



United Community Services
of Johnson County

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Tackling the Big Issues in
Our Community
Together

Message to the Community

2023 marked a year of transition for UCS, as Kristy Baughman was named as our organization's new Executive Director, following Julie Brewer's retirement after seven outstanding years in the role. With over 20 years of nonprofit experience, including six years as Director of Education and Planning with UCS, Kristy brings both continuity and innovation to the role, ensuring that UCS will continue to meet the evolving needs of our community.

Christina Ashie Guidry moved into the newly established role of Director of Policy and Planning. In this role, Christina will more intentionally focus on developing effective statewide policy approaches to address health and human service needs in Johnson County. UCS also welcomed back a previous team member, Erika García Reyes as Director of Resource Allocation.

In 2023, UCS focused on Tackling the Big Issues Together. Homelessness was one big issue that UCS asked our community to tackle together in 2023. Our Human Service Summit asked participants to play a role in establishing a shelter for our unhoused community members. At the same time, UCS took a new approach to public policy and advocacy in 2023 by convening a statewide coalition of partner experts to coordinate proactive education, messaging, and advocacy on the issue of Housing Insecurity and Homelessness in Johnson County and throughout the state of Kansas.

Our work in 2023 also included launching a second cohort of our Racial Equity in Communities program with the cities of Overland Park and Leawood, and bringing our Community Housing Advocacy Training to the city of Edgerton. These programs both aim to equip participants with the knowledge and skills needed to come together to address big issues in their communities.

UCS believes that working together—pooling our resources, ideas, and experience—we can amplify our impact and find innovative ways to address the big issues in our community.



Kristy Baughman
Executive Director

Tom Herzog
UCS Board President

2023 Convenings

Human Service Summit

More than 200 attendees came together for the UCS 2023 Human Service Summit, where the theme of the day was “From Me to We: Tackling the Big Issues Together.” The big issue that participants focused on was establishing a shelter for our unhoused community members, and how each participant could play a role in helping establish a continuum of housing within Johnson County. Two panel discussions framed both the impact of housing challenges and homelessness in our community, as well as visions for possible solutions. One solution highlighted during the Summit was the Dignity Project, which aims to address the needs of those experiencing homelessness, including creating a year-round non-congregate shelter. The Dignity project engaged iBossWell to implement a shelter feasibility study, and Summit participants were presented with some of the initial outcomes of the study. UCS and iBossWell finished the day by listening to Summit participants with table breakout sessions focused on how we can all play a role in supporting and promoting housing solutions.



Kansas Public Policy Forum

UCS released our 2024 Public Policy Platform at the 2023 Kansas Public Policy Forum, outlining priority policy issues for the upcoming legislative session. UCS Executive Director Kristy Baughman provided a brief presentation on priority policy issues and called on participants to seek “upstream solutions” to the challenges of economic stability, housing, healthcare access, and well-being for all.

The morning continued with a panel featuring bipartisan members of the Kansas Special Committee on Homelessness and agency representatives of two Continuums of Care on Homelessness coordinating services in Wichita and Pittsburg, Kansas. The key theme of the discussion was finding effective approaches to address housing insecurity and homelessness at the regional and state levels. The panelists shared data points, best practices, and lessons from the field with the audience.

The event closed with a Legislative Look Ahead with Johnson County legislators. Facilitated by Patty Markley, UCS Public Policy Chair and Principal of Markley Strategies. The panel featured Senator Dinah Sykes, Representative Heather Meyer, and Representative Robyn Essex.

2023 Human Service Awards

UCS' annual **Human Service Awards** recognize the profound impact we have in improving the human condition when we make the effort *to care, to help, and to connect* with those around us. Awards were presented at the **2023 Annual Meeting**.

Citizen of the Year Award



Komal Kaur received the 2023 Citizen of the Year Award. As a junior at Olathe East High School in 2020, Komal founded Eye of An Immigrant, a nonprofit organization that aims to overcome cultural barriers to citizenship through storytelling, financial support and resource assistance. Komal recognized the tremendous power of storytelling as a way to build empathy and bridge cultural divides that are often based in misconceptions and stereotypes about immigrant experiences.

Eye of An Immigrant collects and shares inspirational stories as powerful advocacy tools that reflect the personal and diverse experiences of people starting new lives in the United States.

Distinguished Public Service Award

The 2024 Distinguished Public Service Award went to Mayor Mike Boehm. Mayor Boehm was Lenexa's longest serving Mayor, providing 20 years of visionary leadership to Lenexa and to Johnson County. His five terms as Lenexa's Mayor saw forward-thinking development and unprecedented growth that have lasting benefits for the residents of Lenexa and Johnson County.

Throughout Mayor Boehm's time in office, Lenexa residents were engaged in community-driven processes that shaped the future of the city. Vision 2020 brought about one of the most significant transformations, the relocation of Lenexa's City Hall and the development of Lenexa City Center, the city's new downtown. Spanning 200 acres, Lenexa City Center is a walkable neighborhood with shopping, dining, entertainment venues, offices, residential choices, and hotels. City Center has become a gathering place for creating community and building a stronger, more connected Lenexa.



