**24-25 Campaign Message Toolkit (Newaygo)**

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This 5-day toolkit is designed to engage your team with vital information about United Way of the Lakeshore’s transformative work in Newaygo County. Dive into resources that spotlight the challenges faced by ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed), highlight our essential programs and services, and share ways to get involved in making a difference. Let’s show why we Live United—mobilizing our community for lasting impact!

**Day 1: ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed)**

[**CLICK HERE**](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/164YMtllWfJD_JmLlC6xjFJHSs4QeQSTk?usp=sharing) **to download your preferred images to go along with the ALICE Messaging.**

**Long Version Option:**

Today, United For ALICE launches its newest research, “ALICE in the Crosscurrents: An Update on Financial Hardship in Michigan.” The data finds that while **2,602 households were in poverty in 2022 in Newaygo, another 5,989 (45%) were ALICE®** (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed), earning above the poverty level but less than the cost of basics.

While many of these low-income workers saw their wages grow at the fastest rate in four decades, it wasn’t enough to eclipse the burden of inflation – making it nearly impossible for ALICE to keep pace. For a family of four with an infant and a preschooler, the costs of basics in Newaygo, excluding tax credits, rose from $56,232 in 2021 to $70,716 one year later. Compounding the issue in 2022 was the loss of up to $15,000 in federal child tax credits and stimulus payments that this family had access to in 2021.

These findings add to a more than decade-long trend: Since the end of the Great Recession, despite some ups and downs, the number of ALICE households in Newaygo has remained stubbornly high. From 2010 to 2022, the total number of households remained the same, households in poverty decreased 13% — and the number of ALICE households grew by 26%.

**We have the power to alter the course for our community’s ALICE families. But we can’t do it alone.**

Please join United Way of Lakeshore in building innovative solutions to bring financial stability to these households. [Click here to read the Update for Michigan and explore the interactive online dashboards.](https://www.unitedforalice.org/state-overview/Michigan) And spread the word about the true picture of hardship in our communities by sharing the #ALICE2024 Update with your colleagues and peers.

**Short Version Option:**

Per UnitedForALICE’s new data, the number of struggling families in Newaygo remained high from 2021 to 2022 despite bigger paychecks. In fact, 45% of Newaygo County households were considered under the ALICE Threshold meaning they were not earning enough to make ends meet. Why?

As wages went up, so too did costs – making it nearly impossible for ALICE to keep pace. For a family of four with an infant and a preschooler, the costs of basics in Newaygo County, without tax credits, rose from $56,232 in 2021 to $70,716 one year later.

Compounding the issue in 2022 was the loss of up to $15,000 in federal child tax credits and stimulus payments that this family had access to in 2021. Read the Update: unitedwaylakeshore.org/alice

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**Day 2: Impact Areas & Programs**

[**CLICK HERE**](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1EZmWCEqvjZZvp7pO-7plblk4cIQBriXt?usp=sharing) **to download the image to go along with the Impact Areas & Programs & Services.**

United Way of the Lakeshore prioritizes community-driven decision-making to ensure that local funds are allocated to programs addressing the region’s most critical needs. A central focus is on the ALICE population (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed), representing 45% of families who struggle to meet basic needs despite earning above the federal poverty line. By concentrating efforts on four key areas—Childhood Success, Youth Success, Economic Mobility, and Healthy Families—United Way tackles pressing issues such as early literacy, chronic absenteeism, housing shortages, and mental health challenges, all of which directly impact the well-being of local families.

Following an in-depth community needs assessment, United Way identified 12 priority areas across these impact fields, using data from national and state reports, community input, and expert guidance. Volunteer stakeholders evaluate how well programs align with these priorities, ensuring that investments are targeted where they can make the greatest difference. For 2024, volunteer panels selected 18 programs with Newaygo County agencies, in addition to several internal United Way-led initiatives, as investment recipients. Below is the current list of 2024-2025 program investments for Newaygo County.

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**Day 3: First Call for Help – 211**

[**CLICK HERE**](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1IO-Wlfct3lBNClIicDmNNc945GTzuBnA?usp=sharing) **to download images to go along with 211 Messages.**

**Long Version:**

**What is 211?**

211 is a vital service leveraged by millions of people across North America. Every day, clients contact 211 to access free and confidential crisis and emergency counseling, disaster assistance, food, health care and insurance assistance, stable housing and utilities payment assistance, employment services, veteran services and childcare and family services.

**What Does 211 Do?**

No matter the situation, the specialists at 211 listen, identify underlying problems, and connect people in need with resources and services in their community that improve their lives. ***In 2023 alone, 211 in Newaygo answered over 800 calls helping families with life-changing support.***

**Why Does 211 Matter?**

211 does more than “patch people through” to agencies. Instead, 211 specialists are trained to identify root causes of a client’s problem – and connect them with a wide range of available resources that meet all the underlying needs, not just the one that prompted the call, text or email. No other program has its “finger on the pulse” of our community’s greatest needs. It identified Newaygo’s top needs to be electric service payment assistance, heating assistance, and housing. It’s a vital part of United Way’s efforts to build stronger communities and fight for the health, education and financial stability of every person in every community. 211 makes the social services ecosystem/network more efficient by ensuring people in need are connected to agencies that can help them.

**Shorter Version:**

**GET CONNECTED. GET HELP.**

211 is operated and funded, in part, by United Way of the Lakeshore. Ensuring every person has access to this critical resource exemplifies United Way’s fight for the health, education and financial stability of every person in every community. By connecting people in need with the best resources available to them, 211 helps make the social services ecosystem more efficient and effective so resources can go further.

