



Monadnock
UNITED WAY

**COMMUNITY IMPACT
REPORT 2023**

COMMUNITY IMPACT

No matter the challenge, United Way's comprehensive approach and community roots mean we can find a way forward. We are here to strengthen communities, advance financial stability, and create opportunities for individuals and families to flourish. Together, with our community, we're building a future where everyone, everywhere, can thrive.

Our Vision

A United community where all are cared for and thriving.

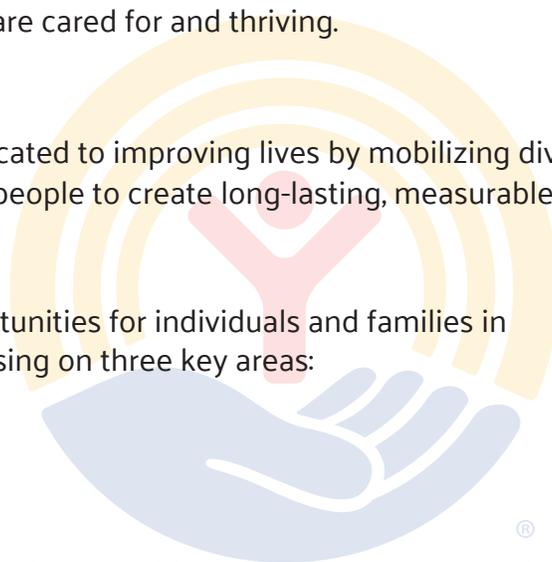
Our Mission

Monadnock United Way is dedicated to improving lives by mobilizing diverse partners and investing in programs and people to create long-lasting, measurable change.

Impact Areas

Together we are creating opportunities for individuals and families in the Monadnock Region by focusing on three key areas:

- Children
- Education
- Financial Stability



Each of us can make a difference for a neighbor. When we come together, we can make change for all. That's why Monadnock United Way is always there whenever there is a need in our community. Supporting MUW means supporting hope for a stronger, more vibrant region.

YOUR COMMUNITY IMPACT IN 2023

- \$1.8 m invested locally
- 6,772 people helped through MUW-supported programs and initiatives
- 33 agencies supported
- 37 towns served in the Monadnock Region
- 30 childcare staff members enrolled in the Child Development Associate (CDA) program)
- 16 family child care centers received grant assistance

Cover photo: Ashley Tracy and some of her students at The Children's Learning Center

CHILDREN

We envision that children in the Monadnock Region live in safe, nurturing, healthy homes and communities.

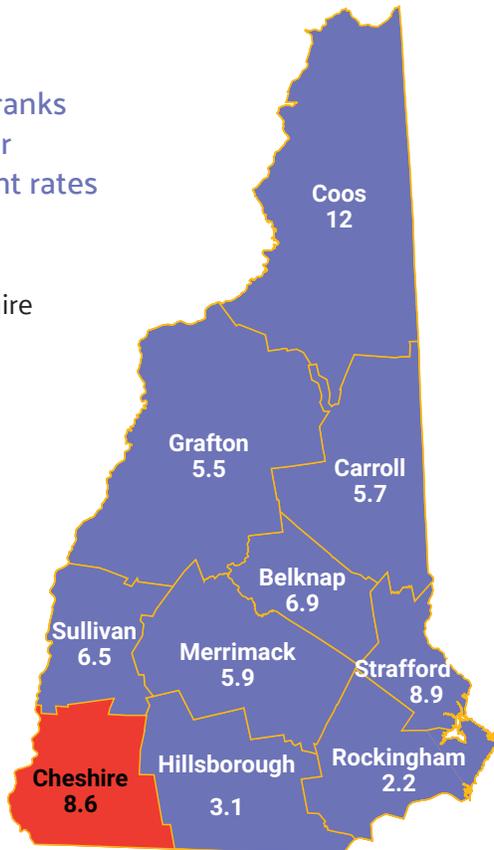
The Need

Cheshire County ranks 3rd in the state for child maltreatment rates at 8.6%.

2020* New Hampshire Child Maltreatment Rate Per 1,000

State of NH 4.7%

Source: datacenter.aecf.org
*Latest data available at the time of publication



The Goal

Connect at-risk youth/families to high-quality, appropriate, coordinated supports and services.

Impact Partners

We invest in programs that support education and early intervention such as:

- Monadnock Alliance for Families
- Monadnock Region Afterschool Program
- Southwestern Community Services – Dental Screening Program
- NH Early Childhood Region 1
- Impact Monadnock
- Impact Monadnock Business Ambassadors
- StartSmart

THE IMPACT

- **1,996 children and families** participated in parent education and enriched engagement services from the Monadnock Alliance for Families in 2023.

“The Grapevine has become my village, here I have a haven where I can trust my child to caring adults while I connect with other parents.”

