

A FEW SUCCESS STORIES

United Way of Greater Chattanooga is making sustained positive changes in peoples' lives. These success stories are the results of such changes, made possible by services provided through United Way-funded programs at partnering agencies.

LIVING UNITED

How Margaret Lives United

As an 82-year-old, life-long paraplegic who lives alone, Margaret depends on United Way-funded support services – from programs at Special Transit Services, Signal Centers, and Partnership for Families, Children and Adults – to help her maintain her independence. With multiple medical issues, including diabetes and heart disease, she could be living in a nursing home. Instead, Margaret receives regular visits from local community program staffers, who provide companionship, transportation, housekeeping and healthcare assistance. All of these services allow Margaret to remain in the comfort of her home and familiar surroundings... and for that she is thankful. Margaret says, “I couldn’t stand to be in a nursing home.” When you give to United Way, your investment pays off for the community in both financial and human dividends. Measured in dollars, the state saves \$50,000 each year Margaret lives in her own home. Measured in human dividends, Margaret's smile is priceless. **When we reach a hand out to one, we influence the condition of all. That’s how you Live United.**

How Natasha Lives United

After losing her job of 14 years when the spinning plant closed, Natasha and her four children needed assistance to start a new life while not losing ground in their old one. She began working with the Department of Human Services Welfare to Work program, where she was referred to a United Way-funded computer and customer service training program at the Urban League of Greater Chattanooga. It opened a world of opportunity for her and within six months her life turned around. Working with a career specialist not only prepared her for a new workforce, but it also encouraged her, building her self-esteem and motivation. Now she works at Convergys and is pursuing a Criminal Investigation degree. Natasha’s family has stable support, thanks to a program supported by United Way. **When we reach a hand out to one, we influence the condition of all. That’s how you Live United.**

How Jack Lives United

Jack has had some educational hurdles to overcome. He had problems with reading and mathematics His mom knew he needed extra support, so she enrolled him in the Urban League’s Street Academy and 21st Century Community Learning Center programs at East Lake Elementary School. She also put him in the Urban League’s summer programs as well.

Thanks to the encouragement, support and mentoring he receives at these United Way-funded programs, Jack is on the road to success. He is now able to succeed in school – he even earned advanced scores on the math portion of the TCAP and scored proficient in reading. His mom is so pleased with his results that she enrolled his sister Elizabeth too. She’s doing so well she got to participate in both the summer program and a science and engineering camp. **When we reach a hand out to one, we influence the condition of all. That’s how you Live United.**

How Josh Lives United

Josh’s friendliness and great attitude show how much he likes working at Goodwill Industries as a donation attendant and as a transportation assistant, sorting and baling

donations and assisting truck drivers on their routes. Josh is happy that he can work out in the community with lots of friendly folks, seeing how different people handle business. "I like working with drivers the best," he said. When Josh first came to this program, he didn't want to be there. Cerebral palsy, lack of work experience and undefined work skills made it difficult for him to find and keep a job. But Josh took advantage of the United Way-supported job training and skill development program. Now he's been honored by the Southeast Tennessee Placement Consortium as one of its Employees of the Year. Josh changed his mind, "I'm glad I came to Goodwill after all!" ***When we reach a hand out to one, we influence the condition of all. That's how you Live United.***

How Elijah Lives United

Severe seizures made it difficult for Elijah to get or even keep a job. But a United Way-supported job-training program for people with disabilities has been tirelessly working with him since his graduation from Brainerd High School more than six years ago. Over time and with lots of assistance from the program's support managers and job coaches, Elijah's life began to turn around. Proper medical treatment finally controlled his seizures so he could get his driver's license. The program also helped him enter Chattanooga State Technical Community College and coached him with his studies. Now he's completing his landscaping certification and has a job offer on the table upon graduation. He's also engaged and planning a wedding after he graduates. Thanks to United Way's support, Elijah is living an independent life. ***When we reach a hand out to one, we influence the condition of all. That's how you Live United.***

How JR Lives United

Speaking to a school superintendent, Tennessee state legislators, and the governor's staff was a brave step for J.R. But thanks to a United Way-supported program, Allies in Action at Girls Inc., she has become a spokesperson against violence in schools and shares how this United Way youth development program changed her life. When she first joined the program, she was an 8th grader at a large inner-city school who was being pressured to join a gang. She was even suspended from school for fighting. Not only did the program teach her how to avoid conflicts and resolve disputes peacefully, but it also taught her to be proactive in her education. She applied for and was admitted to a rigorous magnet school and assumed a leadership role in the program. In addition to being a spokesperson, she serves on the leadership and advocacy team and is now a peer mentor to other girls. ***When we reach a hand out to one, we influence the condition of all. That's how you Live United.***

How the Smith Family Lives United

The Smith family had financial problems – mom couldn't work due to health problems and dad lost his job because he had no transportation – so they had to file for chapter 13. A United Way-supported emergency assistance program helped them get back on their feet and on the road to economic stability. First, the family received help with unpaid utility bills, needed prescriptions, and Christmas gifts. Then dad was referred to the Southeast Tennessee Career Center for job assistance. Now dad is working full-time, mom is working weekends as an eldercare sitter, and life is finally looking up for the family. As Mrs. Smith said, "This program was a stepping stone, not a ditch." ***When we reach a hand out to one, we influence the condition of all. That's how you Live United.***

