



ANNUAL COMMUNITY LUNCHEON 2019
August A. Napoli

Good afternoon. Thank you, Russ (Mitchell, MC). And thank you, Paul (Dolan, Chair of the Board). You and the entire Board have my utmost appreciation for your leadership and your tremendous dedication to this organization and to Greater Cleveland. You are truly servant leaders.

I'm honored to recognize Cleveland's own Mayor, Frank G. Jackson, who is with us today. From the Cleveland Plan to Say Yes to Education, and the Lead Safe initiative with Councilman Blaine Griffin, Mayor Jackson has demonstrated exceptional leadership for the success of vital initiatives that advance our communities.

I'd also like to thank City Council President Kevin Kelley, one of our panelists today, for his support and his willingness to move beyond the status quo. Kevin and Judge Ronald O'Leary have played significant roles in the development of key legislation that will help provide stable housing for so many of our citizens. This type of collaboration is exactly what fuels the kind of change we need.

My special thanks to the other distinguished members of today's discussion: Barbara Siemer, Colleen Cotter, Kevin Nowak and Dr. Toby Cosgrove. The panel is a real-time example of how Greater Clevelanders are working together in new ways to get things done. We're proud to be part of that. This kind of public-private partnership is going to pay big dividends.

And, of course, it's great to see this enthusiastic crowd. I want to extend my gratitude to ALL our supporters throughout Cuyahoga, Geauga and Medina Counties. Nearly 60 thousand strong, you represent the kind of commitment it takes to provide the helping hand so many of our neighbors need.

You represent the power of the human spirit. The power of purpose. The power of philanthropy. The power of YOU.

BUSINESS PIVOT

Over this past year, our organization has undergone a tremendous transformation, triggered by the three-year strategic plan that we launched in 2017. This hasn't been a surface makeover. We've dug deep, looking at the way we must INVEST money to improve people's lives. And that has changed and expanded how we RAISE money. We'll amplify and accelerate what we've built, and make course corrections along the way.

These changes are respectful of the work that's come before. The wisdom and good work of the past keep us focused today. It's about ALIGNMENT. INNOVATION. CONNECTION. AND OPPORTUNITY.

Change is no longer on a slow, straight path. It's fast-forward, and disruption is the norm. Just think about how different our world has become in the last 10 years alone.

ALL of us must embrace this kind of evolution. Our INTERNAL pace of change simply has to MATCH – or EXCEED – the EXTERNAL pace of change. We only have to look around to see who's leading, and who's fallen behind.

At United Way, we'd been facing that exact challenge. Our evolution as an organization just wasn't keeping up. We had to put the WHY of our purpose front and center, and above all, RUN, not walk, in the direction of our TRUE NORTH. The needs of the community. And that brush paints a totally different picture of who we are as an organization, and of our own understanding about where our strengths lie.

THREE STRENGTHS

The needs of the community – not our needs, the needs of the community. That's why United Way is re-inventing itself. Everyone knows that United Way can write a check. But our organization is much, much more than just a pass-thru for

the critical funds we raise. We are building on the totality of our organization, cultivating three fundamental and equally important strengths:

- INVESTING AND RAISING FUNDS
- Working as A STRONG PARTNER and a CATALYST FOR COLLABORATION;
and
- Using our experience and commitment to be an informed VOICE OF
POVERTY.

I'd like to update you on just a few of our activities under these three areas.

INVESTING AND RAISING FUNDS

In just the last year, United Way raised nearly \$43 million in gifts plus pledges for the future through the generosity of nearly 60,000 supporters. This allowed us to make \$33 million in philanthropic investments to

- keep the 2-1-1 Helplink lines open 24/7 for close to 300 thousand callers;
- feed almost 750 thousand meals to individuals and families who were hungry;
- provide shelter to 15,000 people
- and so much more.

This spirit of giving – and the results fueled by it – are powered by every single one of you as individuals and amplified in our work as a strong collective.