- Amber, a participant of a parent group at the Grapevine, a Monadnock Alliance for Families member.



- **1,100 children** attended afterschool programs in 15 towns throughout the Monadnock Region Afterschool Collective in 2023.

At the Hillsboro-Deering Kid Adventures Before/After School program, hands-on learning brings classroom lessons to life! Students apply their knowledge in real-world scenarios, like a concept-mapping exercise where they pitch innovative ideas in a “Shark Tank” style to teachers and volunteers. This active approach inspires creativity, critical thinking, and real-world skills in a fun, interactive environment.



- **83% quality rating** in 4 evidence-based measurements was attained by the programs within the Monadnock Region Afterschool Collective. This helps older children achieve success today and in the future.



www.muw.org/children

BUILDING

Community Connections:

Monadnock United Way's Early Childhood Initiative Strengthens Family Bonds

In 2021, NH Early Childhood Region 1*, a project of Monadnock United Way (MUW), launched an initiative to strengthen community connections for families across 61 towns. Responding to families' desire to have deeper connections with peers and more access to supportive resources, a mini-grant process was launched to grow meaningful activities for families.

A review committee, bringing perspectives of parents with children of differing ages and needs, was organized to evaluate proposals submitted by community organizations like: Amazing Grace Farm in Sullivan, the Gilsum Town Library, Johnathan Daniels Preschool in Keene, the Grapevine in Antrim, and more.

"I frequently attended early childhood events with my youngest daughter and saw this as a great opportunity to help local organizations bring these events to life," described James Panico, a member of the committee. He knew that just one of these mini-grants could turn an idea into a reality, especially in rural areas where resources are often scarce.

The funded activities included parent cafes, story walks, scavenger hunts, community gardening, and more, reaching nearly a thousand people. Another committee member, Mallory Smith, shared, "It was inspiring to see the projects come to life."

This initiative is about building a future where families feel supported and connected. As Panico put it:

"Community building is essential for our children to become the best versions of themselves."

These programs are shaping a brighter future, making the region a better place to raise children—one event at a time.

*Funded by the NH Preschool Development Grant to cover 61 cities and towns in Greater Sullivan County, Cheshire County, and the Upper Valley. www.muw.org/ECR1



Lempster Preschool even hosted a Scavenger Hunt with a real, live llama, drawing 100% participation from its students and families! "This was received better than any scripted plan," said Superintendent James Lewis.

EDUCATION

We envision that Monadnock area community members receive an education that enables them to achieve their fullest potential.

The Need

There is a critical shortage of qualified childcare and early learning professionals in the Monadnock Region.

The Goals

Retain local graduates and attract skilled workers and young families to the region.

Address basic needs that support educational success.

56	Early learning professionals attended Pyramid Model Training
17	Childcare providers enrolled in the Child Development Associate program
4	Assistant Teachers completed the Early Childhood Education Certificate Program

Impact Partners

- Monadnock Community Pyramid Model
- Childcare Expansion Project



www.muw.org/education

THE IMPACT

- **Seven daycare and early learning centers** with 28 classrooms and 454 children are implementing the Pyramid Model, which supports teachers, caregivers, and families in promoting healthy social and emotional skills in young children.

“My son has been very excited to use visual aids, they have given him direction while still allowing independence. We have used visual aids to assist him from getting ready for the day, to guiding him through activities at school, and even to choosing how he is going to greet me and his teachers.

- The parent of a child at The Children’s Learning Center at Cheshire Medical Center Dartmouth Health.



- **70% of childcare teachers** across 11 sites were able to address challenging behaviors to a moderate to great extent, as a result of Pyramid Model, an evidence-based social-emotional framework. In addition, 65% of children at those sites are demonstrating improved social-emotional competencies, which they will carry into kindergarten and adult life.



Pyramid Model workshop attendees showing off their visual cue boards.

Shaping Bright Futures

Finding affordable, high-quality childcare is a daily struggle for working families in the Monadnock Region. Long waitlists and staffing shortages in early childhood programs can create challenges for parents. Monadnock United Way (MUW) and Keene State College (KSC) are leading the Child Care Expansion Task Force in the federally funded* Child Care Expansion (CCE) project, designed to create a thriving local environment for children, staff, and families.



Teacher leading a Pyramid Model session on friendships

“To support the early learning necessary for the future of our children, we need a robust childcare system,” explains Liz LaRose, MUW’s president. The initiative offers several options to engage new early childhood professionals and enhance the skills of existing educators.

“When teachers have opportunities for professional development, they are more invested in their work with children and families. The grant activities have provided multiple pathways for extended learning and collaboration,”

notes Deirdre McPartlin, Director at Keene State College Child Development Center and co-director of the project.

