

Article for the Manistee County Chamber of Commerce

As the merger between United Way of Manistee and Mason Counties continues to move forward, I am excited to have the opportunity to learn more about Manistee County and play an active role in finding long-term solutions to the community's most critical issues as it pertains to financial security, youth opportunity and healthy lives. It is my belief that by working together, we can achieve more than anyone person or organization can do on its own.

While I am gaining a deeper understanding of Manistee County, I thought it would be helpful to share a little bit about myself. I have been the Executive Director for the United Way of Mason County for 28 years, where we are regarded as both community leader and fundraiser.

I am passionate about building partnerships and have demonstrated this through bringing together private business, non-profits, government, foundations, educational institutions, and faith-based organizations, most notably school and workplace resource navigation, Bridges Out of Poverty and 2-1-1. I have also played a leadership role in the creation of several organizations such as Hospitality INC, Lakeshore Food Club and Oaktree Academy.

Currently, I am a member of the Michigan Association of United Ways Board of Directors, Corewell Health Ludington Hospital Advisory Board, and Treasurer of Oaktree Academy Board of Directors. Over the past several years, I have been actively involved in two initiatives - Interconnected Systems Framework for school based mental health and regional childcare. I have presented at state and regional conferences on such topics as time management, outcomes, evaluation, and embedding on-site resource navigation in the workplace and schools.

I live in Ludington with my husband Jeff; we have two grown children and five beautiful grandchildren. In my free time, I enjoy spending time with my family, gardening, going on long walks and boating.

With the support of the community and gaining efficiencies my goal is to expand the work of United Way of Manistee County by providing additional services that are critical for people to thrive. Below are examples of the work already being carried out through the United Way of Manistee County.

- **Bringing a cross-section of our community together to find long-term solutions through coordinated efforts.** The United Way of Manistee County is achieving this work by providing administrative and fiscal oversight for the Human Services Collaborative Body.
- **Operating programs that advocate and remove barriers.** The United Way of Manistee County believes that food is one of the foundations for a thriving community. That is why they are addressing the root cause of hunger by providing a Feeding America Truck to local food pantries throughout the year.

In addition, the United Way of Manistee County is committed to removing barriers by providing a single number for people to locate needed services such as housing, utilities, food, and mental health. 211 is just a call a way, along with the option to text, email, or Live Chat. This service is free and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Manistee County government and United Way of Manistee County fund the program.

- **Funding local programs and initiatives that enhance our work in the community.** United Way of Manistee County is partnering with Housing North to advocate for affordable housing solutions.

In closing, I have included a link to the initial press release regarding the merger, along with answers to frequently asked questions. <https://www.masoncountyuw.org/mergerfaq>. If you have any question or concerns, please contact me at (231) 843-8593 or via email lynne@masoncountyuw.org.