

always united



2020
ANNUAL REPORT



MISSION

To work together with neighbors to provide services and create opportunities that empower individuals and build strong, interdependent communities.

United Neighborhood Centers of Northeastern Pennsylvania Board of Directors

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Ceadership message

Dear Friends.

As I reflect on 2020, it has been a year full of unprecedented challenges that have revealed new insights about our resilience and adaptability – as individuals and as a community. I started my term as Board Chair in January, and by March, we were faced with a global pandemic. It is during times like these that I am most proud to be a part of United Neighborhood Centers, knowing the work we have been able to accomplish amidst such adversity.



COVID-19 forced the agency to rapidly pivot in the ways we typically serve the vulnerable populations in our community. We immediately implemented safety procedures and reduced on-site staff while continuing to meet basic needs, such as food, utilities assistance, housing support, and other emergency services. Through a waiver from the state, we were able to keep one of our child care centers open and offered care for children of essential workers.

When area senior centers were ordered to close, UNC worked with the Lackawanna County Area Agency on Aging to distribute take-home meals for hundreds of older adults each week. In July, the doors of the West Side Center reopened as part of the county's new Healthy Aging Campus network.

Connectivity has been a critical lifeline in delivering UNC programs to families, youth, older adults, and immigrants during this time. Virtual classes and presentations have replaced in-person gatherings when necessary. Case management and tutoring have been done by phone. For clients who could not access or navigate technology, agency departments have designed e-learning support programs.

The UNC team was able to forge ahead with its new revitalization project in the Pine Brook section of Scranton. We began working with a consultant to develop a five-year neighborhood plan and established a steering committee of community representatives. This is an exciting initiative, which will benefit residents and business owners for years to come.

During this period of uncertainty, we are incredibly grateful for the outpouring of generosity from our community. Thank you to the remarkable individuals, organizations, community groups, businesses, and corporations for your support. We invite you to read more about the impact your contribution has made this past year.

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Rosemary Broderick

UNC Board Chair







COVID-19 Emergency Relief Funding

The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation
Margaret Briggs Foundation
NEPA COVID-19 Response Fund
Scranton Area Community Foundation
Moses Taylor Foundation
Bank of America Charitable Foundation
Schwartz-Mack Foundation
The Eureka Foundation
Best Buy Foundation
American Water Charitable Foundation





As an organization that touches people's lives with direct contact every day, the onset of COVID-19 tested the ways UNC meets the needs of vulnerable individuals and families in our community.

Suddenly, staff were faced with having to stay distant while trying to meet the increasing demands for basic needs as businesses laid off workers. UNC's Community Services department swiftly adjusted protocols and procedures to keep everyone safe. The number of staff on-site were reduced, and UNC's Angel's Attic food pantry set up an outdoor distribution where clients could come Monday through Friday and pick up food as often as needed. Staff working remotely helped clients with utilities, housing, and other assistance by phone.

In July, UNC partnered with Lackawanna County to assist residents with applications for rental and mortgage assistance through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, a federal grant that assists people who have lost income or employment because of a pandemic-related issue. Throughout the ever-changing restrictions and increasing needs, UNC adapted services to meet the challenges of a year like no other.



More than **9,750** bags of food distributed

More than
5,470
clients assisted with food, clothing, housing, utilities, and other services

Assisted with 339 applications for CARES



Feed A Friend Exceeds Expectations

In this difficult year, the outpouring of support for the Feed A Friend Thanksgiving program was remarkable. Each year, UNC partners with WNEP-TV to collect food and monetary donations from the community and then distributes all of the makings for a Thanksgiving dinner to local families with children in need. This year, to reduce the number of people handling and distributing food, only monetary donations were collected, and each registered family received a turkey voucher and gift card to a local grocery store. With many people experiencing economic hardships, UNC was uncertain if donations would match the need. There was no reason to worry. Our community rose to the call with generous donations from numerous individuals and local organizations. In a year of so much uncertainty, it was heartwarming to know that every registered family in need could be certain they would have a Thanksgiving dinner on their table.

UNC Participates in Inaugural NEPA Gives

On June 5, UNC participated in the first ever NEPA Gives. The one-day event, sponsored by the Scranton Area Community Foundation and other regional foundations, allowed individuals to make donations to the non-profit of their choice through the NEPA Gives website. Donations made throughout the 24-hour period were eligible for bonus funds from NEPA Gives sponsoring organizations. UNC raised more than \$11,000, including winning four \$1,000 bonus awards. With the loss of in-person fundraisers this year, NEPA Gives was a welcome addition, and UNC looks forward to participating again next year on June 4, 2021!



serving

When senior centers throughout the area closed in March to reduce the spread of COVID-19, many older adults lost their source of socialization and for some, their only daily, balanced meal. With the help of the Lackawanna County Area Agency on Aging, UNC began distributing meals to older adults curbside once a week. The meals were frozen so they would last the week and ensure seniors had at least one nutritious meal each day.