One standout option is the **Childhood Development Associate (CDA)** credential, a nationally recognized certification demonstrating mastery in nurturing children’s emotional, physical, intellectual, and social growth. It’s often the first step toward a career in Early Childhood Education (ECE) and allows certified teachers to work independently in classrooms.

“Once a teacher is certified, it opens up opportunities for programs to expand, sometimes even enabling new

by Elevating Educators

classrooms,” LaRose notes. Over the past year, nearly 30 individuals have embarked on the journey to earn their CDA, creating a ripple effect of enthusiasm among their peers. LaRose adds, “When someone earns their CDA, they inspire others to pursue it, too. It’s caught on like wildfire.”

Another option is the **Early Childhood Education Certificate**, a fast-track option providing essential skills for working with children from birth to age eight in various roles, from daycare teachers to support staff. This certificate serves as a foundation for further education, as well.

The CCE project also offers specialized training like the **Pyramid Model**, which focuses on supporting children’s social and emotional development, especially those with challenging behavior. This model enhances the quality of care, improving outcomes for both children and families.

In addition, local educators participated in a year-long **community of practice**, complete with small-group coaching, to learn how to incorporate nature-based learning experiences. This immersive training equipped educators with creative tools to engage children with the natural world, fostering hands-on learning. Sara Ladzinski, a participant, described the experience as a window into learning how to make her space better and more inviting to parents and children.

The grant also supported **family-based childcare centers** by offering guidance for educators to become credentialed under the NH Early Childhood Professional Development System.

“It really all starts with the staff,” says LaRose.

“The CCE project ensures that teachers are not only qualified but passionate about their work, which directly benefits the children.”

The results of this initiative are already making waves. More qualified teachers mean shorter waitlists and higher-quality care. “Parents will build better relationships

with confident, consistent educators, knowing their children are in good hands,” LaRose says. With these innovative solutions in place, the Monadnock Region is poised to not only support its teachers but also give children the early learning foundation they need to soar toward future success.



Early learning professionals listening to a Pyramid Model presentation

The Monadnock Child Care Expansion Task Force is a collaborative group of invested community members and stakeholders seeking to close the child care supply and demand gap by finding creative solutions to issues of: affordability, accessibility, and high quality early care and education.

- Keene State College – Co-Lead
- Monadnock United Way – Co-Lead
- Impact Monadnock
- Cheshire Children’s Museum
- Keene Day Care Center
- Monadnock Community Early Learning Center
- Rise for baby and family
- The Children’s Learning Center
- The Keene Family YMCA
- The Winchester Learning Center

*Funded through the US Department of Education Congressionally Funded-Community Projects Program in partnership with Keene State College and Monadnock United Way.

and Supporting Families

Mentorship Unlocks Career Growth for Early Childhood Educators

Pursuing a CDA credential can seem overwhelming at first, requiring hours of technical education, work experience, and assessments. However, mentorship has made this process manageable and transformative for educators at The Winchester Learning Center.

“The mentorship component of our CDA program is huge and why it has been such a success,” says Executive Director Roberta Royce. “I meet candidates where they are at, so we’re not expecting everyone to begin from the same place. The program is completely individualized, with personal support available for each candidate.”



“If they get stuck, we don’t push past—we support what they need in that moment.”

This flexibility helps candidates build confidence at their own pace, with a program that adapts to their circumstances. “If a candidate needs to take a break, it’s ok. If they want to go through quickly, it’s ok,” Royce explains.

This personalized mentorship has been a game-changer for The Winchester Learning Center and its staff. With four CDA-certified teachers, the Center exceeded licensing requirements and added up to 18 additional childcare slots, expanding capacity to 78 children. “The morale has been amazing,” Royce shares. One staff member especially took pride in applying new knowledge from infant brain development training, sparking even more passion for her work.

Teachers have also earned raises, promotions, and bonuses, and even pursued further education. Royce recalls one candidate who said she never thought she could take a college class but did so after the CDA and earned an A.

Other organizations, like Sophia’s Hearth, are also reaping the rewards. Childcare Director Paula Sousa described the mentorship model as clear, flexible, and supportive, calling it “an important offering for dedicated early childhood educators on their career paths.”



Empowering Educators and Building Stronger Classrooms with Early Childhood Education Certification

Deb Hunter, Child Care Director at the Children's Learning Center at Cheshire Medical Center/Dartmouth-Hitchcock Keene, is an educator in the ECE certificate program offered by River Valley Community College.

This program offers professionals an introduction to early childhood development and certifies them as associate teachers, empowering them to teach independently. It's more than just a credential—it's a steppingstone to an associate degree and a gateway to professional growth.

“The ECE gives everyone a solid foundation in childcare. But the real value is in having qualified staff. We had great people before, but now they're excellent and eager to learn more. This benefits the children, who have teachers who truly understand them and provide intentional, nurturing care,” Hunter explains.

