



**United
Way**



Heart of West Michigan
United Way

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SHE WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT *what she's wearing to prom.*

United Way understands that high school graduation is the single most powerful predictor of a young person's future success. But, alarmingly, last year in Kent County almost 2,000 students dropped out before graduating with their class. Keeping kids in school has become one of the most serious challenges facing our community. In fact, the lost lifetime earnings for these 2011 dropouts totals almost \$500 million, not to mention other barriers they'll face.

That's why United Way is focused on a bold goal to decrease Kent County's high school dropout rate by 50% by 2020. Kids who can't read are often the ones who eventually drop out of school, so our focus is on early intervention. To make this goal a reality, we're working with other organizations and governmental agencies to seek solutions to this growing problem.



HIS TOUGHEST OPPONENT *won't be on the court.*

Kids who don't read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely to leave school without a diploma*. United Way's Vision Council is charged with achieving our bold community goal of decreasing Kent County's dropout rate. Created from a cross-section of local leaders, the Vision Council is a community-wide collaboration that aligns Kent County's efforts to impact academic achievement. Their work will help United Way develop new strategies or reassess current ones to best impact our youth.

****Annie E. Casey Foundation***



YOU CAN'T RESPECT *what you can't read.*

United Way's Schools of Hope tackles the problem of illiteracy by focusing on early grade reading. Our three-pronged approach helps struggling students achieve the reading skills they need to move ahead. It includes: In School tutoring, After School literacy programs and Family Literacy classes. This award-winning program currently partners with four school districts—Grand Rapids, Cedar Springs, Godfrey-Lee and Godwin Heights—and works to equip students with the resources they need to achieve academic success.

“Schools of Hope is making a difference in our community, and Schools of Hope volunteers are making a difference in the lives of children. The time spent with these children can literally make or break their future, because reading at grade level is a powerful predictor of future success in life.”

Kevin A. Konarska, Kent ISD Superintendent



FROM INSPIRATION, *to education, to graduation.*

Schools of Hope In School Tutoring Program pairs struggling readers in grades 1-3 with volunteers who work one-on-one with the same child once a week for 30 minutes during the school year. Data shows this program is having a systemic impact on early grade reading throughout Kent County. The outcome? Schools of Hope students were able to read at grade level by the end of third grade.

Schools of Hope After School Program focuses on students who are a year or more behind in their reading skills and provides 90 minutes of intensive literacy instruction daily, four times a week during the school year. Over the

last four years, students who participated achieved an average of 1.23 years of reading growth during a single program year.

Schools of Hope Family Literacy Program works to increase the literacy levels of parents with limited English skills. By increasing their literacy skills, parents are better equipped to impact their child's success in school. This partnership with the Literacy Center of West Michigan helped 79% of participating parents achieve significant gains in their reading comprehension, which resulted in their children reaching their target growth in school.



HELP EXPAND *our reach.*

With your support, we can expand our reach into more Kent County districts and schools and make a real difference in the lives of more children. The students who will graduate in 2020 are currently in fifth grade, and while that gives us seven years to help them, we know that early intervention is the critical key to success.

Your gift to United Way supports our goal of reducing Kent County's high school dropout rate. Your support could mean that more than 1000 students who would likely dropout will stay in school, graduate on time and go on to successful, productive lives. Please visit [hwmuw.org /give](http://hwmuw.org/give).





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616.459.6281 • 118 Commerce Ave, SW Grand Rapids, MI 49503

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