



2025 ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

44 Years of Helping People In Need and
Building Community to End Poverty



Friends In Deed (FID) began in 1982 through the efforts of Polly Helmke and Libby Hillegonds, who convened a coalition of Washtenaw County churches to explore the Love INC model. Grounded in compassion, FID was created to provide practical help with dignity, quickly becoming a vital resource for neighbors in need.

What started as a small, faith-rooted response has grown into a trusted, collaborative organization deeply embedded in the community.



New Executive Leadership

In recent years, Friends In Deed has faced challenges that have sharpened our focus. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, demand for services has remained high while the cost of basic needs—housing, utilities, and transportation—continues to rise, increasing both the number of households seeking support and the level of assistance required.



During this time, the organization has also experienced leadership transition. Now led by Executive Director R. Tyrone Kelsey, Friends In Deed is strengthening its infrastructure and building for the future.

With a background in technology and systems thinking, Tyrone has advanced key improvements, including enhanced case management tools and a comprehensive IT integration initiative—streamlining processes, reducing manual workload, and enabling a more responsive approach to community needs.

Experienced Board of Directors



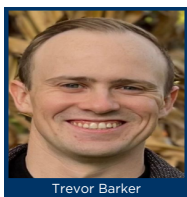
Joseph Verga (Pepe), retired CFO of Ford Motor Company, serves as President of the Board of Directors. His international career experience strengthens Friends In Deed's governance, particularly in fiduciary oversight and regulatory compliance.



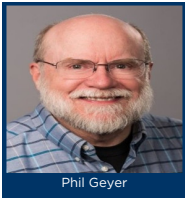
Cheryl Harvey, Director of College and Career Readiness at Washtenaw Community College, serves as Vice President of the Board of Directors. Her expertise in career development and strong community partnerships have deepened engagement with the Circles Program.



Katherine Weathers, Associate Director of LSA Scholarships at University of Michigan College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, serves as Secretary of the Board of Directors. Her extensive experience in managing and developing the LSA Four-Year Scholarship Program supports Friends In Deed's long-term sustainability.



Trevor Barker, Director of Finance, Legal, and IT at Ann Arbor Smiles, serves as Treasurer and Chair of the Finance Committee. A long-serving board member, Trevor brings valuable institutional knowledge and insight into financial trends that impact the organization's stability.



Phil Geyer, President Emeritus and retired Chair of the Computer Science Department at Washtenaw Community College, is a long-serving member of the Board. His deep institutional knowledge provides continuity and informed perspective in advancing Friends In Deed's mission.



Glory Hoffman, former Director of Operations at Friends In Deed and originally from Colombia, brings both lived experience and deep program knowledge to her board service. As a former single mother, she offers a vital perspective and serves as a strong bridge between Board and staff.

Join the Board

Following several longtime Board member transitions, 2026 is focused on rebuilding an engaged, diverse Board that strengthens governance, deepens community connection, and supports Friends In Deed's long-term sustainability and impact.



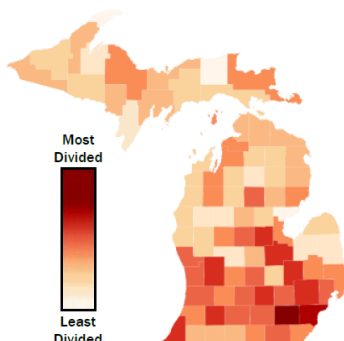
Why We're Here: Poverty in Washtenaw County

Poverty develops in part due to the reality that everyone is dealt a different hand. For people with low-income communities, the deck is often stacked against them. While some people are dealt strong cards – such as good schools, stable homes, access to health care – those in poverty start with fewer resources and more hurdles, and less opportunities. These hurdles include low-paying jobs, systemic inequality, lack of access to education; disability; mental health; and economic instability.