There's no greater example of the force of the collective than our signature initiative, the workplace campaign. The stalwarts of our workplace campaign, the corporate community, has experienced its own enormous transformation. Mergers, acquisitions and takeovers, plus an emerging corporate social

responsibility focus, have become the norm. That kind of shift has had a profound effect on the workplace campaign.

The truth is, we could have maintained the status quo...and watched all that was built over the years continue to erode. But we had a choice, and a very strong one at that: To shift our perspective and look at the corporate changes as the entrée to a modernized workplace campaign, a campaign that meets the needs of the 21st century employer ... and its employees. And to use our expertise and our standing to carve out a valuable place within corporations as they craft the workplace of tomorrow.

United Way is in a perfect position to help companies redefine the role of the corporation in the community. Forward-thinking corporations like Eaton led by Craig Arnold, and like Key Bank with Beth Mooney at the helm, know that when employees are connected more strongly in the community, it's a win for all sides.

Another essential change has been the move to an electronic giving platform, which is now used by growing list of 62 companies. Eaton and Parker Hannifin signed on recently to use the portal for their campaigns across the country, and Omnova Solutions will be fully digital this year.

So our workplace campaign isn't going away. It's moving to a whole new level as we add game-changing components that better serve our companies and our donors. A strong indicator we're on the right track with our corporate partners is a very significant first for United Way. I'm happy to report that we've already received a total of \$9 million in three-year commitments from a number of our corporate partners. This signals both their confidence in our new direction and their increased understanding of what our communities are facing when it comes to poverty.

A STRONG PARTNER AND CATALYST FOR COLLABORATION

I just talked about how we're making major strides with our fundraising approach, but equally important is how we invest those dollars to make them work the hardest for Greater Clevelanders.

We know that changemakers coming together can break the cycle of poverty. We have the wherewithal to convene the kinds of partners who want to take bold steps with us. This time of intentional change and aligned, amplified collaboration, is absolutely critical for our communities, especially NOW.

We have some painful realities to face. A major one is that the average percentage of Medina and Geauga County residents living in or near poverty – the working poor – is nearly 20%. And in Cuyahoga County, it's almost 37%. Or to put it in terms that really hit home, more than a QUARTER MILLION of our neighbors must make the choice every day between food and rent. Food and paying a medical bill. Food and a winter coat. No one should have to make those kinds of choices. No one.

Just today, the Plain Dealer and cleveland.com report that 50.5% of our Cleveland children are living in poverty. Let me read from today's front page: *Poverty rates for both Cleveland and suburban Cuyahoga County remain worse than they were before the recession of 2007-09. This is especially true for child poverty. Overall, a third of Cleveland's residents live in poverty. Worse yet, poverty is the life for more than half the city's children. Countywide, about 216,000 people are in poverty - roughly 92,000 in the suburbs and 124,000 in the city.*

We can pay attention to statistics like population growth, the number of housing units and other factors when we talk about progress in our cities. But without question, we must acknowledge that the poverty rate in our communities is one of the major measures of our health and vibrancy. Cleveland itself ranks in the bottom five of Rust Belt cities, because poverty is a major contributing factor.

We have to recognize that this isn't just about "those people" in the inner city, or "those people" in the neighborhoods miles away from where we sleep at night. This is about all of us. All of us working toward closing the gap between what we all envision for our families and our neighbors and reality.

You've heard or read about two major United Way initiatives over the past year designed to hit poverty from both sides. We've already seen some real progress.

The first, the Community Hub for Basic Needs, is creating a better system to help people TODAY. The Hub is all about eliminating the roadblocks between resources and those who need them.

And the second, United Way's Impact Institute, is where IDEAS – AND DATA – are the currency of innovation to incubate new pathways, environments and opportunities that address the factors that lead to – or keep people in – poverty.

