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## **UCare Foundation invests in programs addressing social drivers of health across Minnesota**

***More than \$440,000 provided to initiatives supporting food security, housing stability, insurance renewals and Indigenous leadership***

MINNEAPOLIS, Feb. 20, 2024 — [The UCare Foundation](#) has provided funds to seven community organizations working to build fairer, more equitable social support systems in urban and rural Minnesota communities. The grants address social drivers of health for African American, American Indian, East African, and Latine individuals and families, and people in crisis. Individual grants range from \$10,000 to \$100,000.

While Minnesota ranks high among the healthiest states in the nation, it also ranks high for having some of the biggest health disparities in the country – especially among people of color. Inequities in income, education and home ownership mirror these gaps. At UCare, we recognize the critical role that social drivers of health play in improving health outcomes for people who have been failed by systems historically and presently. Breaking through this trend requires an investment in programs that directly address inequities and support the whole health of people. This year, the UCare Foundation is funding on-the-ground local initiatives to improve access to food, housing, cultural resources and health insurance. This local effort aligns closely with today’s global recognition of the World Day of Social Justice, established to recognize the need to promote social justice, including efforts to tackle poverty, exclusion, human rights and social protections.

“We have a critical need – and opportunity – to create more equitable conditions for Minnesotans,” said Pleasant Radford, Jr., UCare Health Equity Officer. “At UCare, we are doubling down on our efforts to advance health equity through our partnerships with organizations committed to tackling the issues at the intersection of health and social justice. We are excited that these programs continue to improve the lives of our UCare members and the communities in which they live.”

**[Snapshot of UCare-sponsored programs across Minnesota](#)**

## **Latine and American Indian populations**

[Bountiful Basket Food Shelf](#) and [Mi C.A.S.A.](#) partnership in the Latino community to address food insecurity. UCare is supporting a bi-monthly evening food assistance program in a welcoming environment that enables relationship-building with the Mi C.A.S.A. staff and volunteers to benefit individuals living in the Twin Cities Latino community.

[Comunidades Organizando el Poder y la Accion Latina-COPAL Education Fund](#), statewide *Improving Health Outcomes for Greater Minnesota Latines* program using a holistic approach of providing direct health care and career services, and advancing campaigns that increase Latine families' and workers' access to stable housing, employment with benefits and health care.

[Tiwahe Foundation](#), *Reimagining Indigenous Leadership* building capacity for the Oyate Leadership Network, a culturally grounded leadership development and network weaving program rooted in Indigenous ways. UCare is funding staff salaries, statewide engagement with Tribal Nations, program evaluations and an annual convening of participants.

## **Food, housing, and insurance support**

[African Community Senior Services](#), *Community Senior Services Navigator* program which offers health insurance renewal assistance to immigrants in the Twin Cities. The UCare grant helps cover the costs of staffing, outreach and materials needed to help immigrants navigate the process of renewing their health insurance, ensuring they can continue to access essential health care services and coverage.

[Open Your Heart to the Hungry and Homeless](#), resources to organizations statewide to help them in their mission to support people experiencing hunger and homelessness, and meet specific unmet needs quickly. UCare funding also supports development of information and tools for community members to be part of the solution.

[Route 1](#), *Increasing Food Access within Communities of Color in the Twin Cities* supports, encourages and empowers BIPOC emerging farmers. Through additional funds from UCare, the program helps farmers run a successful farm enterprise and helps them grow nutritious, regeneratively grown food for their community to benefit their health and financial outcomes.

[Steps of Strategy](#), funding for a new *Tenant Wellness Coordinator* position in the homelessness prevention service and mentorship program. The coordinator conducts outreach, provides marketing, and engages participants in groups and services with the goal of increasing stability of tenants living in Steps of Strategy housing. The position

also supports tenants with goal plans, life skills, tenant education and connections to community resources and services.

### **About UCare**

[UCare](#) is an independent, nonprofit health plan providing health care and administrative services to more than 600,000 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 14 consecutive years since the rankings began in 2010.

### **About the UCare Foundation**

Since 1998, the [UCare Foundation](#) has improved the lives of UCare members and their communities through grants that address urgent community health needs. We focus grant-making on initiatives that improve the health of underserved individuals across Minnesota. The UCare Foundation funds high-impact services, education, community outreach and research addressing health equity, social drivers and access barriers.

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