

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

2022 Public Knowledge Report to the Community



An open and honest dialogue
with Franklin and Ripley
County Residents

Greetings from United Way,

Over the past several months we've met with everyday folks from diverse backgrounds, organizations, educators, students, and business leaders, in Ripley and in Franklin Counties to discuss the aspirations they have for their local communities. A couple things became abundantly clear, people want a safe and clean community with opportunities for everyone to thrive. They feel that access to a good education, health and wellness services, and ensuring that every community member has their basic needs met regardless of their economic situation, are vitally important to reaching these aspirations. The conversations we've had across Franklin and Ripley Counties will help us in becoming more impactful in the way we serve our communities.

Tim Brack, 2022 Board President
The United Way of Franklin and Ripley Counties

To our friends, partners, and partners to-be,

We look forward to sharing this important work, and much more than we can include in these pages. We value insights and ideas from everyone. We'll start with our current partners as well as partners with whom we may be able to work with more closely on the top issues we found in our community conversations.

We'd especially welcome vibrant discussion with Mental Health circles, several aspects of Basic Needs including those who help support families through the schools.

We are excited to talk with the community at large through radio interviews, short presentations, and small chats.

There is so much we can do if we work together!



United Way of Franklin
and Ripley Counties

RIISING TO THE CHALLENGE

The United Way of Franklin County has served the community steadfastly since 1990. We've recently added Ripley County to our formal service area (and are pleased about our name change in-progress!). To say that life has changed in recent years is a clear understatement. We've been through unprecedented challenges that laid bare long-standing issues – many now demanding even more attention – alongside the ups and downs of daily life.

In early 2022, we embarked on a journey to take stock by truly listening to our citizens across both Franklin and Ripley Counties using a time-tested Community Conversations approach. Over eight months, we facilitated meaningful and inspiring conversations that helped us listen deeply to people from diverse walks of life. We wanted to explore what matters in *today's* realities.

We heard the community's Aspirations, hopes and dreams, and its Main Concerns, beginning to understand them more fully. People were excited to discuss questions they had never been asked before. Addressing Aspirations, first, set a positive tone instead naming a long list of gripes and issues. Participants left more hopeful, encouraged that honest and thoughtful input can create momentum toward lasting change.

WE LISTENED

It's a privilege to hear about what people aspire for themselves and their families, how they experience their very real challenges, understand their barriers to progress, and what actions might make a difference. We also identified priority issues. The approach is called Turning Outward. It comes from The Harwood Institute's 30 years' experience as a non-partisan organization that teaches communities how to solve problems by working together in new ways. We facilitated small kitchen table-style dialogues lasting 60-90 minutes and invited many organizations to serve as hosts. We themed what we heard resulting in what is called Public Knowledge. We learned about their readiness to change, what assets could be employed for sustainability, and where we might have the best chance of success – investing our time and other resources wisely.

WE HEARD FROM



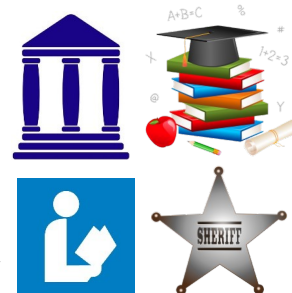
Populations: ~ 48 women, ~ 24 men

Approximate Ages: Youth (ages 12-16, grades 7-11),

young adult, 30s-60s, (especially 30s and 40s), 75-80s

Affiliations: Insurance, law enforcement, retirees, business owners, community leaders, nonprofit organizations and foundations, clubs, youth council, United Way Agency partners (most serving across both counties), five school systems including principals, counselors, teachers, and school associations, libraries, banks, tourism, community board members and more

Geography: Rural areas and small towns, higher population centers and county seats representing both Franklin and Ripley Counties; Batesville, Brookville, Laurel, Milan, Osgood, and Versailles



PEOPLE TOLD US ABOUT THEIR ASPIRATIONS

- People want a safe, welcoming, caring, involved and unified community with good access to opportunities.
- They want all aspects of a healthy community including access to basic needs and mental health resources.
- People also want thriving families, diversity, town pride and features that enhance community retention.

"We want a collaborative community that moves forward."

"We want a community with opportunity to raise children and settle here."

"We want young people to have the skills and education to stay; a goal or path to the future."

"We want to see families that thrive, healthier, better engaged."

"We want to see a community that works together and assumes the best; treat each other with dignity and respect."

PEOPLE SAID THEIR MAIN CONCERNS ARE

Mental Health Issues;

Connectedness;
Mental Health resources



Drug Issues and related Safety concerns; related School-based challenges

Essential Needs Services;

Awareness of resources available;
Access to services



Economic Development; Job opportunities and growth; Balancing growth while retaining small town feel; Communication about businesses and resources; Affordable housing; Transportation

Community Engagement;

Cleaner communities and pride



MORE MAIN CONCERNS DESCRIPTIONS

Strong Engaged Communities and Economic Opportunity

"Main Street programs are a hot topic." "We need a Main Street-style effort, someone to help get grants and funds for the community."

We need community involvement with young people and appreciation for local youth. We need "willingness to make our town more safe and more welcoming."

"Being involved in the community lets you get to know the community and really feel good about it."



PEOPLE DESCRIBED THEIR MAIN CONCERNS

Every person has a story to tell, one with hope as well as barriers to success.

