

In this issue:

- [Pleasant Radford, Jr. joins UCare as Health Equity Officer](#)
- [UCare Foundation advances health equity and access across Minnesota](#)
- [Important 2021 UCare incentive program updates](#)
- [Baby MATTERbox for postpartum UCare members](#)
- [Preventing falls for UCare members](#)
- [New and expanding Maternal & Child Health \(MCH\) program](#)
- [New items available for UCare's MSHO members in 2021](#)
- [Avivo and Mental Health Resources FoodRx Box Pilot](#)
- [UCare funds more than 20,000 meals for Minnesotans](#)
- [UCare's Mobile Dental Clinic is on the road!](#)

Pleasant Radford, Jr. joins UCare as Health Equity Officer

UCare welcomes Pleasant Radford, Jr. to lead development of a robust racial and health equity program. His experience and leadership will strengthen our work to provide our diverse members with a path to the best health for their lives. He will drive UCare's efforts to be the leader in integrating the social and medical needs of UCare members through county, community and provider partnerships.

Radford is a multidisciplinary health care professional using his experience in health care business management, public health and community engagement to help build an equitable, affordable, culturally competent health care system for all. As Health Equity Officer at UCare, Radford will work across the organization to align clinical, community and provider health equity initiatives. Formerly, Radford worked at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, UnitedHealth Group, Mayo Clinic, the University of Chicago, Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health and served in the Peace Corps.



UCare Foundation advances health equity and access across Minnesota

\$1 million awarded to improve outcomes in Black, Indigenous, and people of color, immigrant and aging communities.

In this COVID-19 pandemic, the [UCare Foundation](#) awarded more than 15 grants throughout

Minnesota for health improvement initiatives focused specifically on health and racial equity, access to care and coverage, food insecurity and senior health. The grants fund programs addressing prevailing health disparities among families, children, immigrant communities and older Minnesotans.

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The UCare Foundation is a community-directed initiative of UCare supporting innovative services, education, community outreach and research. “We focused our grants on supporting organizations leading change in health access and equity for Minnesotans facing the most challenges,” said Ghita Worcester, Senior Vice President of Public Affairs and Chief Marketing Officer. “These grants provide much-needed services to underserved and marginalized communities, families and children, and aging Minnesotans. The severe impact of COVID-19 on BIPOC communities this year magnified already existing health disparities.”

Snapshot of UCare-sponsored programs across Minnesota

Health and racial equity

- Bridge funding for the [African American Babies Coalition](#) to continue training, outreach and engagement that identify and address achievement gaps for Black and Brown infants, children and parents
- [CAPI USA](#) COVID-19 community coordination activities for Hmong, Vietnamese, Lao and East Indian people in Hennepin County (in collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Health and Hennepin County Public Health Department). Services include COVID-19 outreach, testing, a hotline, contact tracing and assistance in enrolling in public benefits
- [Lutheran Social Service](#) hospital readmission prevention program specifically supporting UCare immigrant and refugee community members by promoting health equity and care coordination through Community Companion certified Community Health Worker services
- Faribault Families First Coalition expanded programming of adult and early childhood education for Somali and Latinx individuals and families — including flu shots and immunizations, telehealth, healthy living and food access, and mental health support
- [Somali Circles of Health & Wellbeing program in Minneapolis and Rochester](#) to support Somali womens’ and families’ whole health through customized resources and education around cooking, exercise, nutrition and accessing health care
- Somali Community Resettlement program in [Olmsted County](#) support to improve the overall health of Somali children, adults and seniors with culturally appropriate care

Access to care and coverage

- [Angel Foundation](#) free emotional support services to 400 metro and Greater Minnesota families struggling with cancer — including Angel Pack backpacks, monthly activities, camps, medical play, teen groups and phone consultations
- [Community Dental Care](#) providing a diverse community of Medical Assistance (Medicaid) members, children, families and the elderly with an array of preventive, restorative and emergency dental services
- [Minnesota Association of Community Health Centers](#) improving access to primary care and programs such as diversity, equity and inclusion training; staff resiliency; teledentistry; social determinants of health programs; and value-based care
- [Portico Healthnet](#) navigator community expansion to provide immediate assistance with Medical Assistance (Medicaid) renewals once the COVID-19 public health emergency ends, and ensuring capacity for outreach and enrollment strategies to connect uninsured Minnesotans to public health coverage