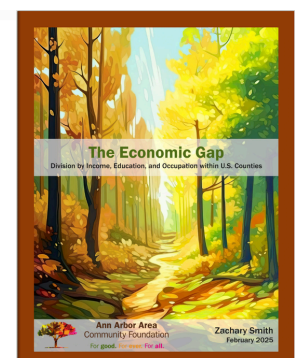
AAACF's Economic Gap Analysis



**Ann Arbor Area
Community Foundation**
For good. For ever. For all.

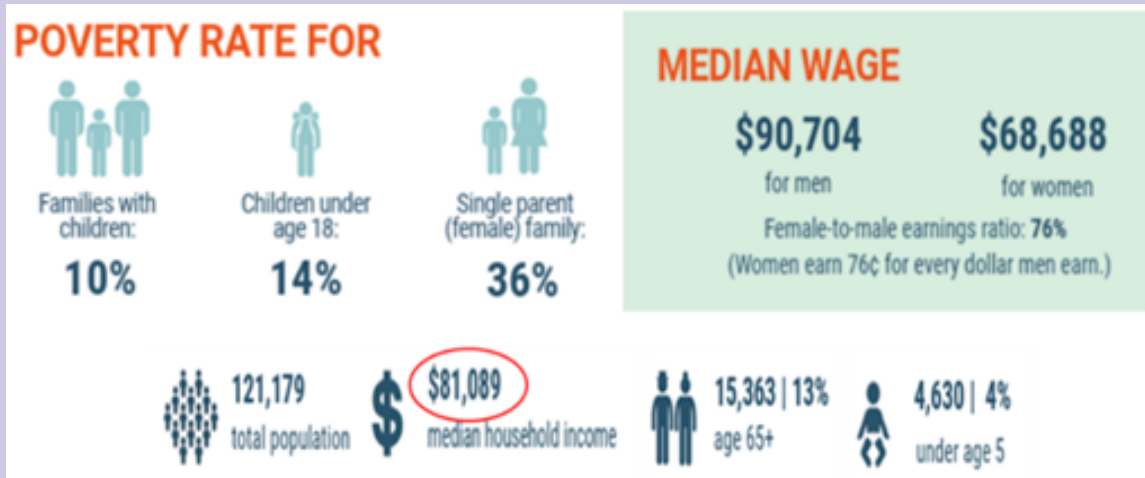


Washtenaw County has been ranked as the **most economically divided county in Michigan** according to the most recent [Economic Gap](#) analysis. Washtenaw County is also one of the most divided in the nation at 44th of nearly 3,000 counties in the United States.

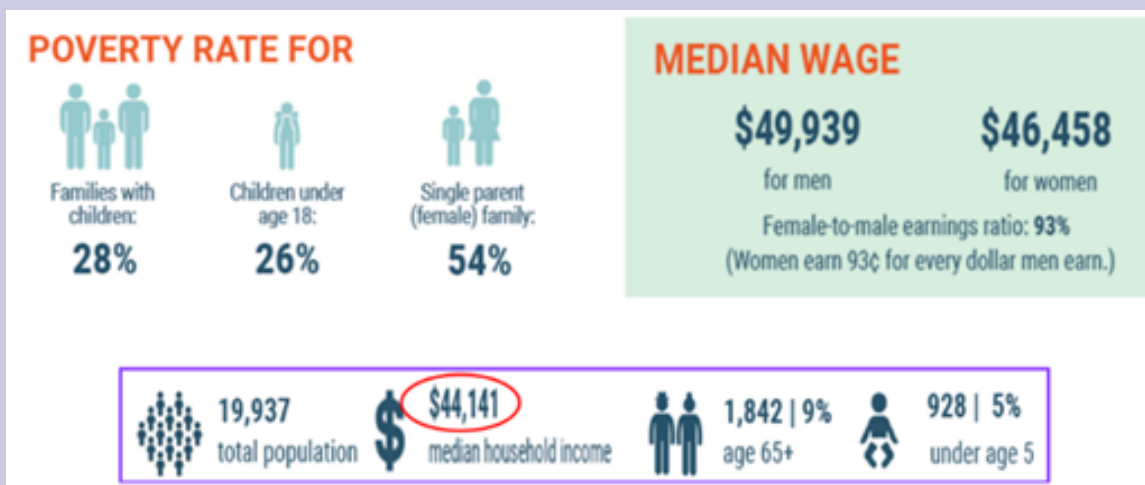


Visit: www.aaacf.org to read the full report.

Ann Arbor's Economic Profile

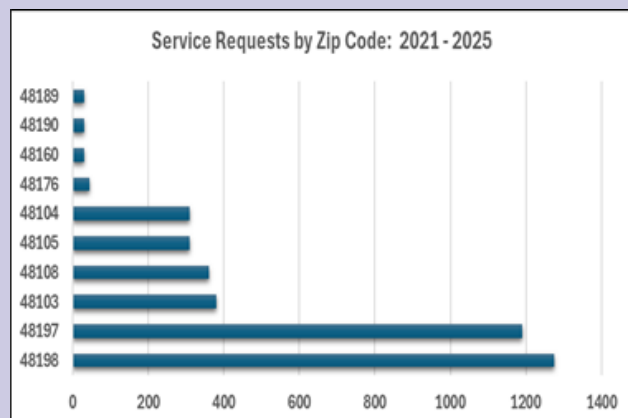


Ypsilanti's Economic Profile



Service by Zip Code

Of the 25% of people experiencing poverty throughout the county, **almost 50% of Washtenaw County families** experiencing poverty live in the city of Ypsilanti, Ypsilanti Township, and southern Superior Township: 48197, 48198 zip codes where our office is located.

