

THE IMPACT YOU MADE THROUGH

PATHWAYS

FINANCIAL COACHING PROGRAM

NOVEMBER 2023

We are so excited to share this Impact Report with you, our amazing donor, to show you the difference you have made in the lives of your neighbors, right here in Pickens County, through “Pathways to Prosperity,” also known as PATHWAYS.

Pathways is a 6–18 month intensive, one-on-one financial coaching program designed to help hardworking, low-income individuals and families with the skills, knowledge and resources they need to learn how to make good financial decisions, take control over their finances and achieve financial freedom.

Inside, you will find stories of **lives that have been changed because of your generosity.** Your support of United Way is truly making a difference for struggling people in your community. **Thank you.**



United Way
of Pickens County

AN UPDATE FROM THE STEWARD FAMILY

The first family to graduate from Pathways was the Steward family. With three children, and one on the way, the Stewards were unable to work during the pandemic. They were sinking financially, so in desperation, Christina Steward reached out to the School District Family Liaison who referred her to United Way.

Our Pathways financial coaches worked with the Stewards for over a year. There were highs and lows, pure love and tough love, but this family persevered. Joe Walker and Jeremy Price were the Steward's success coaches. Christina was a Certified Nursing Assistant and worked at an assisted living facility in Pickens County. With the encouragement of her coaches, she went back to school to become a registered nurse.

Six months after graduating from Pathways, we received this email from Christina out of the blue. Here it is, in her own words. It makes it all worth it.

"It has been long due that we reach out and give a family update to everyone at United Way. I worked really hard, and passed all of my nursing school classes! I graduated from Tri County Technical College in December. I went on and passed my NCLEX in January of this year. I am now an RN! I have just this week accepted a position at Baptist Easley Hospital. John left a fast food management position in February, and has been working instead with an electrician for pretty great pay. The kids are all growing and doing really well! The oldest starts high school in August, and the baby, who is no longer a baby, will start K3 in August. Abigail continues to do pageants and is now an ever improving, and most gifted for her age group, competition dancer. Alexander is into basketball and fishing, and could spend days doing nothing else.

We were also able to save some money for several months, and were able to scratch family vacation off of our goal/wish list. We spent a wonderful, magical week in the happiest place on Earth, Disney! It was the best trip, and we are already saving up for the next trip, and continue to save up for a house some day.

Please feel free to share updates and photos with all at United Way who played a part in our education and independence building! We are doing so very well, and I'm sorry it took me so long to update. I knew there were things coming up that I'd definitely want to share with y'all.

Thankfully yours, the Steward Family"

Those who attended the United Way Annual Meeting in August were fortunate to hear Christina share her family's story first-hand. It was so special for her to speak at Tri-County Technical College where, just upstairs, her picture hangs on the wall in the nursing student class photo. We are so proud of Christina and her whole family for doing the hard work and changing their lives. **Your generous support makes it possible for the Stewards and other Pathways participants to become financially stable and independent.**



Christina, John and the children are financially stable and continue to thrive because of you!



Christina touched the hearts of all who attended the Annual Meeting.

TYLER REMINDS US TO LOOK FOR THE HELPERS

On February 28, 2023, Pathways participant Tyler Carson graduated from the Pathways program after 15 months. We always have a graduation ceremony for our participants who have worked so hard to better their lives. At this ceremony, Tyler spoke so eloquently of his life, his struggles and what Pathways did for him. It was hard not to cry tears of joy. That evening he posted this comment on Facebook:



Tyler received a standing ovation when he shared his story of hard work and success at a recent major donor dinner.

"I am so honored and humbled to have been on a financial coaching journey the past 15 months. I love my family at United Way. This program has changed my life. The past two years I have struggled with deep hurts that manifested into poor financial habits. For a long time, I never practiced what I preached. I am so thankful for this team and the love and accountability. My life has been changed. If you live in Pickens County and are in need of financial coaching, please look into the Pathways program. I am so thankful to the good and generous donor who sponsored me. As Mr. Rogers would say, 'Look for the Helpers.'"

That very night, we received a \$100 donation from Tyler for the Pathways program. Of course, we encouraged him to save it instead, but he replied, "I have it in my budget to contribute. Don't you worry."

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Samantha Lesley, a single mother with a daughter, was referred to Pathways by Family Promise of Pickens County. Samantha's childhood home was filled with addiction and chaos, and no one seemed to mind when she stopped going to school after the 8th grade. In spite of her limited education, she excelled at Adult Education, quickly obtaining her GED shortly after beginning Pathways.

Samantha is bright and determined. She started a manufacturing job that allowed her to work weekends, so she could spend time with her daughter. Family members babysat when she worked, so there were no child care costs.

Through Pathways, she set her first goal... to save money for stable housing. She reached that goal by May, with the help of Salvation Army and Family Promise, who covered deposit charges. She took a part-time fast-food job to meet her expenses and established her very first savings account. But what she is most proud of is how, through her efforts in Pathways, she raised her credit score from 430 to 710! We are beyond proud, too!

Samantha enrolled in Tri-County Technical College's I-BEST program and graduated in early May. That same week, she applied for financial aid and enrolled to pursue an Associate Degree in Criminal Justice with an emphasis in Paralegal. She qualified for grants and has no need for student loans, which makes this educational and career advancement possible without straining her budget.

Samantha proves that if you have drive, ambition and a program like Pathways, anything is possible.



Because of you, Samantha and her daughter are thriving.

YOU HAVE THE POWER TO CHANGE LIVES

Somewhere in Pickens County, a hardworking family is struggling to make ends meet. They live paycheck to paycheck, and just one single unexpected expense can push them over the edge. Without support, they struggle with issues like excessive debt, bad credit, low wages, and high medical expenses. They never learned how to manage their money. Good habits were not modeled for them. And now, they have no idea how to get out of the financial hole they are in.



But you can help them. **Your United Way donation will help a struggling family learn how to make good financial decisions, take control over their finances and achieve financial freedom.**

For a family who doesn't have the knowledge or ability to build emergency savings, one lost paycheck or unexpected expense can send them in a downward spiral. For some, the only option in an emergency is to pursue high-interest payday loans to make ends meet.

Your United Way donation will provide intensive financial coaching and support for hardworking people in our community who have the desire and commitment to build financial security for themselves and their families.

This financial coaching was a lifeline for the Samantha, Tyler and the Steward family. Because of your faithful generosity, Pathways was there to help.

Many of your neighbors are in need of the rescue that Pathways and other United Way services provide. Won't you help them, too?

With your gift, a family will be able to provide for themselves and those they love. They will learn how to become financially self-sufficient and break the vicious cycle of poverty.

In financially capable communities, everyone benefits. **Please make your donation today to help.**

THANK YOU IN ADVANCE!

Your generosity today will make a real difference tomorrow... for hard working Pickens County families who strive to succeed but struggle. Your compassion TRULY does so much good.

My gift to help a struggling family:

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$500 \$_____ to help as much as possible.

Donate securely online at www.uwpickens.org/donate or scan the QR code with your phone's camera. Make checks payable to United Way of Pickens County and mail them to PO Box 96, Easley, SC 29641.



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