Let me show you what I mean. »VIDEO <https://vimeo.com/361553064/d22ca5d96c>

I think you can see that the Hub Model surrounds the person or family in need with comprehensive and coordinated assistance. We think this new approach will produce the kinds of outcomes, at scale, our community needs, and that our donors expect. What we measure and learn will provide a valuable data set that will be used as an informed jumping-off point for the Impact Institute's development of more effective and powerful new solutions.

We're thrilled that Dr. Toby Cosgrove has agreed to become the distinguished chair of the Impact Institute. His record and his brand of innovation and patient-centered care are the embodiment of our aspirations for the Impact Institute, and there is so much to be learned through his leadership. No one is better suited to this role.

The Impact Institute is centered around a simple choice: Do we want to say we're successful...if in 10 years we've doubled the number of meals served to the hungry or sheltered hundreds more families for the night? Or do we want to say we're successful ... because there's no one left to serve who's hungry or in need of a bed to sleep in?

I think the answer is obvious. That's the premise behind the Impact Institute. It's about solutions.

One of the important components of these solutions, beyond what we learn through our real-time delivery of services, will be the addition of groundbreaking technology and data powered by our partner, Unify Labs. At our fingertips will be the predictive modeling and testing that's vital to creating the right strategies that can grow into real-life, sustainable solutions.

Both the Hub AND the Impact Institute get to the heart of what I'm talking about--partners working not in parallel, but in alignment. United Way is more than willing to be the catalyst for these important initiatives through whatever role we can play that adds the most value, whether it's:

- leading the way,
- actively being at the table with other partners or
- endorsing an effort with a strong voice.

These are the kinds of actions that can produce very real results. This can happen here. This IS happening here, and more can happen. If only we widen our vision and work in tandem.

ADVOCACY: A VOICE OF POVERTY

I touched very briefly on United Way's ability to give voice to the issues that can mean so much to the poor. We're an informed and energetic advocate when it comes to the issues that affect our underserved communities, to do all that we can to help inform the decisions our public officials are making that affect our community – whether that means in the local, state or national arena.

Our non-partisan platform can spur meaningful action on behalf of those in poverty. That's why you've seen us support legislation on childhood lead poisoning, and why you'll see United Way intimately involved in the upcoming 2020 census, among many other initiatives.

But this isn't just about United Way and what we're doing. One of the most important things we ALL can do is be totally clear about our understanding of

poverty and the symptoms it manifests. But more important, its underlying causes.

There are many things we get right in this community. But it's disheartening to see our long-standing habit of well-meaning, but often disparate and un-aligned false starts, aimed at fixing our neighborhoods and cities. My point is that we have to get our priorities right. We have to recognize that well-funded studies, community meetings and academic insights are meaningless if we have families who don't have a stable home or a decent meal on the table.

We need to wake up and realize we can't build a flourishing community in Greater Cleveland IF so many of its members are always, always left behind. UNLESS we confront the diminished economic reality that particularly engulfs people of color. And UNLESS we embrace a commitment to inclusive prosperity.

We need to throw our united and aligned energy and resources into designing the types of solutions that will work for our neighbors. That creates an economy that includes everyone and that can lift people out from under the thumb of poverty. An economy that recreates a middle class where everyone is able to have that dream that all Americans should have.

Last year I talked about the profound role racism plays in the realm of poverty. I have to tell you, I took some heat about that from those who just don't think United Way should even utter the word "racism." Who don't think that's our "place."

But I will not back down.

I know that adding United Way's voice to those who already are working so hard in this realm is important, because we know that racial disparities are real, especially when it comes to the plight of our poor--people who can't dream of the economic prosperity that so many of us take for granted.

These aren't broken people who need to be "fixed." Our SYSTEMS are broken because baked into them is systemic racism. They're just not working for the people they're designed to serve, and that has to stop.

We can't dispute the facts right in front of our eyes. Ohio's own records show, without a doubt, that we are especially failing people of color. There is an accelerating economic gap not only in Ohio but across this country, widening the split that already separates the haves from the have-nots. And what hard data has told us time and time again is that our communities simply can't be healthy on any level when there's economic inequality.