How Sara and Nancy Live United

Sara has been a life-long advocate for her daughter Nancy, a 58-year-old with developmental disabilities. With her family's support, Nancy graduated high school with a special diploma and has worked at the social security department for more than 20 years. Recently Sara was diagnosed with cancer – it was a difficult time for the family. But Sara and Nancy are both members of the Jewish Community Federation's eldercare services, a United Way program. The program supported the family with a wide variety of services – Sara's family was notified and a medical plan mobilized, a community nurse accompanied Sara to doctor appointments and the hospital, Nancy was provided transportation to and from work, meals were delivered to the home, and a plan was developed for end-of-life issues. Nancy too was given additional support at home. She even learned how to use a washing machine, so she could help care for her mom in the same way her mom had always cared for her. ***When we reach a hand out to one, we influence the condition of all. That's how you Live United.***

How Gene Lives United

An energetic 83-year-old, Gene Blaes seems much younger. He'll be the first to tell you that he owes his good health to sports. As a former Senior Olympian, he knows the health benefits of sports and exercise – of any type – and he tries to help other seniors by sharing these benefits with them. For more than a decade Gene has run the table tennis program at a United Way-supported senior care program. Every Thursday he sets up a full afternoon of table tennis for residents from area nursing homes. The program is seeing a marked improvement in its clients. Many who couldn't even hold a cup before practicing with Gene now have their upper mobility and strength back. Thanks to this United Way supported program, Gene has a place where he can give back and make an impact. ***When we reach a hand out to one, we influence the condition of all. That's how you Live United.***

How Deborah Lives United in Marion County

Deborah is an enthusiastic 12-year-old selling Girl Scout cookies in Marion County, but she wasn't always this way. A United Way-supported speech development program first saw her 9 years ago and diagnosed her with a speech disorder, but her family never began treatment. Eight years later, Deborah was brought back to the program and diagnosed with both articulation and language disorders. Her problems were so severe that the public school she attends enrolled her in the program for intense, individual speech therapy. When she began, she was shy and had problems in academic and social situations. She could only speak in short, broken, unintelligible sentences. Her reading skills were also poor. Once therapy began, Deborah eagerly completed her assignments with the help of her adoptive Mother. Her articulation and language skills improved dramatically. Her new conversation skills have given her the confidence to initiate conversations and express herself. Thanks to this United Way program, Deborah can now reach her academic potential. ***When we reach a hand out to one, we influence the condition of all. That's how you Live United.***

How Gloria Lives United in North Georgia

16-year-old Gloria is a bright student with a can-do attitude. That says a lot for any student, but Gloria suffers a severe hearing impairment. Despite this, she works hard to be as independent as possible, thanks to the skilled sign-language interpreters provided by Partnership for Families, Children and Adults, a United Way funded program. The interpreters allow her to fully participate in all classroom interaction and play on a level field with other typically developing students. Thanks to the program, this full-time high-

school student has already begun taking college classes, including calculus. She'll be a junior in college by the time she graduates from high-school and will be well on her way to entering veterinary school. ***When we reach a hand out to one, we influence the condition of all. That's how you Live United.***

How Nathaniel and Nathan Live United in North Georgia

To some folks in North Carolina, Nathaniel and Nathan will always be heroes. Last year as the boys were paddling over the Nantahala Falls, they saw someone struggling below. The boys quickly assessed the situation and jumped into the water to save the blue-faced boy. They calmed him down and got him breathing again as they pulled him to shore. "He was really scared and coughing up water," said Nathaniel. Nathaniel and Nathan learned these skills through their participation in the Boy Scouts of America Cherokee Area Council, a United Way-funded youth development program that teaches life-saving skills, strong values, and community service. Drowning is the second major cause of death for children ages five to fourteen – knowing what to do and being prepared can prevent that. North Georgia Troop 125 is proud of the boys. And Nathaniel and Nathan are prepared for success in life, no matter what happens. ***When we reach a hand out to one, we influence the condition of all. That's how you Live United.***

How Angel Lives United in North Georgia

Five-year-old Angel is a happy child, but that wasn't always the case. Last fall, her parents enrolled her in a pre-K program in Catoosa County. There, a United Way funded Parent Educator discovered that Angel rarely spoke and was completely unintelligible when she did. Angel's mother, a teacher, felt she was just developing at her own pace. However, the Parent Educator ran a test showing Angel had speech and hearing problems. Her parents took her for a physical, where they discovered frequent ear infections had caused hearing damage, which in turn slowed her speech development. She's infection free now and is speaking clearly after working with a speech and hearing therapist. Angel is calmer and healthier, thanks to this United Way early intervention program. ***When we reach a hand out to one, we influence the condition of all. That's how you Live United.***

How Mike Lives United in North Georgia

Mike came from North Georgia looking for a job. His Asperger's syndrome kept him from going out and finding work on his own. A job developer at a United Way-supported program for adults with disabilities worked with Mike and found him a job at a BI-LO in North Georgia. He has been there over 7 months and loves it. His primary jobs include bagging groceries and bringing in carts. Mike's supervisor says he's very dependable and courteous, always going the extra mile to assist people with their groceries – everyone loves him. Mike's enthusiasm shows – he's called in, even on his days off, because he's so dependable. Mike is Living United by showing how the barriers of disability can be overcome and independence can be achieved! ***When we reach a hand out to one, we influence the condition of all. That's how you Live United.***