

Did you know? March is National Literacy Month.

United Way mobilizes people and resources to ensure that children can read proficiently by the start of fourth grade, a key indicator of future success. Here's how United Way and our partners celebrated National Literacy Month:



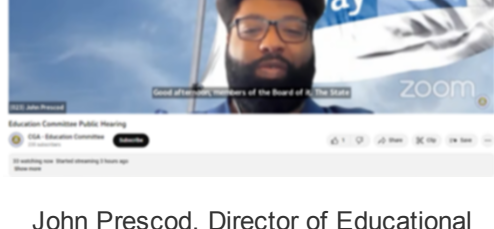
Jill Vichi, VP and Chief Human Resources Officer at Pratt & Whitney.

United Way announces strategic collaboration with Pratt & Whitney on Read Across America Day

During the *Read Across America Day* kick-off in East Hartford, it was announced that Pratt & Whitney's Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer, Jill Vichi, will be joining our organization's board of directors.

In addition, Pratt & Whitney also named United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut as a strategic Volunteer Leader of Choice for organizing volunteer engagement efforts for its employees in the state.

[\[Read more\]](#)



John Prescod, Director of Educational Initiatives at United Way, testifies to expand Dolly Parton's Imagination Library statewide.

United Way Advocates to Expand Literacy Efforts Across the State

On March 8, our Director of Educational Initiatives, John Prescod, had the opportunity to testify at an Education Committee Public Hearing in support of [HB-6845](#), an act establishing a state-wide book gifting program and home reading grant program for children.

Alongside Prescod, United Way's Advocacy Committee Chair, Board Member and longtime volunteer with the United Way Readers program, Michael Goldbas, advocated for the opportunity to provide this valuable resource of knowledge and life changer to children in our community. [\[Watch the Public Hearing - At 2:11:15 and 3:12:44\]](#)



UNITED WE READ

United WE READ Challenge

United Way and our partners through the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading are asking children and families in central and northeastern Connecticut to pledge to read for at least 20 minutes every day throughout the month.

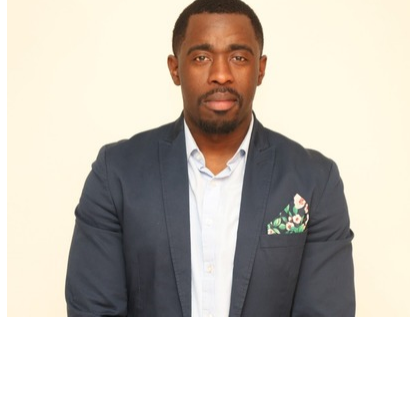
Join us for the largest reading challenge in central and northeastern Connecticut!

[\[Learn more and register here\]](#)

LITERACY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

DONATE TO SUPPORT UNITED WE READ

NEW HIRES AND PROMOTIONS



Anthony Reid

A native of Hartford, Reid is the new Impact and Engagement Manager for Economic Mobility initiatives. He joins United Way after serving in various capacities in the ministerial, IT and customer service fields. Anthony possesses experience in community engagement, youth development and educational advocacy. He holds a bachelor's degree in Biblical Education and Religion.



Shania Hunt

Hunt has joined United Way as an Administrative Assistant for the Impact and Engagement team. Hunt's prior experience includes serving in various administrative and customer service roles in the greater Hartford area.



Deb Fafard

Fafard joins United Way as its new Director of Development and Affinity Groups. In her role, Fafard will be focused on building relationships, cultivating partnerships, and developing and executing strategies to increase revenue and resources under management. She will oversee all major fundraising events as well as strategic planning for United Way's affinity groups. Deb brings to United Way a robust experience in fundraising, leadership volunteer management and event planning for nonprofit organizations.



Rebekah Castagno

Castagno has been promoted to Director of Health Initiatives. In her new role, Rebekah will manage a portfolio of projects that are focused on advancing more equitable health outcomes in our community. Prior to this position, Rebekah led the Emerging Leaders Society (ELS) including its launch of the *ELS Case Competition*, which brings together young adults, employers and community leaders to create innovative solutions to real challenges facing our community.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Hartford Working Cities, a young adult employment initiative managed by our United Way, recently celebrated the conclusion of the third cohort of the Hartford Workforce Leaders Academy (HWLA).

The HWLA is a five month fellowship designed to enhance the capacity of organizations providing positive youth development and/or workforce development services for young adults (aged 16-29). The Academy focuses on equipping leaders in these organizations with skills and connections to help them with implementing best practices and advancing systems changes that improve young adult outcomes, particularly employment outcomes. Participants in three cohorts of the program have represented more than 20 organizations in Hartford.

With this Academy and related efforts, United Way works to improve the financial stability of local families by providing better employment opportunities and workplace environments that allow our young adults to succeed in their jobs.



Last January, 20 managers and supervisors graduated from HWLA.

"COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS"



On February's edition, Maura Cook, Vice President of Marketing and Development at United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut and her special guest, Laura O'Keefe, Director of the Financial Opportunity Center at The Village talked about Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and how the program is helping individuals and families with annual incomes

up to \$60,000 get ahead financially, pay down debt and work toward saving for the future.

To make an appointment at a site in Greater Hartford and Windham County, visit www.211ct.org/taxhelp.

[LISTEN TO THE INTERVIEW](#)

ACCESS TO HEALTH COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

The **North Hartford Ascend Pipeline** is a cradle to career effort to ensure children living in the North Hartford Promise Zone – which includes the Clay Arsenal, Northeast and Upper Albany neighborhoods – have the supports they need to reach their full potential.

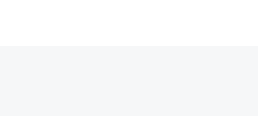
Overseen by Connecticut Children's, Ascend partners, including our United Way, are working to create a comprehensive and integrated network of programs and services that will be universally available to children and families in the North Hartford Promise Zone.

Ascend is addressing **academic, social, economic** and **health inequities** faced by families in **North Hartford**. Partners are working to eliminate disparities in outcomes based on race, ethnicity, disabilities and other factors so children and families are able to thrive.

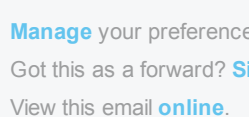
Community Conversations are happening monthly to ensure residents and community members are able to provide input about community needs and help shape the direction of this important initiative. [\[Learn more and join future community conversations\]](#)

[UPCOMING EVENTS](#)

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