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UCare funds social health initiatives for members and their communities across Minnesota

Grants to community partners focus on food and housing for underserved Minnesotans

MINNEAPOLIS, Jan. 31, 2023 — UCare directed its 2022 end-of-year funding to expand and develop programs addressing food and housing insecurity for underserved communities. Grants range from \$20,000 to \$200,000 to 25 community organizations making a difference for diverse populations and cultures spanning urban and rural regions of the state.

UCare steps up where need is greatest. In 2022, the health plan provided \$100,000 in emergency funds to [Second Harvest Heartland](#) to boost dangerously low milk supplies by at least two weeks in 59 Minnesota counties. As a result of funding to [Catholic Charities](#), seniors in 13 counties of greater Minnesota had access to more than 191,000 frozen nutritious meals. From meal packing and distribution of culturally appropriate meals to expanding food mobile routes in underserved neighborhoods, UCare is invested in improving the health of Minnesota's communities. Housing is another area of increased focus. In 2022, UCare emergency funds helped secure housing for more than 185 at-risk individuals with mental illness and/or substance use disorder in St. Louis County, and 2023 funding will ensure housing for hundreds more Minnesotans in other communities.

"We look beyond medical diagnoses to social drivers of health in providing our members a path to the best health for their lives," says Ghita Worcester, UCare Executive Vice President of Public Affairs and Chief Marketing Officer. "We are pleased to support Minnesota's strong network of community partners doing the work to provide our members secure access to food, housing, and needed cultural and social supports."

Snapshot of UCare-sponsored programs across Minnesota

Food security

[Two new, propane-powered school buses](#) for [The Food Group](#) to bring the Twin Cities Mobile Market to weekly stops at existing sites and add new sites over time [serving](#)

nearly 10,000 customers at more than 25 sites. In addition, UCare funding will make traditional foods available to Indigenous communities supporting its “food as medicine” approach to improve outcomes related to obesity, diabetes, heart disease and mental health issues.

Program focused on food as a change tool for business development, education, advocacy and wealth creation for the community of 300,000, and supporting 155 acres of farmland owned by the [Hmong American Farmers Association \(HAFA\)](#).

[Second Harvest Heartland](#) emergency food and milk resources, stocking partner food pantries and distribution of 25,000 culturally connected fresh prepared meals a week.

[The Damiano Center](#) emergency service programs including a Community Kitchen and Kids’ Kitchen for homeless and other low-income people, serving 6,000 Duluth area individuals each year.

[911 Meal Packs – AKA: My Good Deed](#) meal packing volunteer event to generate as many as five million healthy, non-perishable meals to relieve hunger.

Purchase of nutrition course for [AccessAbility’s](#) wellness program serving people with barriers to employment and community inclusion.

[Community Emergency Assistance Programs \(CEAP\) Mobile Food Program’s](#) next phase of hunger relief for its neighbors.

Housing resources

Partnership with [Wilder Research](#) and [Hearth Connection](#) to learn more about barriers and challenges for people experiencing homelessness to secure and maintain stable housing.

[St. Louis County Public Health](#) Housing Fund to move individuals experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing and providing additional supports and services to avoid returning to homelessness.

[YWCA St. Paul](#) safe, affordable housing units for individuals and families experiencing homelessness and customized support services to help participants stabilize their lives, build new skills, connect to community and secure a future of safe, stable housing.

About UCare

[UCare](#) is an independent, nonprofit health plan providing health care and administrative services to nearly 650,000 members throughout Minnesota and parts of western Wisconsin. UCare partners with health care providers, counties, and community

organizations to create and deliver Medicare, Medicaid and Individual & Family health plans.

The health plan addresses health care disparities and care access issues through a broad array of community initiatives. UCare has received Top Workplaces honors from the Star Tribune for 13 consecutive years since the rankings began in 2010.

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