Staff from UNC's Community Health and Aging Department conducted telephone check-ins to ensure seniors were feeling okay, their needs were met, and provided some friendly conversation. As it became apparent that the centers would be closed for months rather than weeks, UNC added online events like trivia nights and discussion groups for older adults to connect online. As the weather warmed, walking clubs were added so seniors could exercise together at a safe distance outdoors.

In September, after being closed since March, the Oppenheim Center for the Arts re-opened to older adults as the Scranton Healthy Aging Campus under the Lackawanna County Area Agency on Aging's healthy aging campus network. The campus provided on-site activities for a limited number of attendees, following strict guidelines including mask wearing and social distancing. As the year wound down to a close and COVID numbers forced another shutdown, indoor activities were suspended again, but the walking clubs continued as did online events to keep seniors connected.





The end of the year also brought about the completion of Fallbrook, UNCDC's newest housing complex in Carbondale and home to the Carbondale Healthy Aging Campus. The Carbondale campus will provide activities on-site in the new year when COVID numbers are deemed safe enough to gather.

in memory of

Charles "Chuck" Weber

Hearts are broken with the recent passing of a very dear UNC friend and active participant of the West Side Active Older Adults Center, Charles "Chuck" Weber. Over the last seven years, Chuck was as involved as one could be at the center. In addition to the weekday socials, he attended



presentations, health fairs, special events, and more. He served as President of the Site Council for the past six years. He also shared his joy for singing at several of UNC's Seniors Got Talent shows. With his kind and personable ways, Chuck became the staff's go-to guy, always ready to lend a hand, pose for an agency photo, or help serve lunches. In fact, when COVID-19 forced the closing of area senior centers, he immediately offered to help staff pack take-home meals for the seniors and continued to do so for months. When the center reopened as the Healthy Aging Campus, Chuck was one of the first to walk through the door smiling. It was good to be part of the activity and camaraderie again. UNC had become a part of his life, and he touched the lives of so many at the agency. He will be greatly missed.

More than **52,550** meals distributed to more than **600** older adults since the start of the pandemic in March





UNC's Community Health team provided health navigation, advocacy, access, counseling, and support to more than 750 adults of all ages. Counseling sessions were transitioned to telehealth appointments when necessary to offer continuous care throughout the shutdowns of 2020.

caring

"When I first started coming to UNC I was in crisis, but with the help of my therapist, I was able to learn to better sort my thoughts and manage my symptoms to help my day-to-day life."

— Deb, UNC Community Health client



Getting Out the Count

UNC was the recipient of a Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development 2020 Census Outreach grant in 2020. With this grant, UNC provided census outreach, education, and assistance to UNC consumers and other community groups to help convey the importance of the census and provide information on how to complete it. Along with other partner organizations in the area, UNC helped Scranton reach historically harder-to-count households and achieve a more accurate count that will determine our congressional representation and the allocation of federal funds for schools, roads, hospitals, and other community resources for the next decade.













Pine Brook Revitalization Plan

This year UNC kicked off its newest neighborhood improvement project in the Pine Brook section of Scranton. With funding from the state, the Scranton Area Community Foundation, and the Margaret Briggs Foundation, UNC began working with a consultant to develop a five-year community revitalization plan for the area that falls between Olive Street and New York Street, and between the Lackawanna River and North Washington Avenue. This project is intended to not only transform the physical and economic state of Pine Brook. It also aims to create more opportunities for homeownership and jobs based on economic reinvestment in the community. Efforts will include returning blighted properties to productive uses, promoting business investment in Pine Brook, and resolving pedestrian safety issues.

Because of COVID-19, planning activities were postponed until May. Meetings have been held via Zoom, and instead of door-todoor surveys for data collection, the staff hosted three community engagement pop-up events, three virtual resident, business, and investor focus groups, and a neighborhood clean-up day. The planning team also adapted by meeting with residents for front porch interviews, walk around tours of the neighborhood, and phone interviews. Thus far, the team has been able to complete a physical inventory of over 1,000 land parcels in the footprint.

A steering committee has been formed to provide technical and experiential guidance on the process, vision, strategies and implementation of the project. To date, members include representatives from the City of Scranton, Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine, Lackawanna College, Lackawanna River Conservation Association, local business owners, Scranton Chamber of Commerce, NeighborWorks NEPA, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, Scranton Primary Health Care Center, Scranton School Board, and UNC. The committee will also include local students and parents in the discussion around the future of the neighborhood.

With its diversity, walkability, close proximity to downtown, and mix of established and up-and-coming businesses, Pine Brook is packed with potential to become a destination neighborhood that offers residents and business owners a bright future.



