

Berkshire United Way and Community Impact

Berkshire United Way works to solve the most pressing problems in the Berkshires by building collaborations among businesses, non-profits, faith-based groups, donors, volunteers and the public sector. **Together the community identifies needs, develops solutions, and invests in programs that attack root causes and deliver meaningful and measurable results – all to create sustainable changes in Berkshire County.** Through a series of wide-reaching community conversations, education and employment have been identified as top priorities. As a result, Berkshire United Way invests in programs in early education and care, family literacy, drop-out prevention, mentoring, support services to pregnant/parenting teens, youth substance abuse prevention, job skills/apprenticeships, and financial literacy – just to name some examples. These programs commit to outcomes tied to improvements in education and employment.

Community Impact partners monitor and report results so that everyone – including Berkshire United Way – is held accountable for improving people’s lives. To ensure that a short-term safety net is in place for those in need, we continue to invest in the areas of emergency housing/shelter, elder intervention and nutrition and food pantry support. Impact in this area is also measured to ensure that programs provide the needed support along with referrals to other critical services – all with the aim of assisting individuals and families move toward self sufficiency.

Background and Highlights

In its commitment to track and measure results, Berkshire United Way presents its first Community Impact Investment Report. The 2010 fiscal year marked the first round of investments distributed through a competitive request for proposals (RFP) process. Berkshire United Way volunteers selected and distributed \$1.87 million dollars to 55 programs from 27 organizations. These programs directly impacted nearly 24,000* lives across the county through a diverse set of activities and services.

The report presents the following information:

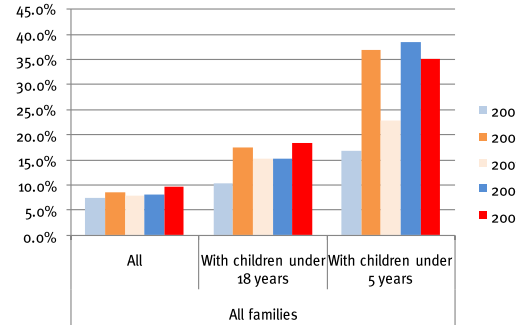
* Does not account for service recipients who participate in more than one program.

A. GOAL-SPECIFIC RESEARCH AND RELEVANT COMMUNITY DATA

For each desired outcome, the report reviews key research findings about the potential threats of community conditions that Berkshire United Way and its partners are working to change.

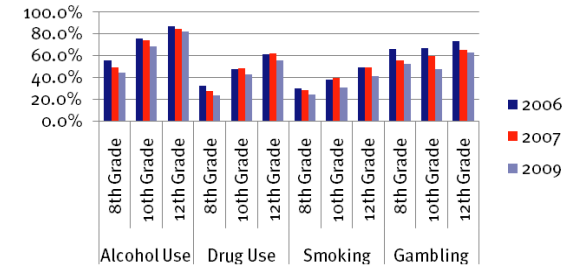
Some Examples:

Families in Poverty, 2009



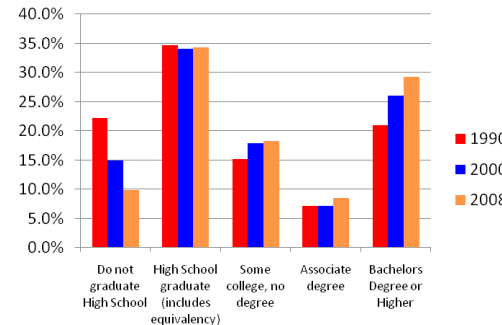
Source: American Community Survey, 2010

Youth Risk-Taking Behaviors



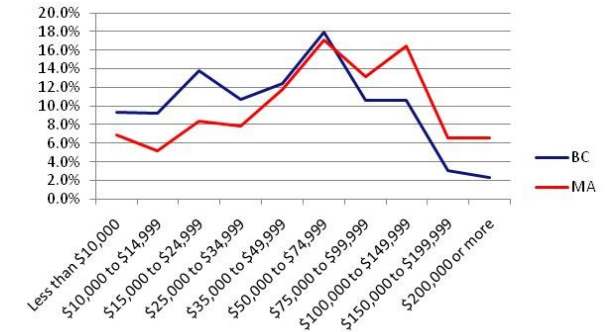
Source: Prevention Needs Assessment, 2007 and 2009

Educational Attainment



Source: American Community Survey, 2010

Median Household Income Distribution, 2009



Source: American Community Survey, 2010

B. FUNDED PARTNER OUTCOMES

The report lists each of the funded partners and programs that received investment from Berkshire United Way and its donors, the work performed by each, and the impacts seen as a direct result. The following chart represents a summary of investment by goal area and program focus.

