United Way of Greater Cleveland Brings the Community Together to Advance Innovative Solutions to End Poverty Among Greater Clevelanders

Delos M. “Toby” Cosgrove, MD, to Serve as Distinguished Chair of the Impact Institute, United Way’s Think Tank with an Action Plan

Panel of Experts Discuss Effective Solutions to the Housing Problems Continuing the Cycle of Poverty for Generations

CLEVELAND – United Way of Greater Cleveland gathered community leaders together at its Annual Community Luncheon to discuss meaningful change and long-term solutions underway to improve the lives of those in need throughout Greater Cleveland.

Russ Mitchell, anchor and managing editor at WKYC Studios in Cleveland, emceed the event held at the Huntington Convention Center on Friday, September 27 where Augie Napoli, President and CEO of United Way, provided the keynote address, sharing an update about the agency’s business pivot designed to better serve the people in need across Greater Cleveland.

Board Chairman Paul Dolan, Owner, Chairman and CEO of the Cleveland Indians, welcomed the more than 1,000 attendees, reviewed United Way’s accomplishments over the past year and outlined initiatives for the coming year. Dolan recognized the importance of advancing the organization’s mission: “To make sure the person in need is at the center of all we do.” Dolan continued, “No citizen’s zip code should determine the trajectory of their opportunities.”

Dolan also announced Dr. Cosgrove as the first Distinguished Chair of the United Way of Greater Cleveland’s Impact Institute, a think tank with an action plan, that brings together the brightest minds from academia, agency, corporate, philanthropic and government organizations. Dr. Cosgrove is the former CEO and President of the Cleveland Clinic and Executive Advisor of Google Cloud Healthcare and Life Sciences.

Local, state and national experts participated in a panel discussion at the event to explore and address an issue that the Impact Institute is working hard to solve for through its Housing Stability Solution Center: the life-long consequences that unsafe and unstable housing have on families and children, including their academic, health and quality of life outcomes.
Panelists included:

- Dr. Cosgrove
- President of Cleveland City Council, Kevin Kelley
- Executive Director of Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, Colleen Cotter
- Executive Director of CHN Housing Partners Kevin Nowak
- Chairman of the Siemer Institute, Barbara Siemer

The panel focused on the importance of keeping families in a stable home.

Dr. Cosgrove noted that a healthy lifestyle is only 20% related to the type of healthcare one receives, with another 20% related to genetics and the remaining 60% related to social determinants, including housing, education, food and job security.

Kelley announced an important step forward toward reducing evictions in the city: legislation expected to pass on Monday with Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson’s support that will provide families with children living 100% below the poverty level in the city with legal representation in housing court.

The event closed with Napoli’s keynote address, where he gave an update on the racial equity work the organization has been undertaking within their initiatives, including the Impact Institute, and through community partnerships, including United Black Fund of Cleveland and the Equity Leadership Council, which is comprised of leaders from across the Cleveland community.

“It’s my unwavering conviction that the space United Way of Greater Cleveland occupies when it comes to fighting poverty must include confronting racism,” said Napoli. “All of 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,” he continued.

Napoli reiterated the importance of the organization’s collaboration across the community. “I know we can change the trajectory of families who’ve been hounded by the effects of poverty for generations,” said Napoli. “We’re setting our sights on creating a community that is based on opportunities for all.”

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*Founded in 1913, United Way of Greater Cleveland is a local, independent nonprofit organization dedicated to fighting poverty across the Greater Cleveland area. The largest private-sector investor of health and human services, United Way invests in efforts that address poverty using a two-pronged approach. The first prong focuses on the daily issues affecting those living in poverty, the Community Hub for Basic Needs. The second drives research and innovation through the Impact Institute, a think tank with an action plan, focused on identifying long-term solutions to break the cycle of poverty. For more information, visit [www.unitedwaycleveland.org](http://www.unitedwaycleveland.org).*