

SHAW LOCAL News Network

Kishwaukee United Way distributes \$175K to 17 DeKalb County nonprofits at annual Day of Caring

Grant announcement served as kickoff to Kishwaukee United Way’s annual volunteer event



Kishwaukee United Way Executive Director and President Michele Vaughn, Ed.D.
(Photo Provided by Kishwaukee United Way)

By Megann Horstead
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DeKALB – From the DeKalb Area Women’s Center and Barb Food Mart to Voluntary Action Center and Opportunity House, 80 volunteers turned out to lend a hand at one of 13 community volunteer sites Thursday.

The occasion was Kishwaukee United Way’s annual Day of Caring event in DeKalb.

Kishwaukee United Way Executive Director and President Michele Vaughn announced during the event that the nonprofit will distribute \$175,000 to its partner agencies.

“It’s definitely going to make an impact because the organizations that we’re helping to fund, they have a mission as well,” Vaughn said. “Their mission needs dollars behind that mission in order for residents to be participants. ... Kishwaukee United Way is all about education, health and income – the basic needs in life – so we’re

hoping that \$175,000 will stretch over the next fiscal year and meet people where they’re at.”

Among the local beneficiaries of the grants was Greater Family Health.

“I think when you have something new and new energy, it kind of sparks a new interest for others to come on board. I think the people are excited for where Kishwaukee United Way is headed.” - Kishwaukee United Way Executive Director and President Michele Vaughn

Jared Chimil, community outreach coordinator at Greater Family Health in Elgin, said the \$4,500 given to the agency will go a long way toward making a difference in the community. “At Greater Family Health, we provide primary care services to everyone, regardless of their ability to pay,” Chimil said. “Sometimes they’re privately insured, but sometimes they come in without insurance. They’re not able to pay for the health care that we provide them. So, receiving grants, such as this, really helps us help more people in the community, again, so that they’re able to access primary health care.”

Other organizations that received money included Hope Haven at \$12,500, Safe Passage at \$20,000, Children’s Learning Center at \$10,000, The Salvation Army at \$4,000, RAMP at \$8,000, Adventure Works of DeKalb County at \$8,000, 4C:



Paul Callighan, a member of the Kishwaukee United Way board of directors, hands out T-shirts to volunteers Thursday, June 13, 2024, during the kickoff of Kishwaukee United Way’s annual Day of Caring event. (Mark Busch)

Community Coordinated Child Care at \$28,000, the Family Service Agency of DeKalb County at \$12,500, and Youth Outlook at \$3,000, all based in DeKalb.

In keeping with its mission, Kishwaukee United Way decided to distribute funding to partner agencies meeting three objectives: health, education and income. Through the grants, the local United Way distributed \$18,000 toward education-focused organizations, \$57,500 toward financial stability and \$99,500 toward health.

The Day of Caring event has grown to a record level over the past year, Vaughn said.

The volunteers did painting, lawn care, food pantry work and playground cleanup at the 13 community volunteer sites, which also included Children’s Learning Center, The Growing Place, Habitat for Humanity of DeKalb County and Court Appointed Special Advocates of DeKalb County, Vaughn said.

“We more than tripled our attendance from last year,” Vaughn said. “It’s many different things you can contribute the growth to. I’ve been in this position for one year now, so it’s new leadership here. I’m always excited for the community and helping people. I think when you have something new and new energy, it kind of sparks a new interest for others to come on board. I think the people are excited for where Kishwaukee United Way is headed.”



Representatives from funded partner agencies along with the Kishwaukee United Way board of directors gather for a photo at their office Thursday, June 13, 2024, with a check representing the amount of grant allocations by the Kishwaukee United Way this year. Thursday was the Kishwaukee United Way’s annual Day of Caring event. (Mark Busch)