

Community Unlimited Annual Report

October 1, 2019 - September 30, 2020

221 Ellen Street
Union City MI 49094
517-741-4656
www.communityunlimited.org



Mission: To build a community of character for all generations to interact and grow as we live, work and play - a healthy community for all. **Long Term Goals:** Youth residing in the area communities will learn and practice the skills of economic self-sufficiency, healthy relationships, and community involvement. Residents of the area communities will have resources to meet the needs of youth.

History: Community Unlimited was established on September 25, 1999 by a group of citizens wishing to improve the community, defined as the geographical area served by Union City Community Schools. Non-profit 501(c)3 status was granted in December 2000, with final determination in 2005. The Board of Directors represents diverse age groups and the geographic service area. Active local and regional partnerships provide programming support and organizational sustainability. Community Unlimited is a member of American/Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children and UC Rotary Club.

Annual Board Goal

To meet as a Board at least quarterly; to create a Personnel Committee.

Board of Directors (current): Meets at the Community Center, 221 Ellen Street, Union City; meets quarterly at dates set the annual meeting. Call the office for dates.

- Judy Knowles, President
- Pam Smith, Vice-President
- Faith Robertson, Treasurer
- Alona Hayden, Secretary
- Diane Haley
- Deb Geiger
- Stacy Guertler
- Susan Morton
- Julie Dunks

Current Central Office Staff: Jenna VanDyke, Executive Director; Teasha McIntosh, Office Manager; Jolene Yeakey, Accountant/HR; Connie Kennedy, Grants Manager.

A significant change in 2019-20 was CU leadership. Julie Dunks, our longtime Executive Director, departed in October 2019. Despite a search for a new ED, the Board Personnel Committee did not find a candidate with the requisite skills. It was decided to operate with temporary leadership until the committee felt more qualified applicants would be available. **Connie Kennedy** took on the main ED responsibilities with substantial assistance from **Jolene Yeakey** and **Teasha McIntosh**.

In June 2020 the Personnel Committee offered the position to **Jenna VanDyke**. She brings twelve years of experience in early childhood, with ten of those being as Director of a childcare center with more than thirty employees. In addition, she has experience working with school-age children in out-of-school time programming. This year has been like no other, and her expertise has been put to the test immediately. We have experienced a smooth leadership transition and are very happy to have her on board.

2019-20 Program Reports

BLAST provided before school programming five days a week at Union City High, Middle and Elementary Schools. Former Site Coordinators, **Malinda Olmsted** (UCMS) and **Cher Troup** (UCES), both long-term BLAST employees, provided safe space for children an hour before school during the 2019-20 school year until the Governor closed schools in March 2020. While no participation data was collected, attendance was consistently low at all locations. Due to the coronavirus safety precautions in place, this program was suspended for the 2020-21 school year. This program is not operating for the 2020-21 school year due to the coronavirus response, but will be redesigned as the school district normalizes.

The MI Department of Education has decided to postpone the offer of the next 21st Century Community Learning Centers RFP until winter 2021. A successful application would mean new programs would start at the beginning of the 2022-23 school year.

Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP): GSRP utilizes high quality High Scope curriculum to prepare children from low income families **for success in Kindergarten**. For the 2019-20 school year CU operated **thirteen GSRP classrooms** in Union City, Tekonsha, Homer, Harper Creek, Pennfield and Lakeview school districts, serving a total of **218 children**. Direct instruction in classrooms ended in March 2020 because of the Governor's order to close schools. Our teams each developed and implemented distance learning for their students. This offered remote child and parent engagement, educational supplies, and resource information. The families were able to participate in weekly school district food distributions.

A great deal of change has occurred for the 2020-21 school year. There are again thirteen classrooms with thirty-seven classroom staff, but no longer includes Pennfield district. Marshall School District GSRP classes are now operated by CU at Gordon Elementary School. The coronavirus has proven to be an entirely new type of challenge. CU offer both in-seat and remote/distance learning options. Distance learning, which is now more defined by state and CISD guidance, is a regular option for parents, but it is also utilized when a child or classroom quarantines due coronavirus exposure.

We continue to work toward our local school districts embracing GSRP as a vital contribution to the public school educational mission. We promote family engagement by offering family activities and the services of Family Liaison staff, who assist individual families.

CU-Early Childhood Connections: **Staci Beckmeyer**, our trained **Family Coach**, provided services to families in Union City, Sherwood, Burlington, Athens and Tekonsha for the entire year, despite the challenges. She sent activity packets home, maintained contact with all of her caseload families, and modified the Diaper Pantry to respond to the increased need.

She continues to provide on-going resources and support to families with children ages 0-5 utilizing **Parents as Teachers** curriculum. For 2019-20: the caseload included 21 families with 27 children; 69 children ages 0-5 were newly registered in **Imagination Library** (each receives an age-appropriate book per month in the mail); 47 families had **Welcome Baby Baskets** delivered, and; books were distributed thru "Happy Endings by CU". The Little Free Library remains outside the CU building. All children in the program increased their ASQ development scores this year. This program operates a Diaper Pantry in Union City and Tekonsha. Financial partners are **local donors, CISD, Athens Area Community Foundation, Tekonsha Library**, and the

Research Club. This program has an active donor campaign to raise funds for the Imagination Library and Diaper Pantries.

