

SHAW LOCAL News Network

Kishwaukee United Way distributes \$160K to 17 DeKalb County nonprofits at Annual Day of Caring



Angel Hannah, community outreach director for Kishwaukee United Way, takes a selfie with everyone who turned up for the 2023 Kishwaukee United Way annual Day of Caring event on June 15, 2023. (Camden Lazenby)

By Camden Lazenby
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DeKALB – Kishwaukee United Way kicked off its annual day of caring this week by distributing \$160,000 to 17 different agencies that provide services to those in need throughout DeKalb County.

Cami Loving, community engagement director for the Voluntary Action Center said the \$25,000 given to the action center will shore up an unexpected budget shortfall. The center coordinates Meals on Wheels programs in DeKalb, Bureau, La Salle, Kendall and Putnam counties, and provides rides for individuals for who may be disabled or elderly throughout DeKalb County.

“A funding source didn’t come through one time and we’re using things like the Give DeKalb County and donations like this to offset that loss, so we’re able to continue to provide cold sack lunches or cold sack meals to our Meals on Wheels clients.”

Community Coordinated Child Care (4-C) also received \$25,000, tying with the Voluntary Action Center for the most money received from the Kishwaukee United Way. Other organizations that received money included Hope Haven at \$15,000, Safe Passage at \$15,000, Children’s Learning Center at \$10,000 and Barb Food Mart at \$10,000, all based in DeKalb.

The local United Way’s mission is to provide a better quality of life to the communities it serves through collaboration, resource mobilization and volunteer work. Considering their goal, the Kishwaukee United Way Board of Directors divided the money they approved to give to 17 partner agencies into three impact areas: health, education and income. The board decided to give \$70,500 to health focused agencies, \$61,000 to financial stability agencies and \$28,500 to education oriented agencies.

Executive Director and President of Kishwaukee United Way Michele Vaughn said United Way raised the \$160,000 through workplace campaigns, micro grants and donations from individuals. One of those funding options was front and center Thursday morning.

ComcastNBC gave Kishwaukee United Way \$10,000 to go toward teaching digital literacy.

“As we all know broadband access and learning is so critical in today’s world. People can really only apply for jobs if they go online. They can get education online, they can work online. There’s so many things to be done, and what this grant will help do is bridge that digital divide,” said Joan Sage, government and community affairs manager for ComcastNBC in DeKalb County.

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Cami Loving, for Voluntary Action Center, stands with the Kishwaukee United Way’s Board of Directors after the action center was awarded \$25,000 on June 15, 2023. (Camden Lazenby)



A crowd of a couple dozen gathered outside at 2201 North First Street in DeKalb on June 15, 2023 for the beginning of the Kishwaukee United Way annual Day of Caring event. (Camden Lazenby)

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For Vaughn, the Day of Caring event – which also sees volunteers from the 17 partner agencies go to a handful of locations to do volunteer work after being presented with the funding from United Way – was extra special because it was her first.

“I’m excited to be a part of the DeKalb community, I moved here with intentionality to serve. So I consider myself a servant leader, and I’m very glad to be a part of Kishwaukee United Way,” Vaughn said.

Although Vaughn started her job at the beginning of the year, she said she understands Kishwaukee United Way needs its “partners to help mobilize this community.”

“One organization can’t do it. So we need a community to come together and move people forward and upward, so this is very important,” Vaughn said.