It is my unwavering conviction that the space United Way of Greater Cleveland occupies when it comes to fighting poverty MUST include confronting racism.

It MUST give voice to the mothers, fathers, children, grandparents, families and the forgotten who have been swallowed by the despair of poverty.

For United Way and for myself, personally and professionally as its President and CEO, it's disingenuous to say we are fighting poverty without addressing the very issue that is one of its primary root causes.

All our efforts and innovations WILL BE FOR NAUGHT if we turn our backs on this epidemic of racial inequity that has been festering for so many years, an epidemic so devastating that some cities have already declared it a public health crisis. Talk about priorities.

That's why United Way has partnered with the United Black Fund to form what we call our Equity Leadership Council, made up of 25 community leaders. We announced the group to you last year as we were beginning to assemble.

Under the leadership of Cecil Lipscomb and Helen Forbes Fields, I'm pleased to share with you that this council has already been able to develop a suite of racial equity resources that United Way is making available to all of you through our website.

Of course, a toolkit like this isn't the answer, but it CAN be a jumpstart. We CAN bring to the table, as organizations and as individuals, our own energy. We CAN do what's within our own power to advance the ball down the field.

In essence, the Council's charge is to figure out how we, as a unified force, can confront racism. We're not only allies, we're "co-conspirators" of sorts, a collective bound by trust and purpose. And as one Council member pointed out, "Change happens at the speed of trust!"

This is about systems thinking and a total paradigm shift. Challenging ourselves, and others, to "elevate, to educate and to demonstrate." Wise words from another Council member: "What we thought was, doesn't exist anymore. And what we designed just doesn't work anymore." Which is exactly what so much of the new United Way is about.

For myself and for United Way, from this promising beginning with the Council, I see much more clearly now that our organization's own "good intent" needs to be cemented.

It's vital for us to start with our own house, in a top to bottom look, to better formalize and aggregate the organizational energy we have in an intentional and targeted way. So we're creating our OWN blueprint to model race, diversity, inclusion and equity.

United Way is committed to these and other actions you see on the screen:

- We're building a more inclusive community in our workplace. In other words, weaving it solidly into the fabric of our organization.
- We'll continue to build equity considerations into our funding process.
- This will be front and center for our own Board, beginning with orientation for new members and moving through to an integral consideration in every Board action.
- We will formalize Race, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity as a foundational component of our new Impact Institute, as well as our Hub.
- And finally, it's our intent to actively reach out to our corporate partners, the delivery system and the general community, calling on them to establish their

own position and initiatives.

This journey is ever-changing and all-encompassing. We're committed to it, and we're calling on every single one of you to do the same, to "take it up." It's what we SHOULD DO, and it's the RIGHT THING to do.

I'd like to thank our entire Council for their faith and the insight they bring to this table. There's a lot more work to do and I appreciate their commitment. Many of them are here today. Their names are in your program and on the screen, but I'd like them join me on stage and be recognized.

What I've been describing today isn't about the efforts of a single person or organization, but a cadre of dedicated partners. People like YOU who step forward every single day because this work matters to them.

I'm energized by the groundswell of support we've received so far, from those who believe, as we do, that we CAN make a huge dent in the issues that face our neighbors.

United Way doesn't have the magic solution, that's for sure, but I DO know where to find it and that's with you. I know that we CAN change the trajectory of families who've been hounded by the effects of poverty for generations.

The stakes are too high for ALL of us – morally, socially and economically – to turn our backs. With all my heart, I believe this new course we're mapping is a true and a powerful one. It's right because we're setting our sights on creating a community that is based on opportunities FOR ALL.

Our challenge is to be hyper-focused on the needs of our neighbors. To be nimble and open to new ideas. And to steel ourselves for the inherent risks that are part and parcel of the kinds of change we're talking about.

Each of us has an open invitation to be remarkable. Our community is depending on us. Depending on the POWER OF YOU.

»VIDEO <https://vimeo.com/360694236>