After School Pack Program provided over **1800 packs** for about **80 children** prior to the COVID-19 school closures in March. Each pack provided a weekend supply of nutritious, kid-friendly food. We want to thank all of the donors to this program this year for their generous donations: the UC Elementary, Middle, and High Schools; the Food Bank of South Central Michigan; Walters-Dimmick Petroleum; UC PS Food Mart, and; Ladies of Our Savior Lutheran Church. We also want to thank the UCHS students, staff and coaches, Mr. Bob Collins, and the UC GSRP staff for helping pack each month. After the school closures, we were able to donate all remaining packets, as well as SM Food Bank food boxes, to supplement the UCCS effort. We worked side by side over 11 weeks to provide food assistance distribution to community families. Protecting our children from hunger is truly a community effort!

VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance): CU's free income tax site opened as planned in early February, closed in March, then modified procedures to attempt completing the program by July 15. It prepared 257 state and federal returns for a federal return amount of **\$281,902**, and state refund amount of **\$109,033**. Earned Income Tax Credit refunds increases local spending, as well as helps our community's high-need children and families. **Thank you** to our volunteers: **Dennis Stanton, Sheryl Watson, Anne Lightfoote, Paula Blue, Judy Knowles**, as well as staff **Teasha McIntosh and Kristera Neal**. Our VITA site will provide free tax preparation for the 2021 tax season at the CU Building, but its form is yet to be determined. Please call the office if you would like to volunteer as a tax preparer.

Community Unlimited Building – Our Continuing Funding Challenge

Renovation of our building began four years ago. Our plan specified phases to accommodate our fundraising progress, as well as the need to work around the GSRP school year. Four years ago we replaced the heating system and half the windows and doors, as well as remove asbestos. The **Bronson Family** generously donated an additional significant sum to finish Phase 1 by installing the remaining windows and doors.

Three years ago we renovated the main office area, and two years ago we completed the Executive Director's office, a children's restroom, an adult restroom. This is significant, because the plumbing had been original to the building and was a constant headache. The next project was to be the completion of the GSRP classrooms. However, sufficient money was not available in the 2019-20 budget. Last year roof leaks were temporarily repaired, but the need for a new roof rose to the top of the building renovation project list, an estimated cost of \$40,000.

As this is being written, there is GSRP capital outlay money available for the coming year. We have submitted requests through the CISD and state approval processes for a new roof, completion of the building HVAC system, and a start to a classroom renovation. Some of this space is shared space with GSRP, so needs to be funded with CU funds. The building renovation program has a significant way to go to completion, so needs to remain a central fundraising project of the CU Board.

Sustainability

In 2018-19 there was a significant change in programming with revenue and expense impact, because of no longer having the 21st CCLC MDE grant. This affect has continued into the 2019-20 fiscal year.

The annual audit report prepared by Taylor, Plant and Watkins, PC, Coldwater MI is available upon request.

- Total revenue was **\$2,044,049** (**\$1,950,565**, 2018-19):

- **\$1,961,059 (95.94%)** (96.8%, 2018-19) of the revenue came from program **contracts** with CISD (GSRP) and the State of Michigan (21st CCLC and food programs) and other small grants
- **\$82,990 (4.1%)** (1.5%, 2018-19) were donations, fundraising, field trip fees, and miscellaneous revenue.

Fundraising: The **GLOW RUN** had a notable "run". However, its last year was in 2019. We continue to appreciate the contributions of **Cher Troup, Malinda Olmsted, Megan Burgett**, as well as their many volunteers who made it run smoothly for **SEVEN** years! The fund developed from the profits of the Glow Run is devoted to out-of-school time programming for Union City children and youth. This fund paid for the expenses of the morning hours at each of the three UCCS schools last year. .

Fundraising in 2020-21 will include Imagination Library/books, the Diaper Pantry, the After School Pack Program, and the CU building renovation. Development of a long-term plan for BLAST program funding will be a major 2021 task.

Our Funding Partners:

- **Calhoun Intermediate School District** contracted with CU to provide thirteen full day, state-licensed GSRP classrooms and Family Coaching in rural Calhoun County.
- **Michigan's Child and Adult Care Food Program** reimbursed meals/snacks.
- **Binda Foundation** funded \$16,000 per year for two years (2020-22) for our CU-ECC program.
- **Branch County United Way** - We received an allocation of \$10,000 for the CU-ECC program.

The **CU Endowment fund** with the **Branch County Community Foundation** has a value as of September 30, 2020 of \$28,461.57, an increase from last year's \$26,206.68. **We appreciate having community members contribute to this fund directly.** Send donations to Branch County Community Foundation, 2 W. Chicago St., Coldwater, MI 49036 and indicate on your check that it is for the CU Endowment. Thank you!

Community Unlimited is sustained by passionate people who contribute to a healthy, thriving community. We appreciate our volunteers and employees who embrace our dedication to children, engaged parents with a strong connection to the community. CU is known for being eager to learn, striving toward excellence and embracing best practice procedures, squeezing a lot out of a little while providing high quality programs, maintaining our sense of humor as we push beyond our comfort zones, taking sensible risks - and **always** asking "how does this positively impact children and families?"

Established in 1999, **Community Unlimited** is committed to improving the **quality of life** for all who live in Burlington, Sherwood and Union City. We provide enriching opportunities for **children and their families**, with a focus on **early childhood** and helping **youth** achieve their academic goals and practice community involvement.

Keep in touch with what we are doing at www.communityunlimited.org or like us on Facebook!

This organization is an equal opportunity provider.

Questions? Contact Connie Kennedy at 517-741-4656 or ckennedy@communityunlimited.org