Food insecurity

- [Food Group](#) programs at the intersection of food access, equity and nutrition issues related to hunger in 32 counties in Minnesota and Wisconsin; supporting growing nutritious food locally and getting that food to those who need it most
- Twin Cities Mobile Market, a [Food Group](#) program bringing affordable fresh and healthy foods to Twin Cities neighborhoods where there is a scarcity of grocery stores
- [MATTERbox](#) healthy meal kits and snacks distribution to first responders providing hunger relief for emergency and ongoing needs – such as Fire/Sheriff departments, paramedics, MAD DADs, daycare workers, schools and more
- [Second Harvest Heartland](#) COVID-19 response to end hunger through free drive-up emergency grocery pop-ups offering fresh produce and food staples as well as meal distributions from the Minnesota Central Kitchen caterers and restaurateurs

Senior health

- [Light the Legacy](#) advanced care planning for individuals in Greater Minnesota with education and empowerment through facilitated conversations and actions
- [Lutheran Social Service](#) Senior Companions visits, support and advocacy for aging neighbors in the Twin Cities, Brainerd and Duluth through assistance such as transportation to medical/dental appointments and help with errands

Important 2021 UCare incentive program updates

UCare offers rewards for members who take steps to stay healthy. Most incentive rewards for 2021 are not changing. A few changes to note:

UCare's MSHO incentives

UCare's Minnesota Senior Health Options (MSHO) (HMO D-SNP) incentive program is on pause for the first quarter of 2021. Once UCare's new MSHO incentive program is determined, voucher mailing, member outreach and rewards will resume. More information on updates to this program coming soon.

At this time, UCare will not accept 2020 UCare's MSHO vouchers that have a 2021 date of service listed.

Child & Teen Checkup incentives

UCare members can earn rewards by completing their Child & Teen Checkup visits. The new 2021 C&TC incentive vouchers will be posted at ucare.org/rewards soon.

2021 Child & Teen Checkup Incentives:

1. **15 Month infant Child & Teen Checkup:** \$50 gift card for completing 6 visits by age 15 months (no change from 2020)
2. **30 Month infant Child & Teen Checkup:** \$25 gift card for completing 2 visits between age 16 months – 30 months (new for 2021)
3. **3-21 year-old Child & Teen Checkup:** \$25 gift card each year for completing an annual visit. The age group eligibility is more inclusive in 2021, as it now includes children age 7 – 11.

Eligible plan types: Prepaid Medical Assistance Program (PMAP), MinnesotaCare, Individual & Family Plans, UCare Connect (SNBC) and UCare Connect + Medicare (SNBC). Vouchers must be submitted within 12 months of date of service.

View a complete list of UCare incentive at ucare.org/rewards.

Baby MATTERbox for postpartum UCare members

To help our youngest (newborn) members, UCare is offering a limited supply of Baby MATTERboxes for eligible postpartum members at no charge. The Baby MATTERbox is a baby supply kit with sample sizes of diapers, a bottle, baby wash and more.

Eligibility: Must have given birth within the past 12 weeks and enrolled in UCare PMAP, MinnesotaCare, UCare Connect, UCare Connect + Medicare or a UCare Individual & Family Plan.

To order: Call the UCare Customer Service phone number on the back of the UCare member ID card and request a "Baby MATTERbox." Limited supply is available and will be discontinued when out of stock.



Preventing falls for UCare members

Falls are the leading cause of injuries for adults age 35 and older and are even more common among older adults. Each year one in three adults 65 or older experience falls. Many older adults develop a fear of falling, which may cause them to limit their activities and lead to reduced mobility, loss of physical fitness and an increased risk of falling.

