVER RIBBON
COMMUNITY PARTNERS



Thank you, United Way, for the continued support and for always looking at the needs of our community and stepping in to help.



~ Jesus Sanchez
Children's Advocacy Center

MARCH TO RECOVERY

COVID - 19 COMMUNITY GRANTS

BASIC NEEDS

- Emergency Shelter
- Rental Assistance
- Utility Assistance
- Prepared Meals
- Food Baskets
- Personal Hygiene Kits
- Gas Cards
- Back to School Attire

HEALTH

- Counseling - Domestic Violence
- Addiction Counseling - Adults
- Addiction Counseling - Teens
- Community Outreach -Wellness
- Calls to Elderly and Disabled Clients
- Quaranteen Program -engage youth in physical activities, safe virtual socialization, academic preparation and mental wellness check-ins
- Becoming Me Program offers young girls opportunities to converse about stress and anxiety due to less interaction
- PPE for non-profits and school districts

EDUCATION & FINANCIAL STABILITY

- Building Opportunities for Ongoing Recovery (BOOSTR) Program prevent summer learning loss curriculum & opportunities
- Education & Prevention Materials (i.e. brochures/videos) Wellness Seminars
- E-Commerce Business Creation & Launch Training

37,507 Clients Served Through September 2021

\$234,376 Allocated

As Assistant Vice President for External and Legislative Affairs, for AT&T's South Texas Region, J.D. Salinas oversees employees from El Paso to San Antonio, and every community in South Texas.

One of his duties is to help coordinate the company's annual donation campaign for United Way.

"Personally, I've been involved with United Way for years," Salinas said. "AT&T has also partnered with United Way on the giving campaign for years as well. Our latest campaign just started at the beginning of September, and we're once again encouraging everyone to give as much as they can to help. Our employees give enthusiastically. They also volunteer locally, because as my dad used to say, 'One day it might be us, or it might be our neighbors who need the help.' I believe we have to help others and that's the attitude that we have at AT&T and it's something we're always committed to do."

Salinas says United Way is all about making a meaningful impact in our communities. It supports education, health, financial stability, and a litany of other services. Salinas points out that AT&T employees live and work here and he says they want to make sure that United Way is fully equipped to help others.

Another reason Salinas supports United Way is because of its reputation for ensuring accountability of the agencies it serves. "I think United Way of South Texas is a very efficient fiscal agent that helps everyone," Salinas noted. "By you investing in them you know that your money is going to be used for direct impact to help people from all walks of life. I truly believe it's the best way to invest your money to help others."

United Way of South Texas has a 40-year track record of giving to those most impacted and most underserved. Salinas says giving even a dollar or two dollars per month or per paycheck is the best investment the public can make.

"I want to congratulate United Way on its 40th anniversary for their impact on the community," Salinas said. "I want to thank them for everything they've done. United Way leads by example. It's a volunteer-led non-profit organization and for the next 40 years I'm going to be right there with it and so will AT&T."



J.D. Salinas III
AT&T



Pictured left to right: United Way Board Members Cris Moncayo, LIVE UNITED Co-Captain, Vantage Bank; Gerardo Paz, Campaign Co-Chair, South Texas Federal Credit Union; Elvira Alonzo, Campaign Co-Chair, City of McAllen; and Michelle Quiroz, LIVE UNITED Co-Captain, Reserva Coffee Roasters.

LIVE UNITED 
400 for CHANGE
 New Donors & Fans Lead. Empower. Inspire.

To commemorate 40 Years of Impact in Hidalgo and Starr Counties, the United Way Board invites you to join the 400 New Donors and Fans Club. Donate now by scanning the code.

FOLLOW US



SCAN ME



DONATE TODAY!

**VANTAGE
 BANK** 
 TEXAS

“WE ADMIRE UNITED WAY FOR THE WORK AND EFFORT THEY DEDICATE DAY IN AND OUT TO THOSE IN NEED. UNITED WAY SERVES AS THE SAFETY NET FOR MANY INDIVIDUALS IN THE COMMUNITY. OUR COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE IS AT THE CORE OF THE VANTAGE BANK CULTURE. WHEN OUR COMMUNITIES NEED US, VANTAGE BANK IS THERE TO HELP.”

**JEFF SINNOTT
 PRESIDENT & CEO**