Through 211, clients can access free and confidential crisis and emergency counseling, disaster assistance, food, health care and insurance assistance, stable housing and utilities payment assistance, employment services, veteran services and childcare and family services. No matter the situation, the specialists at 211 listen, identify underlying problems, and connect people in need with community resources and services that improve their lives. **In 2023 alone, 211 in Newaygo answered over 800 calls helping families with life-changing support.**

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**Day 4: Every Dollar Counts**

[**CLICK HERE**](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1GzU29RQxniNRkdwGBsr61nkym3qysFkV?usp=sharing) **to download the image or file to go along with Every Dollar Counts.**

Every gift, no matter the size, has the power to create lasting change when we come together as a community. Through United Way of the Lakeshore, your contribution joins forces with others to make a big difference across Newaygo County. Just $1 a week can ignite a child’s love for reading, providing two children with a book each month for a year. A $2 weekly donation ensures safety for two families by supplying car seats for their children. And with just $3 a week, you help five visually impaired clients gain clarity with a magnifier and counseling.

But it doesn’t stop there—$5 per week feeds a child every weekend for an entire year, and $10 builds confidence in 10 kids through leadership and afterschool programs. When we give united, our collective impact transforms lives. Whether you give a little or a lot, you’re creating opportunities, supporting families, and building a brighter future for everyone.

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**Day 5: Collective Impact & Success Stories**

[**CLICK HERE**](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1GzU29RQxniNRkdwGBsr61nkym3qysFkV?usp=sharing) **to download images to go along with Collective Impact & Success Stories**

Thanks to donors, volunteers, and advocates like you, the lives of families in Newaygo County are being transformed every day through United Way of the Lakeshore. Your generosity empowers partner organizations to make a profound impact, not just by offering vital services, but by opening doors to new opportunities. In 2024, the grants provided by United Way will allow partner agencies to leverage an additional $84,500, extending their reach and providing critical services that would have otherwise been out of reach for many. The power of your support is felt through every family lifted up, every life transformed, and every new beginning made possible. New beginnings like:

***\*\*\*Insert a Selected Success Story\*\*\****

**Helping When Disaster Strikes:** After a devastating fire left Bryan’s family homeless, the American Red Cross, supported by United Way, stepped in to provide emergency financial assistance, guidance, and comfort. Volunteer caseworker Judith Chesley connected with the family, who, despite their overwhelming loss, remained hopeful as the community rallied around them. Through your support, Bryan's family received vital aid, from clothing to power restoration, helping them rebuild their lives step by step. When asked if their needs had been met, Bryan's wife tearfully responded, “They sure have.”

**Helping Through Recovery and Treatment:** Jan’s courageous journey toward sobriety and healing is another powerful example of what your generosity makes possible. After entering Arbor Circle’s sobriety court program, Jan committed to therapy and recovery coaching, working tirelessly to rebuild her life. Her recovery coach walked alongside her, attending AA meetings, addressing transportation struggles, and providing accountability. Jan’s determination, paired with the ongoing support of her team, has allowed her to maintain employment and continue her journey toward a brighter, healthier future.

**Gaining Independence & Mobilization:** Thanks to your support, Teresa found the independence she needed through the Transportation Voucher Program with Disability Network of West Michigan. Initially relying on her mother to get to essential medical appointments, Teresa gradually gained confidence using the program. Today, not only has she become more independent, but she’s also giving back as a volunteer driver, helping others like her and driving her two autistic sons to therapy appointments. Teresa's journey from participant to volunteer exemplifies how the program empowers individuals and strengthens families.

**Regaining Confidence & Financial Footing:** Sara and her daughter faced overwhelming challenges, including unstable housing and financial hardships. After joining the Hope program, they’ve made incredible strides. They’ve secured a mortgage, opened savings accounts, and even launched a bakery side business after perfecting their skills at The Cookery. Now, they’re on the path to long-term stability, filled with promise and hope for the future. Their story of resilience and transformation highlights how vital programs like Hope are for rebuilding lives.

**Providing Comfort at the End of Life:** Si’s final days were filled with peace and dignity at Compassion Home, thanks to your support. His daughters, overwhelmed with the thought of losing him after already caring for their mother, brought him to the home with apprehension. However, they soon found comfort, knowing Si was treated with love and care. When his time came, he passed away quietly, not alone, but with a coordinator holding his hand. His daughters' gratitude reminds us that Compassion Home is more than just a place—it’s a family that offers comfort in the most difficult moments.

**Providing Books to Young Children Families** enrolled in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library shared how the program has sparked a love of reading in their homes. From young children eagerly awaiting their monthly book to parents discovering the joy of reading with their kids, the program has been life-changing. One parent shared, “We spend more time reading together because of the free books,” while another said, “It has improved our time together, and I know my grandson is learning.” Your support fosters literacy, strengthens family bonds, and creates lifelong readers.

**Giving Youth a Mentor and a Voice** Brooklyn, a 13-year-old in the TrueMentors program, cherishes the time spent with her mentor, Nancy. From local events to long walks, their bond has grown over the years, allowing Brooklyn to blossom in confidence and communication. Nancy shared, “I’ve enjoyed seeing her maturity and growth. We’ve built a really close relationship.” Thanks to this program, Brooklyn has a mentor she can always count on, showing the importance of positive role models in a young person's life.