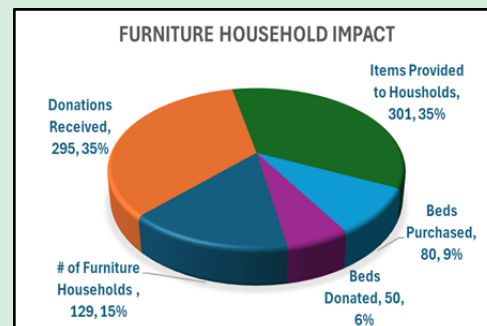
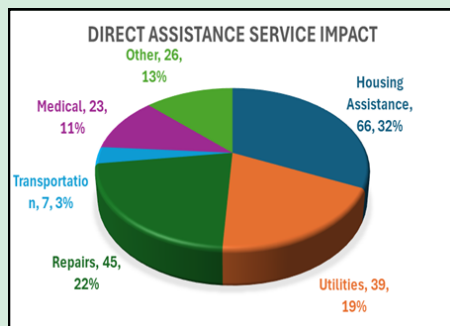


Being There During Financial Hardship

Situational poverty results from a financial hardship which individuals may experience due to sudden job loss, medical problems, or relationship change that thrusts them what I call income-to-expenses misalignment. A past economic survey reported that 63% of workers do not have savings reserved to pay an unexpected \$500 emergency expenses. An inability to meet unexpected hardship can lead to a domino effect that leads to loss of housing, reliable transportation, or employment.

Our **Essential Services** programs work to address critical needs that emerge from incidental financial hardships impacting housing, transportation, utilities, senior services, and furniture assistance by **mitigating the burden of financial situations impacted by income-to-expenses misalignment**.

- **Rental Assistance** – Helping individuals stay housed and transition successfully when needed.
- **Transportation Assistance** – Addressing barriers to work and daily life through car-related aid, bus passes, and reliable transportation to working families.
- **Utilities Relief** – Filling gaps to ensure households maintain essential services.
- **Senior Services** – Promoting dignity, independence, and well-being by providing a wide range of supportive services in the categories of housing stability, transportation support, safety, and wellness.
- **Furniture Assistance** – Providing basic household items that support client rehousing needs when timely rental or utility assistance cannot remedy the factors that leads to loss of housing.



Meeting clients in their time of financial hardship generates relief that expresses the impact of this program: "I Needed Help" to "They Found A Way!" But we can and need to do better. In 2025 we recognized the need to enhance our intake processes and procedures, and our data gathering and reporting capabilities. With the acquisition of a more capable case management system, we have begun a multi-phase integration effort to strengthen our ability to define client needs better and tell our client story better.

Additionally, we were awarded our first federal grant, as a part of the Washtenaw County's Office of Community and Economic Development homeless prevention initiative, funded by the HUD HOME ARP program.

Making The Magic: Strategic Thought Leadership



Elisa Guyton

Elisa Guyton, Director of Development and Communications, leads Friends In Deed's efforts to strengthen community engagement, expand philanthropic support, and elevate the organization's storytelling. Her work is grounded in the belief that clear, compelling communication helps connect people more deeply to the mission of helping neighbors in need and building community to end poverty.

Development and communications at Friends In Deed focus on building the relationships, partnerships, and systems needed to sustain both immediate services and long-term impact. This work is grounded in a strategic approach to community building—recognizing that lasting change happens when organizations, donors, volunteers, and community members work together toward shared goals.

A key priority has been strengthening donor and volunteer engagement, expanding recurring and multi-year giving, and ensuring consistent storytelling that clearly communicates both community need and organizational impact. Signature initiatives such as the Annual Impact Dinner and Over the Edge event continue to deepen community connection and cultivate new partnerships.