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South Side Farmers Market Carries On through COVID



The South Side Farmers Market was **SOUTH SIDE** able to keep serving customers safely throughout the year's COVID restrictions by transitioning to a pre-order MARKET and pick-up market. Customers were able to place orders directly with the

vendors online or by phone and pre-pay so they could simply pick up their order on Saturday mornings at the market and stay safely distanced.



bridging divides

Throughout the year's stay-at-home orders and limits on in-person gatherings, UNC's Community Education department transitioned to online classes and telephone tutoring when necessary to continue students' progress toward their English language and literacy goals. What became apparent though, was that many students were falling behind in other areas of their lives because of the changing circumstances of COVID. Job interviews, health appointments, children's schools, and other everyday tasks were going virtual, and many students struggled to access the technology needed and navigate it due to language barriers and lack of devices and training.

UNC began offering assistance with setting up personal devices, teaching how to use virtual meeting platforms and other online resources, helping families navigate their children's online schoolwork, and created a lending library for students to borrow devices when needed. Through these additional services, UNC was able to narrow the gap in digital access and literacy for these students and continue their progress toward their goals.





"The teachers at UNC taught my son and me how to get information and tech support from the school. Now my son is up to date on all of his assignments. He is getting 90s and 100s."

> Shan Barry, ESL student at UNC and father of Safa, pictured right with **UNC ESL instructor Audrey Golosky**







constructing opportunities

Dear Friends,

The COVID pandemic created many challenges for staff, contractors, and supporters of United Neighborhood Community Development Corporation (UNCDC) in 2020. The most significant of these challenges was the completion of our Fallbrook project, which was about half completed when the virus forced construction to stop in March. However, we succeeded in completing the project!

In late May, after hammers, excavators, and table saws were silenced for two months, monumental efforts were made by Grimm Construction to complete the project by the end of December. Additionally, UNC's property management team acted swiftly to prepare leases and hand over keys to our tenants who were anxious to settle into their new homes for the holidays.

As 2020 comes to a close, we look forward to the new year and new opportunities to offer residents of Northeastern Pennsylvania more affordable housing options within local communities. Thank you to all of our generous donors and supporters. Without you, this wouldn't be possible.

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Maureen Bunnan

Maureen Brennan UNCDC Board Chair

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Fallbrook Opens

The completion of the Fallbrook project was a welcome addition to the Carbondale community. The project included renovating the former Carbondale General Hospital building and constructing eight new buildings on the grounds to create 36 apartments and townhomes equipped for people with disabilities, the elderly, and extended families living together. Additionally, it will serve as the Healthy Aging Campus for the upper valley providing programs, services, meals and activities for older adults.

We would like to thank our many partners who helped make the Fallbrook project a reality.

- City of Carbondale
- Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency
- Royal Bank of Canada
- Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation
- Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh
- Northeast Behavioral Health Care Consortium
- Lackawanna County

Brick Avenue Construction Begins

UNCDC began renovations on a newly acquired 8-bedroom single family house on Brick Avenue in North Scranton this year. This project is unique for UNCDC because most of the rehab work is being completed by the UNC Facilities team. The Facilities crews have put in new windows, refinished flooring, painted all of the rooms, and will be installing a new kitchen and bathrooms.

The project is expected to be complete in early 2021, and the home will accommodate large, low-income families. This project is possible thanks to funds provided by the City of Scranton's Office of Economic and Community Development.

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Bucktown Center and Other Plans

UNCDC continued developing plans for new affordable housing communities throughout northeast Pennsylvania in 2020. One of the projects under development will be located in Dunmore Borough's commercial district on Drinker Street. The four-story building, which will be known as Bucktown Center, will include 40 apartments for seniors with retail space on the first floor. UNCDC began securing the funding this year and plans to move forward with the project in 2021.

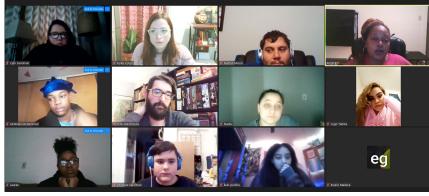


Several other projects were identified in 2020 and are in the pre-development stages. UNCDC plans to purchase and rehabilitate an existing low-income senior housing complex in Olyphant and has its sights set on projects in Archbald, Honesdale, Old Forge, Nanticoke, and Berwick.

connecting

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools and after-school activities online, UNC's Youth programs quickly found ways to keep students connected and engaged with each other and their pursuits. Staff assisted with online schoolwork to help students adapt to virtual learning and keep up with their studies. They also continued UNC's after-school enrichment programs in some new and innovative ways.

UNC staff provided weekly themed photography assignments, video challenges where students learned to use editing apps, and other projects to keep UNC's Youth Arts students actively working toward improving their skills remotely.