Investment and Participation by Program Focus Area

Program Focus	# of Participants	Funded Amount
Helping Children and Families Succeed		
Early Childhood Education	520	\$125,000
Stable Home Environment	4,179	\$348,000
Youth Empowerment	7,741	\$641,400
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>12,440</i>	<i>\$1,114,400</i>
Promoting Financial Stability and Independence		
Employment	1,910	\$227,500
Financial Management	69	\$47,750
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>1,979</i>	<i>\$275,250</i>
Meeting Basic Needs		
Housing/Food	6,418	\$244,400
Emergency/Crisis Needs	3,052	\$240,600
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>9,470</i>	<i>\$485,000</i>
Total Investment (FYE 10)	23,889 *	\$1,874,650

C. COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

A number of collaborative community initiatives that began as a direct result of Berkshire United Way’s Community Impact work are highlighted throughout the report. One example:

Early Childhood Education Think Tank

In summer 2010 Berkshire United Way and the Compact for Education began meeting with a group of early childhood education (ECE) and other interested professionals in response to a concern for Berkshire County third grade MCAS English scores, which indicated that nearly 40% of students are not proficient. Investigation led to the agreement on the connection between ECE and third grade reading scores as well as longer-term educational success.

As a result, the group is working to define a county-wide campaign for early childhood education that will include the following components:

- ✓ Educator training and certification, including the role of local colleges in providing training.
- ✓ Student assessment and defining unified performance measures across curricula.
- ✓ Public information campaign to convey the importance of early childhood education to parents and place a spotlight on education as a central value of our region.

Sample Outcomes Reported By Funded Partners:

- ✓ 86% of children demonstrated effective social relationships and interpersonal skills
- ✓ 82% of children had documented intellectual growth
- ✓ 89% of parents communicated with children’s teacher and participated in the classroom
- ✓ 36% of youth reduced risk taking behaviors
- ✓ 41% of program participants gained and maintained employment for a minimum of 6 months
- ✓ 81% of Adult Independent Living Program participants accessed permanent housing
- ✓ 61% of households screened at a food pantry site were helped to obtain food stamps (SNAP)

Community Impact Goals

1. HELPING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SUCCEED
2. PROMOTING FINANCIAL STABILITY AND INDEPENDENCE
3. MEETING BASIC NEEDS

Ongoing Progress

The Investment Report represents a significant effort by Berkshire United Way and its funded partners to track performance and be accountable to the community for results. In 2011, work will continue with a focus on enhancing and growing the full range of community impact activities.

For Example:

- ✓ Funded partner reporting will shift to twice annually and be captured by a new software tool that will improve efficiency, data analysis, and ultimately drive program improvements and funding decision-making to ensure value-driven investment in the future.
- ✓ To ensure all programs are consistently aligned to goals and outcomes, community meetings will be held to discuss and finalize plans to standardize program focus and measures for each goal area.
- ✓ The Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative will move from planning to implementation with the completion of a community-wide survey of Berkshire County youth and adults to assess perspectives on teen pregnancy. Results of the survey will be used to develop county-wide goals and action plans to address teen pregnancy.
- ✓ The Early Childhood Education Think Tank—a community initiative focused on promoting early childhood literacy—has set a goal of being the first “Bookend County” in the nation. This will mean expanding the program by first enlisting all eligible pediatric and family practices in Pittsfield, then broadening throughout the county over time. The team is also planning a spring kick-off event to promote the week of the young child and Pittsfield Reads activities.
- ✓ Berkshire Priorities is working to ensure that Berkshire County children develop the dynamic package of cognitive, social, and character skills needed for success in school and life. They’ve reviewed a number of successful approaches taken by other communities and plan to establish a pilot program with a local school district.



For a complete copy of the Investment Report and more information about our work throughout the year visit us at www.berkshireunitedway.org