To combat this, UCare offers SilverSneakers to members on select plans (UCare's MSHO,

UCare Connect and UCare Connect + Medicare). SilverSneakers offers online strength classes, balance classes and Balance Builders workshops to eligible members. Online classes include both live classes through Zoom and on-demand classes.

To check eligibility or to find online classes, visit SilverSneakers.com. For more information on preventing falls, visit ucare.org/falls.

New and expanding Maternal & Child Health (MCH) program

UCare is committed to improving members' maternal health and birth outcomes. In July 2020, we expanded our current maternity program by bringing high risk case management in-house and extending its scope to include at-risk and high-risk pregnant women and their babies.

Through claims, county and provider referrals and hospital records, we identify pregnant and postpartum members for outreach. Our outreach specialists and perinatal nurses call identified members throughout their pregnancy to check-in and connect members with resources and provide education, including care planning, when to contact their doctor, breastfeeding support and more. In 2020, we reached over 1,200 pregnant and postpartum members to provide support and connect members to resources. Our outreach efforts were instrumental in helping us better understand our members' needs and develop programs to best serve our members.

Kubra Dire, UCare Perinatal Outreach Specialist, makes outreach calls to pregnant and postpartum members. "I call members to inform them of prenatal/postpartum resources through UCare and their community," says Dire. "I refer them to resources such as the UCare MOMS Handbook, UCare's free car seat program and breast pumps. I also offer incentives for timely care visits and regularly refer members to public health home visiting programs and WIC."

Members who may experience an at-risk or high-risk pregnancy are referred to UCare's MCH case management program for telephonic perinatal case management. In 2020, 136 women opted in to UCare's MCH telephonic case management. UCare MCH Case Managers My See Yang and Lisa Kjeseth state:

"The goals of maternity case management are to prevent complications, focus on a positive birth experience and healthy outcomes for both mom and baby. As case managers, we assist members in preparing for the birth of their child by helping facilitate appointments, assisting with transportation to appointments and providing incentives for them to attend early prenatal and postpartum appointments. We help members,

as needed, to communicate concerns with their providers and determine if they need assistance with their mental health."

"We also evaluate the need for community support and provide resources, such as childbirth classes, doulas, baby supplies, car seats and assistance with food support through referrals with Second Harvest or WIC applications. We coach members on prenatal care, upcoming tests, warning signs and who to call with concerns. After they give birth, we follow up to ensure they have what they need to care for the baby and themselves, including understanding when to call the doctor and scheduling follow up appointments."

There are times when a baby needs to be admitted to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). UCare's specialty NICU Case Manager, Lori Sydow shares:

"Our team offers ongoing case management throughout the baby's NICU stay and during transition to home. We offer emotional support and education for these parents. We can assist in connecting them with mental health resources and encourage moms to follow-up with their provider for their postpartum care and county public health for additional support. UCare also offers transportation help for parents who need it to ensure they can visit and bond with their babies while in the NICU."

UCare encourages county public health and social service staff to refer members to our case management program. You can make referrals by calling the pregnancy advisor line at 612-676-3326 or toll-free at 855-260-9708, or secure email maternitynotification@ucare.org.

For more information about UCare MCH outreach and case management program, please contact UCare MCH Manager Kaying Vang-Lor at kvanglor@ucare.org.

In addition to UCare staff outreach, the UCare County Team provides data on prenatal and postpartum members to county public health agencies upon request. UCare offers these reports at all county check-in meetings with county public health agencies. To learn more, please contact UCare County Manager Annie Halland at ahalland@ucare.org.

New items available for UCare's MSHO members in 2021

Memory Support Kit

This kit includes tools and activities to help members living with dementia. Members should talk with their UCare care coordinator or case manager to find out which of the two kit options may be right for them. Limit one kit per member per year. UCare's MSHO care coordinators can order the kit for members by using the form located on the [care management site](#).