Students in the Leaders in Training (LIT) program moved their exploration of college and career and other topics to online discussions. In May, LIT students participated in a virtual dialogue hosted by the University of Scranton about the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the community, and as a service project, LIT students created a video to thank essential workers.

This year, UNC received a grant from the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board to implement the evidence-based alcohol prevention program Class Action to youth, age 12-18, who participate in UNC's after-school programming. The program engages teens in examining real-life dramatic court cases involving alcohol use by minors and the social and legal consequences of underage drinking. Though COVID-19 delayed some of the in-person activities associated with the program, youth participated in the pieces that could be done virtually and plan to complete in-person activities in the new year.



with UNC Teens," students spoke with former UNC Youth Director Angel Atell about her experiences as a black woman, how the world is changing to allow black voices to be heard, and about current issues regarding race. The series will continue in 2021 with special guests from the community talking with students further about race as well as other forms of diversity and related issues.

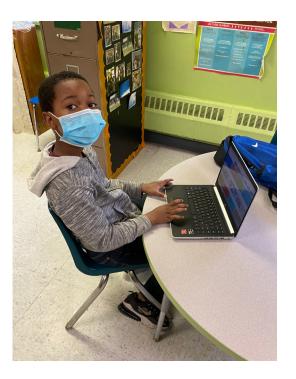
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In January, UNC's LIT Board President
Tiahna Lugo received the Youth Leader
of the Year Award at The Greater Scranton MLK Commission Celebration and
Awards Dinner at the University of
Scranton. Tiahna was nominated for her
ideas and work with the LIT program as
well as her continuous efforts to go above
and beyond to help her community. UNC's
LIT Coordinator Nathan Masco (right) presented Tiahna (left) with the award.



"LIT has opened my eyes to so many opportunities. It's shown me that there are many problems in our community that need to be helped. When I received the MLK award, it made me feel like I could do even more."

- Tiahna Lugo



adapting

When child care centers were ordered closed at the start of the pandemic in March, UNC applied for and received a waiver to keep UNC's Progressive Child Care Center open. This allowed UNC to care for children of essential workers who had nowhere to turn for child care.

By fall, all three of UNC's child care centers were back open and tackling a new challenge – supporting children with online school. Many schools, including the Scranton School District, made the choice to teach virtually in the fall to keep children distanced as COVID numbers rose again. Working parents who usually worked while their children were in school now needed all-day child care and help with their children's online schooling. UNC designated time, space, and staff assistance in their centers to assist children with virtual lessons and help families balance the demands of online school with work schedules.

Project Hope Activities Come Home to Campers



Youth from UNC's LIT program put their leadership training into practice by helping with remote projects for Project Hope campers, including a "Jelly Bean Engineer" project, pictured above.

This summer UNC made the difficult decision to cancel in-person camp at UNC's Camp Kelly. With the help of the United Way of Lackawanna and Wayne Counties, a Lackawanna County Community Arts and Culture Grant, the Overlook Estate Foundation, and **CEO Weinberg Northeast Regional** Food Bank, UNC was able to offer at-home programming for Project Hope, UNC's day camp for lowincome families that is usually held at Camp Kelly. For six weeks over the summer, staff provided virtual activities as well as packages for children each week filled with food, crafts, scavenger hunts, and other fun and educational activities that could be done at home.

455
hours of e-learning support
in UNC's 3 child care centers



175 children participated in this summer's Project Hope at-home programming

2020 Annual Giving

*Donations listed are from January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020 and are cumulative for the year.

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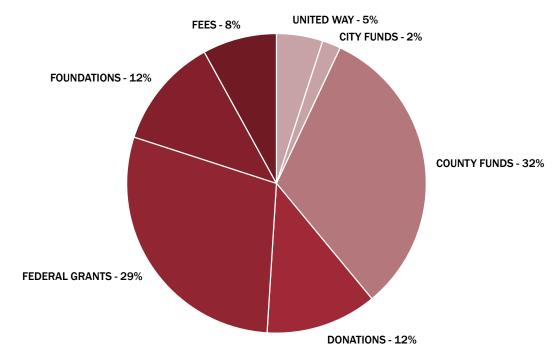
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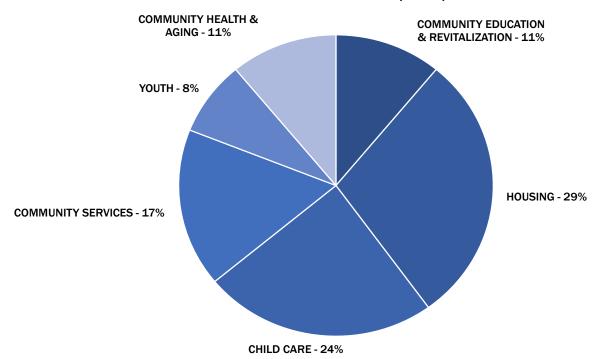
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