



## JOIN US — Make A Difference In Education

Together, we can make a real difference in our schools. Just look at Grand Rapids, where struggling elementary school students are now making dramatic improvements in reading skills. What's making the difference? Community volunteers are stepping up to tutor students who need individual help, to read with kids in and after school, and to mentor kids who need someone to believe in them.

That's a big part of what it takes to cut dropout numbers in half. Caring adults working with kids – of all ages, from the early years through high school – can help boost academic achievement.

We need one million volunteer readers, tutors and mentors to extend the momentum across the nation.

Join with volunteers in your community, and show the power of Living United. Go to [www.liveunited.org/volunteer](http://www.liveunited.org/volunteer) to find out more.

### THE CHALLENGE

United Way has set out a challenge – to our 1,246 state and local United Ways and our national, state and local partners – to help cut high school dropout numbers in half by 2018.

But United Way can't do it alone. That's why we want one million people – including young adults, retirees, faith communities and employees – to join us over the next three years.

Anyone with passion and commitment can help a young person achieve greater academic success. Volunteers can make the difference.

## VOLUNTEERS STEP UP IN GRAND RAPIDS

The Heart of West Michigan United Way is zeroing in on first through third graders in its most disadvantaged neighborhoods. That's because children are learning to read through third grade; by fourth grade they are reading to learn. Kids who read well are more likely to graduate, and succeed in college, work and life.

The Grand Rapids community has come together around 900 young students who need the most help. Some 1,200 community volunteers – including college students and retirees – work one-on-one with kids in schools for 30 minutes a week. More than 60 companies give employees paid time off to mentor. Congregations host after-school and family literacy programs.

It's working. Students in the Schools of Hope program are making greater reading gains than their peers. And those in the after-school program are gaining 1½ year's worth of academic growth in just 9 months.

## HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

It could take as little as one hour a week – during school, after school or even on the weekends. Here are just a few examples of what you could do:

- **Volunteer Reader:** read stories to individual students or groups
- **Reading Buddy:** work with students and their teachers in an online book club
- **Reading and Math Tutor:** use your skills to work one-on-one with students (using curricula designed to improve academic performance)
- **Mentor,** connecting with students beyond the classroom, providing advice, guidance and even career mentoring. Do it one-on-one, or with a group of mentors.

If one million of us do it, just imagine the change we could create in the world.

Don't wait for someone else to step up. Show the power of Living United by joining this education volunteer movement now.

Go to [www.liveunited.org/volunteer](http://www.liveunited.org/volunteer) and sign up to make a difference in your schools – and help change your community.

## THE VOICES OF GRAND RAPIDS

Does volunteer reading, tutoring and mentoring really matter? Here's what they're saying in Grand Rapids:

*Schools of Hope builds confidence in children. They don't believe they can do it until someone else believes in them.*

Misti Stanton  
Schools of Hope Coordinator at  
Brookside and Harrison Park schools

*When we survey our teachers and ask what programs have the most impact on student achievement, the reading tutor program always is at the top.*

Maryann Prisichenko  
Principal, Sibley Elementary

*I never used to read books. I didn't even like reading, but now I enjoy reading. I feel good about myself because I learned how to read better all because of my mentor.*

Child who participates in Schools of Hope

*My weekly visits are the highlight of my week. I have grown so much from the experience. The children open themselves up and work so hard. It gives me strong feelings of hope about their futures, as well as the future of our community.*

Mike Pfennig  
Schools of Hope Reading Tutor

GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.  
LIVE UNITED 