Kit A:

- Photo album
- Memory training game
- Motion sensor light with batteries
- Voice controlled alarm clock
- Brain books



Kit B:

Choose one item from the following list:

- Animatronic cat
- Animatronic dog
- Animatronic baby boy
- Animatronic baby girl
- One button radio
- Twiddle muffs
- 5 lb. weighted blanket



Smartwatch activity tracker

The smartwatch activity tracker is an easy-to-use activity tracker plus Personal Emergency Response System (PERS) device. The activity tracker, usable inside and outside the home with built-in GPS, helps members do what they love and feel safe doing by:

- Helping them reach their health goals with steps and heart rate tracking
- Providing a care coordinator access to health and wellbeing data
- Providing 24/7 emergency call-for-help directly through the watch

An authorization is required. To order, MSHO Care Coordinators complete the [REEMO Authorization/Order form](#). The smartwatch is ready-to-use out of the box with no set up required or pairing to a cell phone or wi-fi.

WW (formerly WeightWatchers program) local workshop vouchers

- Access to 13 consecutive weeks of WW Workshops
- 14 weeks of access to WW digital tools
- No meeting registration fee required

UCare's MSHO members can order a WW voucher packet by calling UCare Customer Service at the number on the back of their member ID card

Avivo and Mental Health Resources FoodRx Box Pilot

We have exciting work underway connecting UCare members experiencing mental illness and other chronic health conditions with healthy food. In partnership with Avivo, Mental Health Resources (MHR), Minnesota Community Healthcare Network and Second Harvest Heartland, we launched a FoodRx box pilot in December 2020. This pilot supports PMAP, MinnesotaCare, UCare Connect and UCare Connect + Medicare members in the seven-county metro area and will run through spring 2021.

Participants will receive a monthly healthy food box delivered to their home containing healthy shelf stable food, recipe cards and educational material. The goal of the pilot is to help members improve their chronic conditions while receiving mental health support one-on-one from our provider partners, Avivo and MHR. We look forward to learning how we can better support the needs of our members to improve their overall health and wellbeing.

UCare funds more than 20,000 meals for Minnesotans

UCare provided a \$132,000 donation to the [Second Harvest Heartland Minnesota Central Kitchen](#) and [winter markets](#). Minnesota Central Kitchen brings together restaurants, furloughed chefs and caterers, and hunger-fighting organizations to tackle hunger and service-sector layoffs brought on by the pandemic. They provide prepared hot meals to respond to the surge in hunger and see Twin Cities-area communities through recovery.

UCare is also supporting winter markets that are large-scale distributions of produce, emergency food boxes, protein and dairy. The markets are held weekly throughout the Twin Cities metro area and in Greater Minnesota.

“When Second Harvest Heartland leaders told us they’d seen a 30% increase in food demand since

March, we knew we had to take action. By providing individuals and families with more than 20,000 meals this winter, we can help mitigate this COVID-era hunger surge,” said Ghita Worcester, Senior Vice President of Public Affairs and Chief Marketing Officer. “These nutritious chef-prepared meals and winter market staples will ensure our members and the community have access to the food they need to stay healthy, especially during the pandemic.”

“By powering emergency food distributions, our friends at UCare are tackling these tough, hungry times head on. If we all do what we can, we will ensure the winter of 2020 does not become the hungriest winter in memory. UCare is joining these efforts, and we’re grateful for their collaboration,” said Allison O’Toole, CEO of Second Harvest Heartland and member of UCare Board of Directors.



UCare’s Mobile Dental Clinic is on the road!

Check our [schedule](#) and note these upcoming dates and locations below:

February 15-19

St. Cloud – Bethlehem Lutheran Church
4310 County Road 137

February 22-26

Blaine – Christ Lutheran Church
641 89th Avenue NE

March 1-5

Forest Lake – Faith Lutheran Church
886 North Shore Drive

March 15-19

Eden Prairie – Immanuel Lutheran Church
16515 Luther Way

March 22-26

North Mankato – Nicollet County Social Services
2070 Howard Dr W

March 29 - April 2

Minneapolis – Diamond Lake Church
5760 Portland Avenue S

April 12-16

Blaine – Christ Lutheran Church
641 89th Avenue NE

April 19-23

Duluth – First United Methodist Church
230 E Skyline Pkwy