

# CAMPAIGN LEADER

## Email Short Stories



United Way of San Antonio  
and Bexar County

**Impact Area:** Safety Net

**Subject:** Empower People like Av’Ron to Succeed through Rental Assistance

**Body:**

Av’Ron’s mother was doing everything she could for her family and it still seemed like it wasn’t enough for them to succeed in life.

Working long hours and without family to support her as a single mother, Av’Ron’s mother didn’t have “access to anything.” Despite her hard work she struggled to make ends meet, to keep the lights on or to maintain reliable transportation. Growing up with financial hardship, Av’Ron did whatever he could as a child to help his family.

“Watching my mom’s struggles as a kid was extremely hard,” Av’Ron says. “I would things for next to nothing at the time, to cash in a food stamp for cash, I would take a \$5 food stamp out of a book and buy something for 25 cents and give her back the \$4 and change because that was the only way we could pay for a cab or a bus. I kind of took on that responsibility as the second oldest child to do that for her.”

Feeling trapped in a cycle of never knowing if they would keep a roof over their heads, Av’Ron’s mother finally discovered a United Way Safety Net Impact Partner who could provide them with rental assistance. This life-changing service gave her the support she needed to get her family’s finances back on track.

“For my mom to finally reach out and say she needed help, that was humbling for her because she tried to keep a job and she wanted help but we didn’t have access to anything. We didn’t have access to a vehicle or basic necessities,” Av’Ron says. “The rental assistance helped us get the lights back on full-time and it provided her with the stability to be able to get to work, to find a higher-paying job. It changed our lives on so many levels and helped us as kids feel a little bit more comfortable in our skin,” Av’Ron added.

Today, Av’Ron says he is “living the dream” working for a “dream company” locally. Most of all, he saw his mother come out the other side of adversity. “Seeing my mom thrive and her still surviving, my mom is living proof that our story wasn’t finished. I think the support my mom received through United Way is a huge reason why we are here today. United Way helped us be able to get our lives back together and from there, there was no looking back.

You can support families like Av’Ron’s who need a safety net of services to get them back on track to stability during times of crisis. Please give to our 2024 United Way Campaign. **[insert link here]**

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**Impact Area:** Ready Children

**Subject:** Give Parents the Resources Needed to Foster Early Learning. Amparo's Story

**Body:**

In the early 2000s, Amparo was adapting to a new way of life with her 3-year-old daughter Mariana after relocating to the U.S. Like many first-time parents, Amparo thought she was “making mistakes” when it came to fostering her daughter’s early development and didn’t know what to do to change that.

“She cried a lot because she was very attached to me,” Amparo said. “I was making mistakes. How was she doing to be independent? And I really didn’t know how,” she added.

That’s when she discovered a parent-child education program with United Way Ready Children Impact Partner AVANCE. The evidence-based program focuses on parents being their child’s “first teacher” by helping them create deeper connections with their children and preparing their children for school.

Amparo quickly saw the transformation in her daughter after employing what she learned in the program. “She began to recognize colors, patterns and letters. She began to educate herself very quickly. When she started pre-kindergarten a year later she was already very advanced. She was no longer afraid,” Amparo says. Amparo would go on to use this program with her second daughter, Sofía and today her daughters are thriving in their careers as successful college graduates.

“I realize the great importance that we as parents have, as the first teachers. We do not have that education sometimes because I did not have it,” Amparo adds. “From 0 to 5-years-old it is the most important thing to give them everything.”

To support parents like Amparo as they foster early learning for San Antonio’s young children, please give to our 2024 United Way Campaign. [\[insert link here\]](#)

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**Impact Area:** Successful Students

**Subject:** Give Students the Resources they need to stay in school. Bryana's Story.

**Body:**

At 15-years-old and still in high school, Bryana found herself without the ability to care for her newborn daughter during school hours. Bryana, who already faced barriers to her education due to her disability with dyslexia, was disconnected from school.

