

A Positive Outlook

Data and Community



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This idea is at the heart of the United Way of Southern Nevada's Community Connect website (communityconnect.uwsn.org). The organization has been helping children and families for six decades and is one of the most recognizable nonprofits in the region. It works as a conduit for ideas, support and resources from throughout the community and focuses them on finding solutions to improve early childhood education, high school achievement, post-secondary attainment and workforce support. The first step in finding solutions is identifying the problem, and United Way relies on community data to help it do so. Yet identifying, collecting and managing accurate up-to-date data presents a challenge for any organization, especially considering the alphabet soup of government agencies that produce critical datasets, such as the CDC, BLS, DETR, ACS and DOE.

Community Connect was created to pull this key data together into one place, where it can be easily accessed, updated and processed into usable insights for fulfilling the United Way mission. The data available at Community Connect aligns with the United Way's focus: demographics, education, financial stability, and health and well-being. Each category contains a range of relevant indicators, such as race and ethnicity, educational proficiency, poverty rate and work status, that can be viewed in charts and maps to understand how needs change and vary in different parts of the community. Together, these indicators help the United Way staff spot trends and areas, including neighborhoods, where they can help. Community Connect also includes a section for Community Stories, where site visitors can read personal stories and informational posts about the impact of United Way programs throughout the community. Community Connect is available to the public, allowing nonprofits, government agencies, businesses and residents to learn more about the community they live in and how they can help make it a better place.

As someone who relies on data as much as I do, I take care not to forget that each number represents something in the real world: a parent, a child, a family, a household, a worker, a business. The data is the forest and helps us see the big picture, but we can't overlook the trees. The United Way's Community Connect helps us see both the forest and the trees, and that perspective will help us all in improving the understanding of our community and identifying new ways to make it better for all.