Broad Concerns

People told us that we need much greater awareness of services available, access to services, and more services provided overall. People need transportation to services, especially.

People are proud of their small town strengths. "It's harder for transient families, but this is where the locals shine. The burden rests on us — those that are thriving, not the family that is struggling."

"We tend to see Franklin County as a very giving community." But, "People are trying to solve problems internally, not through a caring community." "It's heartbreaking."

Mental Health

"Mental Health issues are huge at school and at home." "We see a lot of second-hand trauma passed down to kids."

"So many people are doing great things, but it's too stand-alone, not coordinated, which makes it overwhelming for families seeking help."

"People don't know when they need help." "They don't know how to cope with trauma, can't afford counseling...they begin self-medicating."

"Eighty percent of people housed in jail have a mental health disorder. We need to focus on mental health at a younger age."

"... it's a complicated issue with multiple causes. Solutions aren't quick-fixes."

"Chronic pain causes depression." "There is a COVID fallout resulting in loss, grief, depression."

Stress, depression of work team members "escalated during COVID." "Nobody is immune to it." "It feels heavy! We're all affected."

"Stigma is still there, but those who do try to access things are not able to find them. Too many needs and not enough resources."

"Some students have been on waiting lists for six months."

Access to Basic/Essential Needs Services and School-Based Access

Students and families, both, need food programs, clothing, hygiene kits, especially for displaced kids. The BackSack program is really helpful.

"Schools see many drug issues, leading to safety issues." Three school systems agreed that vaping is an issue, "even in the elementary schools."

"There is a need for affordable childcare, housing and transportation"

"We need resources for kids to hang out."

"Sometimes I feel that our community just puts band-aids on, that we don't plan ahead on how we use our monies or time or talents. If we didn't put the band-aid on how could we...improve things over time?"

"Families don't know where to begin. We need a one-stop shop." "People need to access multiple resources earlier to avoid emergencies."

EXPERT KNOWLEDGE

United Way sees tremendous community need through daily requests for help or advice for accessing services. We also see regular reports confirming how residents are doing and the many ways they strive. Data examples:

ALICE Data: ALICE stands for **A**sset **L**imited **I**ncome **C**onstrained **E**mployed — households that earn more than the poverty level, but less than the basic cost of living for their county (the ALICE Threshold). The most recent data is from 2018, and we know that conditions have changed considerably since then through the pandemic and other challenges. In both Franklin and Ripley Counties the 2018 Household Survival Budget shows that costs were well above the Federal Poverty Level of \$12,140 for a single adult and \$25,100 for a family of four.

Ripley County: Every township and town had at least 25% of households in poverty including 4 townships at 40% or higher ALICE and federal poverty levels.

Franklin County: Similarly, 13 of 17 townships/towns had at least 29% living in poverty including six with at least 40% or higher ALICE and federal poverty levels.

Sources: <http://unitedforalice.org/Indiana> and the 2019 Report [The Consequences of Insufficient Household Income](#).

IN211 Call Data: From January 2021 to November 2022, 828 calls from Franklin and Ripley County combined, were referred to 1,947 services including these top five provider types: Utility Assistance, Housing, Food/Meals, Health Care, and Individual Family and Community Supports.

An additional 53 referrals were made to Mental Health Services and Mental Health Addiction providers, though no callers named those services in their initial call requests. Clearly people were reluctant to ask for help or have a stigma about asking for help.

Source:
<https://in211.communityos.org/datadashboard>

HOW WE'RE USING WHAT WE HEARD

We're already embracing our next opportunities and challenges to focus United Way's resources in the most impactful ways possible.

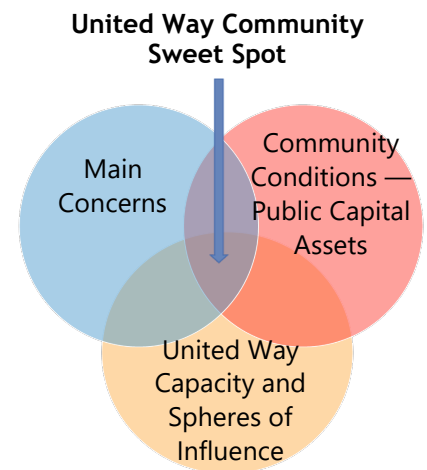
The Board has been engaged in rich discussion about new ways to make a long-lasting difference in the lives of our community. The Turning Outward approach helps us find a Sweet Spot — the intersection between the Main Concerns, what we call Community Conditions or Public Capital Assets, and United Way's natural or emerging Spheres of Influence where we can leverage existing efforts and work with partners in new ways.

The Harwood Institute's research suggests that for a community to work effectively, it needs a web of fundamental structures, networks, and norms called **Public Capital Assets** to open channels, build shared purpose, and leverage knowledge. For example: **Abundance of Social Gatherings:** Helps people to learn about what's happening in the community and increase trust. **Conscious Community Discussions:** Gives ample opportunity to think about and sort through options and invite allies, before taking action.

NEXT STEPS

UWFRC is excited to discuss the Public Knowledge findings through a robust sharing plan. We'll continue to learn more and explore opportunities for real change.

We expect to focus on very specific actions that can leverage already-good works and partnerships. We may also pilot community-strengthening efforts such as the Public Capital Assets to support long-lasting change.



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