“I got pregnant in eighth grade and it was a tough road,” Bryana says. “I wasn’t going to school. I think it was already going to be two or three months, so I went looking for a school that had a daycare. None of them really had one,” she says.

That is when she discovered United Way partner Healy-Murphy, who provides resources in both Ready Children and Successful Students Impact Areas. With this support, Bryana had finally found a school she could attend while trusting that her new-born was safe in the school’s child care center.

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“It made me feel really happy that I was able to give my daughter a good opportunity to learn at a young age,” Bryana says. “They accepted me with my disability and didn’t just see me as another girl that got pregnant.”

This support opened doors for Bryana and motivated her to achieve more in her education, including graduating high school a year early. “Without United Way, I don’t think I would have ever been able to graduate,” she says. “Going through the program was actually the first time that someone actually believed in me like that.”

You can help students stay connected to school and keep them on track to future success. Please give to our 2024 United Way Campaign.

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**Impact Area:** Strong Individuals and Families

**Subject:** Maintaining stability through mental health challenges. Thomas’s story.

**Body:**

Newly retired after a long career, Thomas was immediately thrust into a new full-time role as caretaker for his mother. After watching his grandfather succumb to Alzheimer’s disease when he was younger, Thomas was now faced helping his mother maintain quality of life with Alzheimer’s as well.

“I was feeling a wide variety of emotions, anxiety and fear. Not knowing what was to come,” Thomas says. “My family and I are willing to do pretty much anything to make her quality of life better.”

That’s when Thomas was connected to United Way Strengthening Individuals and Families Impact Area Partner Meals on Wheels, who provided Thomas with the respite and support he needed to become a better caretaker for his mother.

“What they do is educate the caregivers for people with dementia in order to make life better for everyone,” he said. “All of those things help the caretaker deal with a lot of the anxiety and makes you much more confident,” Thomas added.

Six years after his mother’s Alzheimer’s diagnosis, Thomas’s family has greater stability after this life-changing event. More than anything else, Thomas has the tools he needs to ensure his mother’s quality of life is as good as it can possibly be during this stage of her life.

“I believe the value in United Way is tremendous and I know that for me personally, for 30 years as a policeman, I have given to United Way,” Thomas said. “Not everybody understands is the value of United Way and how far the dollar can stretch and the impact it has. My mom has continued to live with Alzheimer’s for six years and I attribute that longevity to us being able to participate in these programs that are free to us, but they’re free to us because of the generosity of other people donating to United Way.”

To support families like Thomas’s during life-changing events like, please give to our 2024 United Way Campaign. [\[insert link here\]](#)

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**United Way Program:** Dual Generation

**Subject:** Giving Parents the Parents and Their Children Achieve More. Kiotti's Story.

**Body:**

Kiotti was familiar with instability, after losing her mother at 14-years-old with no family to turn to. Years later when she found herself pregnant, living in a car with no heat during the peak of winter, she had finally had enough.

"I had lost everything," Kiotti says. "I remember being in a car that had no heat and it was in the middle of winter time. I was big and pregnant and having all my belongings in the car. I felt like I had nothing to offer my son and I was contemplating adoption because I didn't think I would be able to be what he needed," she confesses.

Determined not to give up after the birth of her son, Kiotti began searching for programs that could help her get back on her feet. That's when she discovered United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County's Dual Generation Initiative.

"I walked through the doors of Dual Gen and they were very receptive of me and my situation. They provided differences resources that assisted me with obtaining housing, child care and access to pharmacy tech school at no cost," Kiotti says. "For the first time in my life after my mom passed away, I felt supported."

Dual Generation provided Kiotti the stability she needed with housing, quality child care for her newborn son and job training to level up her career. Today, Kiotti runs a successful business and is now the proud mother of 3.

"I do not believe I would've been able to recover as quickly as I did without the support of Dual Gen," Kiotti says. "Being a single mother is not easy and no one wakes up to say they want to be a single mother. I believe that these kinds of programs are needed for single mothers."