Collaboration Alert

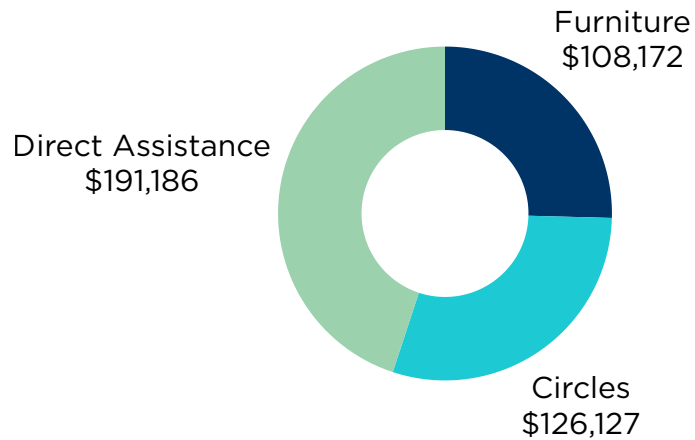
This spring, collaborations with the University of Michigan supported several strategic capacity-building initiatives. UM School of Information UX Capstone team redesigned the Friends In Deed volunteer journey to strengthen onboarding, communication, and long-term engagement. In addition, an SI 495 project team developed Data That Drives Change, a Tableau dashboard prototype designed to better visualize program outcomes and support data-informed decision-making across Essential Services and Circles.

Finally, through the Ginsberg Center's Storytelling for Social Change initiative, Friends In Deed is strengthening how it communicates impact, lived experience, and community need.

Together, these collaborations reflect a growing commitment to strategic growth, innovation, and community partnership in support of Friends In Deed's mission.

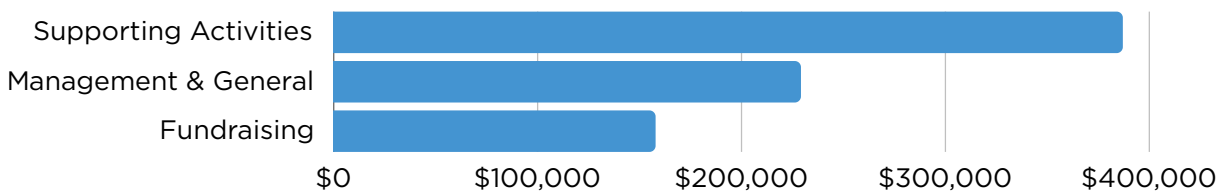
2025 Program Activities

Direct Assistance represented the largest share of program investment in 2025, helping households meet immediate and critical needs.



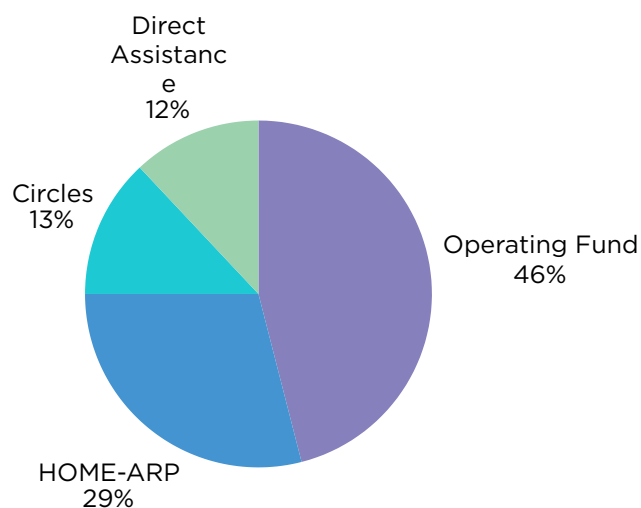
Organizational Support Investments

Operational and fundraising investments provide the infrastructure necessary to sustain and expand community impact.



2025 Income Summary

Community support, grant funding, and strategic partnerships fueled critical programs and services throughout 2025.



Working To Break Generational Cycles: Circles



Twana Greene

Twana Greene, Circles Program Director, is a visionary leader and community advocate dedicated to breaking the cycle of poverty and building pathways to long-term stability. Through her leadership of the Circles initiative at Friends In Deed in Washtenaw County, she leads with both strategy and compassion, empowering individuals, and families to achieve sustainable success through intentional goal setting, community support, and personal development.

Generational poverty is defined as being in poverty for two generations or longer. Our **Circles Program** works to address critical needs that emerge from long-term systemic hardship. FID saw a repeating cycle of incidental financial hardship — families who would stabilize briefly after receiving help but were soon back in crisis. It became clear that a short-term relief approach, while necessary, wasn't enough to address generational poverty or long-term systemic barriers. We work to accomplish this by **facilitating personal transformation that transitions clients into wider streams of socioeconomic capital and achieving higher income and financial security.**

Circles implemented strategic enhancements to strengthen outcomes in financial mobility and workforce readiness. We expanded our program into a structured 24-month curriculum that integrates the national Circles model with locally developed content. This change provides a more comprehensive pathway that addresses both economic advancement (employment, income growth, financial stability) and underlying barriers such as trauma and mindset, which often impact long-term success.