One shining example of the program's impact is Ashley Tracy, a staff member who became a credentialed associate teacher through the ECE program. “The class was interactive—group work, games, and hands-on projects like game and toy-building. It made it easy to share ideas,” Tracy says.

Not only did she gain valuable skills, but she was also motivated by learning about her peers' career paths. “What I thought would be stressful ended up being fun and fast. Now I have my own classroom, a stronger connection with the kids, and trust from my co-workers.”

Photo top right: Ashley Tracy and Deb Hunter

Photo bottom right: Ashley Tracy on a pinecone hunt with some of her students.



FINANCIAL STABILITY

We envision Monadnock community members having the financial resources necessary to live healthy, happy, productive lives.

The Need

8.7% of individuals in our region live at or below the federal poverty level.

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
7.90%	7.60%	7.00%	7.40%	7.40%
9.90%	9.00%	8.80%	9.90%	8.70%

State of NH Cheshire County

Source: www.census.gov/data/datasets/2022/demo/saige/2022-state-and-county.htm. Poverty is defined as individuals on or below 100% of the poverty threshold, based on family income, size, and composition. In 2022 the Federal Poverty Level for a family of four was \$27,750.

The Goals

Support community members to find meaningful work.

Address basic needs that support financial stability.

Impact Partners

We invest in programs that provide resources to help community members grow and thrive.

- Cheshire County Emergency Housing Collaborative
- Monadnock Region Food Pantries Collective
- Keene Day Care Center
- Monadnock Community Early Learning Center
- Hillsboro Child Development Center
- Walpole Village School
- The Winchester Learning Center
- Monadnock Resource Alliance
- My Free Taxes
- Singlecare
- 211

THE IMPACT

- **The Monadnock Region Food Pantries Collective served 610,833 meals** across eight food pantries in 2023.

“When people look at you with tears in their eyes and tell you that they don’t know what they would do if we were not there for them. Not only do we feed their hunger but we are there to listen to their stories.”

- Volunteer at a local pantry member of the Monadnock Food Pantries Collective

- **The Cheshire County Emergency Housing Collaborative provided 31,236 nights** of safe shelter and basic needs to families, children, and individuals facing housing insecurity.

“We only needed someone to give us a break”.

- Mark and Sally, guests of Hundred Nights, a member of the Cheshire County Emergency Housing Collective, after learning that they had found stable housing through the generosity of a local landlord.



- **220 children received tuition scholarships** at five MUW supported early learning centers in 2023.

“The MUW scholarship funds made a significant impact by enabling two single moms to secure meaningful employment while their children received quality care. Neither family met the criteria for state scholarships, and the support provided was crucial in allowing them to work each day.”

- Walpole Village School



www.muw.org/financialstability

“Families spending too much of their income on housing need this. Employers who are cutting production due to a lack of workers need this. All of us need smart, sustainable, secure housing for the Monadnock Region to thrive.”

– Tom Julius

The Monadnock Resource Alliance Housing Collaborative

In October 2023, the Collaborative invited employers, developers, environmentalists, landowners, municipalities, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and residents to gather to discuss our region’s latest reports and statistics on housing needs.

“Many of us in these sectors have been working on the housing crisis for a long time, some even despaired that nothing would ever change,” remarked Tom Julius, chair of the Monadnock Interfaith Project and MRA member. “This meeting brought the players together, inspired innovative thinking, and now is taking concrete, collective action.”

Together 40 attendees drafted a strategic plan and formed three workgroups with complementary purposes:

Soft Infrastructure

Promotes smart, sustainable, affordable housing development by educating policymakers about building incentives to ensure affordability.

Community Awareness and Engagement

Educates the broader community about housing by sharing facts, dispelling myths, opening dialogue, and encouraging action.

Entrepreneurial Solutions

Encourages innovative solutions like home sharing and accessible dwelling units (ADUs) to improve housing access and generate income for home and landowners.



Liz LaRose, MUW President leading a community discussion on the housing crisis.

The Monadnock Resource Alliance Housing Collaborative, co-founded by Monadnock United Way and the NH Community Loan Fund, focuses on affordable housing. By working with local nonprofits, businesses, and community members, the Collaborative aims to strengthen the Monadnock Region through resource sharing, awareness, and open discussions to tackle housing instability and ensure everyone has a place to live.



Join the Housing Collaborative!

Join a workgroup and help create housing for everyone in our region.



www.muw.org/monadnock-resource-alliance



United is the Way

- We forge unlikely partnerships.
- We find new solutions to old problems.
- We mobilize our best resources.
- We inspire individuals to join us to tackle our community's most daunting social crises.

Monadnock United Way is dedicated to improving lives by mobilizing diverse partners and investing in programs and people to create long-lasting, measurable change.



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muw.org