To support families like Kiotti's as they build a better foundation for their future, please give to our 2024 United Way Campaign. [insert link here](#)]

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**United Way Program:** Child Care Scholar/Women United

**Subject:** Helping Parents Achieve Economic Mobility. David's Story

**Body:**

After an accomplished career in the Army that took him across the world, David embarked on what will be his life's greatest challenge: fatherhood. With a newborn at home, David took the risk of not re-enlisting to focus on going to college so he could level up his career and spend more time with his daughter.

"Obviously, serving my country has always been a huge priority of mine," David says. "But she really turned the tables on that," he added.

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While he wasn't afraid to bet on himself and change careers, David didn't know how he could afford to go to school and pay for his daughter's child care. That's when he discovered the United Way Child Care Scholarship.

Powered by Women United, the United Way Child Care Scholarship provides parents with subsidized, quality child care so they can focus on their education.

After relocating to San Antonio with his wife and infant daughter, David was able to graduate from the University of Texas at San Antonio with his bachelor's degree due to the stability the United Way Child Care Scholarship gave him.

"The way the scholarship helped me the most was it was my first win, my first green light out of the military," David said. "It gave me momentum like you can do it," David added.

Help parents like David achieve economic mobility and build stronger foundations for their future. Please give to our 2024 United Way Campaign. **[insert link here]**

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**Impact Area:** Safety Net

**Subject:** Help People Like Kiara Find a Safe Environment to Thrive

**Body:**

For as long as she can remember, Kiara has been on her own despite being the oldest child of seven.

At 12 years old, Kiara was placed into foster care due to living in an abusive home. That's when she arrived at Boysville, one of United Way's Safety Net Impact Partners.

Despite the trauma she had dealt with, Kiara quickly adapted to her new home. It was the first time she had a bedroom all to herself. She could finally count on having three meals a day and no longer had to worry about food, shelter or clothes. She could "finally focus on being a kid," as Kiara says.

Kiara credits the staff for teaching her how to focus on her studies and how to set goals. When they provided her with the glasses she sorely needed, she went from a "not so great" student to A/B honor roll.

With this support, she would blaze a trail of academic and competitive success. A phenomenal athlete, she would win the state championship for track and field and be inducted into the National Honor Society.

This year, Kiara graduated from Texas A&M-Corpus Christi with a B.A. in Media Production. Without the support of United Way, she would not be where she is today.

"When you donate to United Way, you are helping youth like me find a safe place to call home," Kiara says.

To support individuals like Kiara who need a safety net of services to help them meet their immediate needs in times of crisis, please give to our 2023 United Way Campaign. **[insert link here]**

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**Impact Area:** Safety Net

**Subject:** Putting People in Crisis on the Path to Success. Cesar's Story

**Body:**

Cesar had spent years living in the woods or abandoned buildings, unsure of what each day would bring. "I was in the streets, I had lost everything," Cesar says.

After years of instability, Cesar had finally had enough and sought help. He was directed to United Way Safety Net Impact Partners Haven for Hope and Restore Education, where he was finally ready to put the work in to get off the streets. "I told myself, what am I going to do? Am I just going to keep wandering around these streets?"

With the support of United Way's Safety Net Impact Area, Cesar was able to regain safe housing, his identification, birth certificate and job training. Even with these resources it wasn't easy for Cesar, who refused to give up.

"I went and took a test and I failed it," he says. "So I went took their math classes everyday for six months and when I took the same test again, I got a 98," Cesar added.

Thanks to the resources he received, Cesar now works as an AC Technician, has his own apartment and has broken down the barriers that seemed insurmountable to him.

The impact of life-altering events job loss or mental health crises can make it seem impossible for individuals to continue living self-sufficiently. With a helping hand from United Way, Cesar was able to find a better path to walk in life.

"When you are sitting there with no direction the older you get, the harder it is," Cesar says. "There are less people wanting to help you. Thankfully I have finally found my way and I don't feel like I am going nowhere anymore."

To support people like Cesar as they restore their stability, please give to our 2024 United Way Campaign. [\[insert link here\]](#)