



2016-2018

Community Conversations Report Executive Summary

An open and honest dialogue with
Jackson County residents about the
condition of our community.



Jackson County
United Way

Jackson County United Way has been a respected convener of resources.

In our **55 year history** in this community we have worked to make a difference, from raising financial resources through workplace campaigns, to putting volunteers to work through our annual Day of Caring.

We believe **we can do more**. We are prioritizing our work, investing in additional ways we can improve the lives of all who call Jackson County home. Our community told us the kind of place they aspire to build. We want you to help us get there. We hope this information helps you better understand your community and shows you ways you can work alongside United Way to help us **make a difference**.

For two years, Jackson County United Way has listened to our county. Using an approach developed and honed over decades by the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, United Way 'turned outward' from our boardroom and committees. We asked community members to tell us their hopes, concerns, and actions they wanted to see that would create lasting change. United Way learned that if we made more intentional choices about creating change, we could have a greater impact in our county.

Our staff and volunteers conducted over 35 Community Conversations, in addition to many meetings with local business leaders, these conversations involved 375 Jackson County residents of all ages and were held at a variety of locations. We talked to people in active recovery and current use at area places of worship and library branches, and talked with teens engaged in prevention programs.

Over the course of these conversations, this is what we heard our county hopes for:

Jackson County residents want a community
where people *choose* to live,
a community that is healthy and safe.

They want a community that is *alive*, vibrant and
growing with places to go and things to do.

We want to be known as a place
where we *work together for solutions*
to take care of our neighbors and generations.

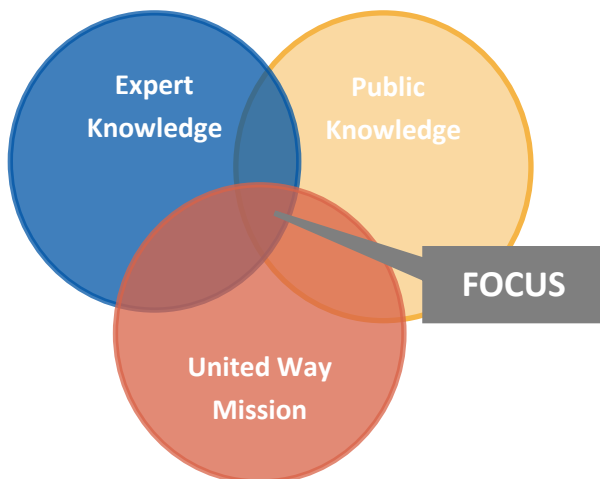
A recent multi-state study, *United Way ALICE Report*, completed by Rutgers University in partnership with United Ways around the country showed a growing segment of our population in Jackson County is working and staying above the poverty line, but not able to attain financial stability.

The MISSION of Jackson County United Way is to **assess needs**, **secure resources**, and **strategically invest** those to **create measurable, lasting change** in the areas of **health**, **education**, and **financial stability** of **every** person in Jackson County.

United Way learned through those conversations and our own data that working families struggling to make ends meet were at greatest risk of being left behind, even as Jackson County continues to grow economically.

We found for these participants in our conversations, there were many barriers between what they wanted for our county and what together we could achieve. United Way understands for those 3,830 Jackson County households struggling, attaining financial stability is difficult due to some of the following barriers: community connectedness and collaboration, accessing resources, lack of safe places to go and low cost things to do, language barriers, and stigma of asking for or receiving assistance.

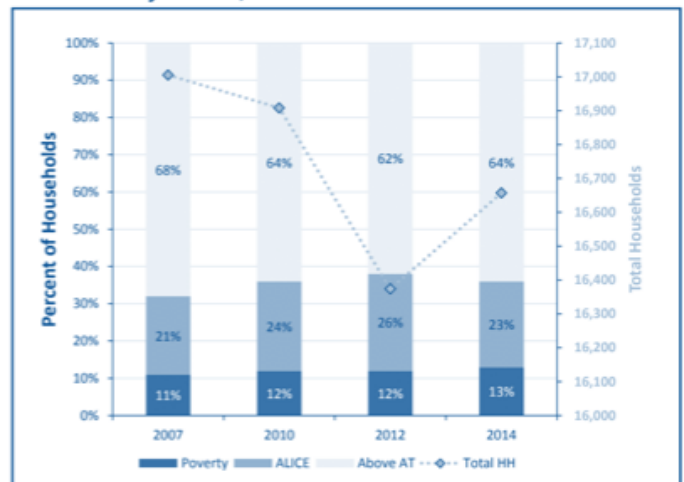
These barriers, faced by this growing portion of our community, are the intersection of this public knowledge, our expert knowledge, and our vision—a Jackson County where all individuals and families discover and achieve their potential. This is the new focus for our work.



We know that if we can tackle specific issues facing this population, it will have a positive ripple effect on all community members, not just those in need.

United Way fights for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in our county. We believe that our role as a trusted community partner can begin to drive conversations about potential solutions to issues faced by this segment of our population.

Households by Income, 2007-2014



We continue to create opportunities for collective impact where all organizations are working to create a stronger community. We hope the information contained in this report helps you better understand your county and shows you ways you can work alongside United Way as handraisers, collaborators, and game changers.

We know how much work we have done together and we look forward to seeing how much more we can do together as we continue to LIVE UNITED!