

UNITED WAY OF NORTHWEST GEORGIA

Meeting basic needs in our community

We know from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs pyramid in our Psychology 101 class that the basic needs — food, water and shelter — must be met first. After the basic needs are met, an individual can take care of safety needs: employment, family and health. Basic needs and safety make the base of Maslow's pyramid. Without these needs fulfilled, individuals

cannot develop higher-level tasks such as making friends, building self-esteem, having respect for others or problem solving.



Amanda Burt

United Way's Information and Referral hot line is flooded daily with calls for emergency needs: people seeking food, mortgage, rent and power bill assistance. Just this week, a gentleman who is employed locally called in need of groceries for his family. His wife had been laid off at a local company, and they can no longer afford to feed their family on his income alone.

Unfortunately this is all too common. Nearly one-third of working Americans do not earn enough money to cover their basic needs.

When hungry, homeless or in crisis, it's impossible to succeed. Some individuals find themselves in unsafe environments or facing domestic violence and abuse. Four local United Way partner agencies provide residential services in our community: Carter Hope Center, a residential recovery program; Salvation Army's transitional housing for families; the Northwest Georgia Family Crisis Center, a domestic violence shelter; and Oakhaven, a home for teenage moms and their babies.

Thousands of local families are impacted by your United Way investment each year. James, a long-time resident and worker in our community, found relief thanks to United Way. Upon a routine check-up, James was diagnosed with prostate cancer. He had to retire after 30 years of working with a Dalton company to cope with his illness. After undergoing treatment, James found he was spending his entire monthly budget on mounting medical bills and could no longer afford to pay his monthly rent. He faced the threat of homelessness.

James contacted the Salvation Army, a United Way partner agency, which provided him with food

assistance, getting his bills up to date, and budgeting. Seven years ago, James was given two weeks to live without treatment. However, thanks to the generosity of United Way investors, James was able to stay comfortably in his home throughout recovery and is currently beating cancer and enjoying retirement.

Some families in our community have to choose between paying rent and eating dinner. The well-being of our children is at stake when parents have to sacrifice safe housing for food. The Salvation Army's Food Bank, a United Way-funded program, provides thousands of families each year with boxes of food. United Way agencies like the Boys & Girls Clubs, Friendship House and Whitfield County-Dalton Day Care Center, help families stretch their dollars by providing affordable child care — including snacks and lunches — so parents can work or attend school and pave the way for a better future for their families.

As a donor, you can be sure that your investment in basic needs is reaching those who need it most. Through United Way's Community Database, we work with nonprofits and churches across the community to stretch the dollars to help the most in need.

Our partner agencies work hard to create stability and long-term success in our community. Once basic needs are met, we can focus on providing support and resources that lead to long-term financial independence. Investing in United Way prevents homelessness and hunger for children and families in northwest Georgia.

As we near the holiday season and think about reaching out a hand to help someone in need, I invite you to give to the United Way campaign to help people like James and others right here at home. Our goal of \$3.35 million is definitely a challenging one in these difficult times, but the needs are even greater. Whether your budget allows you to make an investment of \$1,000 or \$100 to United Way, you can be sure your gift helps prevent homelessness for individuals and families struggling to get back on their feet.

During this season of giving, please invest in United Way's work in meeting basic needs. Simply visit ourunited-way.org/give or mail a check to United Way of NWGA, P.O. Box 566, Dalton, GA 30722.

Amanda Burt is the president of the United Way of Northwest Georgia.