Circles Leader Spotlight



"Circles gave me hope again. Through the program, I learned how to turn my dreams into goals and my goals into action. More than anything, I found a community that believed in me, supported my family, and reminded me that I didn't have to navigate life's challenges alone."

Thierry, Circles Cohort 1 Alumni

CIRCLES IMPACT OVERVIEW

COHORT 6 & COHORT 7 COMPARISON

Building Pathways. Transforming Lives. Strengthening Community.

	COHORT 6 COMPLETED – PROVEN RESULTS	COHORT 7 IN PROGRESS – BUILDING MOMENTUM
REACH & ENGAGEMENT	13 Leaders Served	24 Leaders Served
WORKFORCE & ECONOMIC MOVEMENT	6 Employed Leaders (86% Employment Rate)	15 Employed Leaders
CHILDREN SERVED	16 Children Served	32 Children Served
PROGRAM STATUS	- Completed 14 Weeks of Training - Matched with Allies - Completed 18-Month Curriculum	- Completed 14 Weeks of Training - Matched with Allies - Began 18-Month Curriculum
80% Achieved at Least One Major Goal	70% Increased Confidence, Self-Advocacy & Goal Clarity	3 Business Owners (Cohort 6)
	2 Continuing Education (Cohort 6)	70 Active Volunteers
		300 Volunteer Hours Per Month
		2 Community Partnerships (Jan – May)
		85% Retention Rate (Cohort 6)
From engagement to employment – creating lasting impact for families and our community.		

Circles Cohort 6 supported seven families in advancing toward greater financial security. Meanwhile, Cohort 7 Leaders completed the 14-week onboarding segment and enhanced program curriculum. As a result, 19 of the 24 Leaders who began in September 2025 transitioned into the core curriculum with both new and returning Allies.



Core Pillars of Circles Washtenaw

- 1. Financial Empowerment & Mobility** – Building budgeting skills, increasing income, improving credit, and creating sustainable financial systems.
- 2. Workforce Development & Career Advancement** – Supporting job readiness, resume building, career exploration, and connections to employment opportunities.
- 3. Emotional Intelligence & Healing** – Addressing trauma, stress, and mindset barriers that impact decision-making and long-term success.
- 4. Social Capital & Community Engagement** – Strengthening relationships, expanding professional networks, and increasing access to community resources.
- 5. Personal Development & Goal Achievement** – Supporting Leaders in setting, tracking, and accomplishing meaningful personal and professional goals.

Volunteers of the Year



"This experience has meant more to me than just volunteering. Connecting with younger kids taught me responsibility, patience, and what it really means to be a leader. Having people believe in me made a big difference—and now I want to be that example for others."

Denzel, Circles Children's Program Volunteer

"Nemo embodies the spirit of volunteerism at FID. His warmth, reliability, and dedication have made a lasting impact on both our Furniture Program and the community we serve. Week after week, clients look forward to speaking with him—not just for assistance, but for the kindness and connection he brings to every conversation." — Cole Nelson, Furniture Coordinator

Nemo, Furniture Helpline Volunteer



To Our Beloved Community

Friends In Deed works every day to help people in need and build community to end poverty. This work is only possible because of the collective strength of our community—dedicated staff, committed volunteers, generous donors, public partners, and neighbors who have received support and now give back in gratitude.

Each plays an essential role in sustaining this work through the generous sharing of time, talent, and resources. On behalf of the Board of Directors and the entire Friends In Deed community, **we extend our deepest gratitude for your presence,** partnership, and commitment throughout the year.

Powered by Community

Friends In Deed's work is made possible through the generosity of foundations, businesses, congregations, civic partners, and individual supporters who believe in a stronger, more connected community.

Foundations & Grants

Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan
United Way for Southeastern Michigan
Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation
James A. & Faith Knight Foundation
HOME-ARP

Corporate & Business Partners

Bank of Ann Arbor
PNC
Old National Bank

Congregations & Faith Communities

First Presbyterian Church
Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church
Crossroads Community Baptist Church
Calvary Presbyterian Church

First Baptist Church – Ypsilanti
First Congregational Church
First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor
First Presbyterian Church of Ypsilanti
First Unitarian Universalist Church

First United Methodist Church of Ypsilanti
St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church
St. Luke Lutheran Church

Civic & Community Organizations

The Ann Arbor Thrift Shop
Ypsi Thrift Shop
Kiwanis

Every contribution helped strengthen support systems, expand opportunity, and build community across Washtenaw County.

friends in deed

over the EDGE

September 12, 2026
Hill Hall @ EMU

We are TEAMING UP with businesses,
congregations, and fellow nonprofits
for OUR community!

Because doing good is better
when we do it together!

Scan to Register!

