



**United Way of
Williamson County**

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United Way....which one? Ours is different.

Jennifer A. Edwards/United Way of Williamson County

United Ways across the country have been shifting their business models to move from traditional roles as fundraisers to more involved roles as “community impact” agencies. Hundreds of United Ways have changed their funding priorities and thereby, their relationships with nonprofit agencies.

Various United Ways in Central Texas have gone about this process with exceedingly different results. I firmly believe my United Way - United Way of Williamson County - got it right. People often paint the United Way system with one broad brush, but United Way of Williamson County (UWWC) is as unique as the community we serve. Our story is far different from the one that has been reported lately. United Way of Williamson County has philosophy and investment strategy that we are proud to talk about.

The Williamson County community is one of the fastest growing in Texas. We’re in a population boom and we know it. Just ask Mayor Love of Hutto – the fastest growing city in Texas. Our nonprofit infrastructure is barely keeping up in the urban areas of Georgetown, Round Rock, Cedar Park and Leander. It is falling behind or non-existent in smaller towns like Taylor, Jarrell, Granger and Liberty Hill.

For our United Way to not financially support basic needs service providers in these communities that desperately need to establish deeper social service infrastructure would be wrong. We understand that no social issue exists in isolation. Our UWWC investment strategy reflects this. We are dedicated to supporting both “nets” and “ladders”. By that I mean, we support equally both safety net issues (food, shelter & safety) AND “ladders to success” programs addressing financial stability, education and healthcare. Some United Ways have chosen to fund only the “ladders” model – we have chosen to fund both.

Our nonprofit partners in this work are extremely valuable to our community. They may not be funded by United Way Capital Area (in fact, probably aren’t) but they are funded by United Way of Williamson County. We dedicate 40% of our investment funds in these areas of food, shelter & safety. We support all the major food pantries in our county. We fund the primary crisis care providers for women and children. We fund agencies serving the elderly and the disabled among us. We’ve partnered with the American Red Cross of Central Texas to expand their services in our county. Why do we do this? Because the facts, the public and our donors insist it is critically important. Because the nonprofits, in a competitive volunteer-led process, present excellent solutions worthy of investment. I’m proud to work for a United Way that made a conscious decision to support the most vulnerable in Williamson County.

I think most folks truly don't know what happens to their money after they make a United Way donation. I compare a UWWC gift to investing in a good mutual fund. Your investment is strategically leveraged into funding for many worthy charitable solutions in your own community. The fund portfolio is balanced in both "nets" and "ladders" programs and rounded out with disaster preparedness and unmet need/infrastructure programs. Nonprofits receiving funds are monitored and held accountable. Your investment is overseen by community volunteers who leverage their expertise to further increase the ROI. The ROI is clearly evident in the efficient, excellent work that is done throughout the process and throughout the county.

United Way of Williamson County is not the same as every other United Way – nor is our community. In our role as both funder and convener, we encourage all nonprofits with appropriate solutions for Williamson County to get involved. If you call this county home, join us in advancing the common good by investing in United Way of Williamson County. It can't be done without you.

All United Ways are different. In Williamson County you have a choice. Please support the only one that serves you exclusively. At United Way of Williamson County, our vision is "in Williamson County everyone has a hopeful future." We are proud to be working to make this vision a reality for you and your neighbors.

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