

United Way 101

What is United Way of Southwest Minnesota?

United Way of Southwest Minnesota (hereafter UWSWMN) is a 100% autonomous, local nonprofit organization that focuses on human service needs of people living in our service area. UWSWMN is much more than a fund-raising organization. We work to create lasting changes in people's lives. We work with dozens of partners and internal programs to deliver results. Our service area is Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Yellow Medicine and portions of Cottonwood, Lac qui Parle, Nobles and Redwood counties of southwest Minnesota.

Who runs United Way of Southwest Minnesota?

The United Way of Southwest Minnesota Board of Directors (hereafter board) is comprised of up to twenty-four local volunteers. These volunteers are responsible for setting policies, budgeting and overseeing the direction of UWSWMN. Professional staff manage day-to-day activities. Al Castor and Matt Suby are serving as the board chair for the rest of 2025. Castor lives in Marshall and works for Lockwood Motors while Suby also lives in Marshall and works for Western Equipment Finance. Suby will assume the Chair responsibility on January 1, 2026.

What is the difference between United Way of Southwest Minnesota and United Way Worldwide?

United Way Worldwide (UWW) is the leadership and support organization for the nearly 1800 local United Ways in 40 countries and territories around the globe. UWW's work is supported by a membership fee paid by local United Ways. The membership is currently 1%. **Local donors support work in this area through UWSWMN, which is a separately incorporated nonprofit that is governed by its own board. There are no fund-raising quotas, and all resources are under local control and decision-making.** The membership fee to UWW is recouped by our community via staff training opportunities, services and access to national corporate and employee giving campaigns.

How do I know that my contribution is wisely spent?

When you give to UWSWMN, you entrust your hard-earned dollars to a local organization that takes this trust very seriously. We are committed to the highest standard of fund responsibility, transparency and stewardship. UWSWMN's volunteers oversee grants to all local programs and closely monitor agency services while holding them accountable for integrity in their programming and business operations.

Just as important, UWSWMN's own operating expenses and records are audited by an independent accounting firm and scrutinized by a volunteer finance committee to protect this trust. Based on our most recent audit, our overhead ratio using the net method was 17.79% (local administration costs were 6.73% and fundraising costs were 11.06%). This means that almost 18 cents of every dollar donated supports the foundational needs of our organization, making it possible for 82 cents (82.21%) of every dollar to be invested in programs to improve the lives of local people.



In 2021, we went through the re-certification process with Charities Review Council and were awarded their "Meets All Standards" Seal which provides donors with a visible and reassuring sign that UWSWMN is an organization that is accountable and can be trusted to invest donations wisely. One of the standards requires demonstrating efficient and effective use of funds to achieve the organization's mission while investing in infrastructure, administrative capacity and the communities they serve. The Charities Review Council recommends that 70–90% of expenses are used to directly support programming. For additional information on this, go to smartgivers.org.

Does United Way of Southwest Minnesota fund abortions? Does United Way of Southwest Minnesota fund PETA?

No. All donations given to this organization are under local control and decision making. For a complete list of grants, UWSWMN funding priorities and supported programs, please visit our webpage UnitedWaySWMN.org/CI.

How do organizations apply for grants?

Community Impact Grant applications are available around February 15th of each year, with an application deadline of April 1. All grant applications are reviewed by volunteers, who make funding recommendations to our local Board of Directors. Other grant opportunities may arise throughout the year and are made available through our website.

How much should I give?

That is an individual choice. The best thing about UWSWMN is that everyone has the opportunity to join together to improve the quality of life in southwest Minnesota. Payroll deductions allow for a person to make affordable donations throughout the year that will end up becoming a significant donation. We also have the option to give through ongoing credit card donations and/or being invoiced on a monthly or quarterly basis.

How can I get more involved?

UWSWMN needs and appreciates volunteer participation, as do many of our community partners. For a listing of volunteer opportunities available throughout our service area, visit our designated webpage at UnitedWaySWMN.org/volunteer.

How do I learn more about Imagination Library?

Contact us at 507-929-2273 or go to our website www.unitedwayswmn.org. Children ages birth to 5 years of age who live in our service area are eligible to be enrolled in this literacy, school-readiness program through our sponsorship. They will receive a free, age-appropriate book each month at home.

