



# FREE THE FUTURE

INVEST IN OUR REGION'S KIDS

At United Way of the Columbia-Willamette we have a simple, ambitious vision – to invest in our region’s kids so they are free from poverty, in order to be free to reach their potential.



**“IT MEANS A LOT TO HAVE A HOME THAT IS SAFE AND OURS. WE WORKED HARD THAT FIRST MONTH. BUT WE’VE BEEN GOOD EVER SINCE THEN.”**

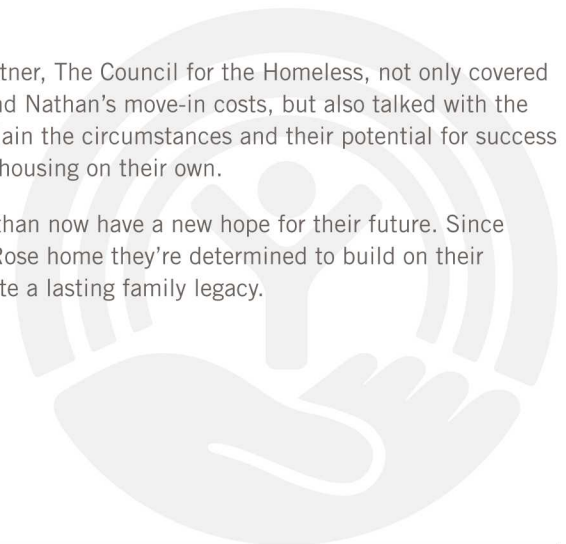
**– Marina**

A year ago Marina and Nathan Brazille experienced a series of unfortunate events. A job loss, rent increase, car accident—caused the hard-working couple to lose their Vancouver apartment in Washington. The Brazilles had been forced to break their lease when the rent was raised out of their range and they ended up living in their van.

When Marina and Nathan found out they were expecting a baby, the potential future consequences of their living situation made their search for housing even more urgent. They spent months applying for apartments and paying application fees, only to be denied because they’d broken a lease in the past.

United Way partner, The Council for the Homeless, not only covered all of Marina and Nathan’s move-in costs, but also talked with the landlord to explain the circumstances and their potential for success in maintaining housing on their own.

Marina and Nathan now have a new hope for their future. Since bringing baby Rose home they’re determined to build on their success to create a lasting family legacy.



**Last year, 2000 families received immediate, short-term rent and utilities assistance.**





**"I WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DO IT MYSELF. I WOULDN'T HAVE KNOWN WHERE TO START."**

**– Katrina**

22,000 working families are provided with financial education and tax preparation services each year resulting in a regional economic impact of \$20 million/year. That's cash in hand for families to spend on food, rent, health insurance and other basic needs which would otherwise be left on the table.

Three years ago Katrina was a single mom desperate to find a place for her and her son, Adan, to live. She was determined to turn her life around after years of abuse, trauma and addiction, but had no credit and was facing a mountain of debt.

A small team of agencies serving Clark County worked together to get Katrina and her son into an apartment. Soon after, she started working with a financial counselor at Community Housing Resource Center (CHRC), to claim tax credits that could be used to settle some of her debt. United Way funding makes CHRC's Earned Income Tax Credit work possible. In just one year Katrina's credit score went from nonexistent to 667.

Three years later Katrina is working full time, studying accounting in college and Adan is thriving.

12,000 kids receive coordinated services and support through interventions focused on early learning, literacy and skills building programs.



**"I HAVE PARENTS TELLING ME THAT THEIR PRESCHOOL CHILD IS AHEAD OF THEIR KINDERGARTEN CHILD IN PUBLIC SCHOOL. I SEE THE KIDS EVERY DAY. I SEE THE PROGRESS THEY ARE MAKING. IT'S EXPONENTIAL."** – Bashir

Abdikadir Bashir's family fled violence in his home country of Somalia when he was seven years old. He spent 18 years in a Kenyan refugee camp before his family was able to come to the United States through the refugee resettlement program. Almost immediately after he arrived, he got to work giving back to his new community.

After getting his MBA, Bashir started a childcare business and created a nonprofit called CAIRO - Center for African Immigrants and Refugees of Oregon. Through this work he uncovered an alarming trend - Somali kids were really struggling in school.

At the same time Oregon was rolling out its new Preschool Promise program, designed to create high-quality early learning opportunities for children who might not otherwise have access to them. United Way believed in Bashir's work and advocated at the state level in support of his efforts to create the CAIRO Academy Preschool Promise classroom.



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[www.unitedway-pdx.org](http://www.unitedway-pdx.org)