2023 Human Service Awards

Excellence in Community Service

The Johnson County Museum's REDLINED Initiative was recognized for their Excellence in Community Service. In January 2021, the Johnson County Museum hosted the 12-month exhibit, REDLINED: Cities, Suburbs, and Segregation. REDLINED was a 1,500 square foot multimedia exhibit that took visitors into the history of redlining—the systematic disinvestment of some neighborhoods and populations in favor of others, most often on the basis of race—and how it both shaped and was shaped by Johnson County and the region. The REDLINED exhibit explored the 19th and 20th century foundations of redlining, how the private practice became federal policy during the Great Depression, the expansion of the practice during postwar suburbanization, attempts to dismantle the system during the Civil Rights Era, and how the legacies of redlining continue to impact communities around the nation today.



Karen Wulfkuhle Bridge Spanner

The Karen Wulfkuhle Bridge Spanner Award went to Leawood Mayor Peggy Dunn. Mayor Dunn faithfully served the City of Leawood for more than a third of the city's history, and after seven terms retired from public office. She began her career in public service when elected to the Leawood City Council in 1993. After serving four years as a Leawood City Council member, she ran for Mayor, a position she held since 1997. Mayor Dunn's exceptional leadership has been characterized by her deep commitment to improving the city and the quality of life for Leawood residents.

During her tenure as Mayor, Leawood saw its population double in size and saw the development and growth of significant economic projects including Town Center, Town Center Crossing, and Park Place. Mayor Dunn's leadership also spearheaded city improvements such as



I-Lan Park, Gezer Park, two new fire stations, the Public Works and Parks Maintenance facilities, and the Leawood Justice Center which includes facilities for police and municipal court functions. During her years of public service, Mayor Dunn was known as a leader who prioritized collaboration, always creating space for City leadership and residents to contribute their vision to Leawood's future.

2023 Highlights

Public Policy

UCS took a new approach to public policy and advocacy in 2023 by convening a statewide coalition of partners and establishing the Kansas Housing Advocacy Network (KHAN). Drawing on research, data analysis, and the experiences of stakeholders and those with lived experience with homelessness, KHAN develops proactive education, messaging, and advocacy on the issue of housing insecurity and homelessness in Johnson County and throughout the state of Kansas.

KHAN's research shows that Kansas lacks an adequate housing supply overall, and has an acute shortage of affordable and accessible housing. Messaging developed by KHAN focuses on how Kansans are on the same housing continuum and are feeling the pressure: from retirees unable to sell a family home and downsize, to growing families unable to buy a larger home, to young professionals and core workers in childcare, healthcare, and emergency response services unable to find anywhere affordable to live in the city where they work.

While homelessness increased in Kansas in 2022 and 2023 due to the shortage of housing, rising rental costs and inflation, and stagnant wages, homelessness and housing insecurity remain solvable in Kansas. KHAN recommends three evidence-based approaches: build and maintain affordable housing where Kansans need it; act upstream to prevent vulnerable Kansans from losing housing; and invest in housing with supportive services to quickly stabilize Kansans in homelessness.

In November, UCS was invited to present to the legislature's Special Committee on Homelessness on the scope and causes of Kansas homelessness, the coordinated response led by regional Continuums of Care (CoCs), and stories of Kansans who lost housing and stabilized with the support of their local CoC.

In 2023, UCS also launched regional educational "lunch and tours" for elected officials and city and county staff working to address homelessness. These events provide an opportunity for participants to tour homelessness responses in their area, build new working relationships, and establish common goals and evidence-based solutions related to housing challenges. In 2023, UCS brought these events to Olathe (with Salvation Army Family Lodge), Manhattan (with Manhattan Emergency Shelter), and Pittsburg (with Safehouse and Building Health).

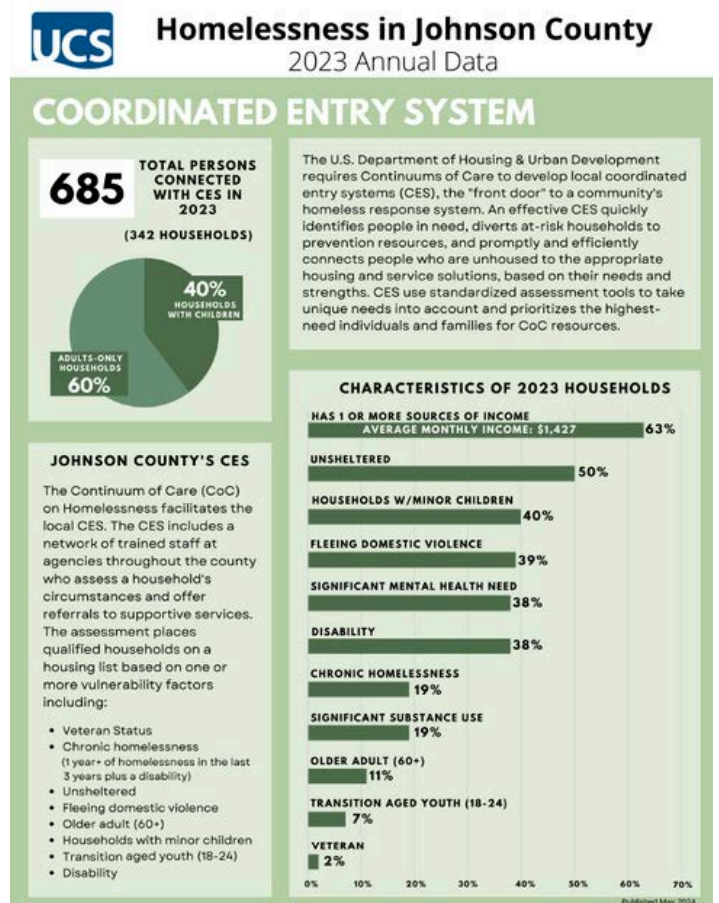
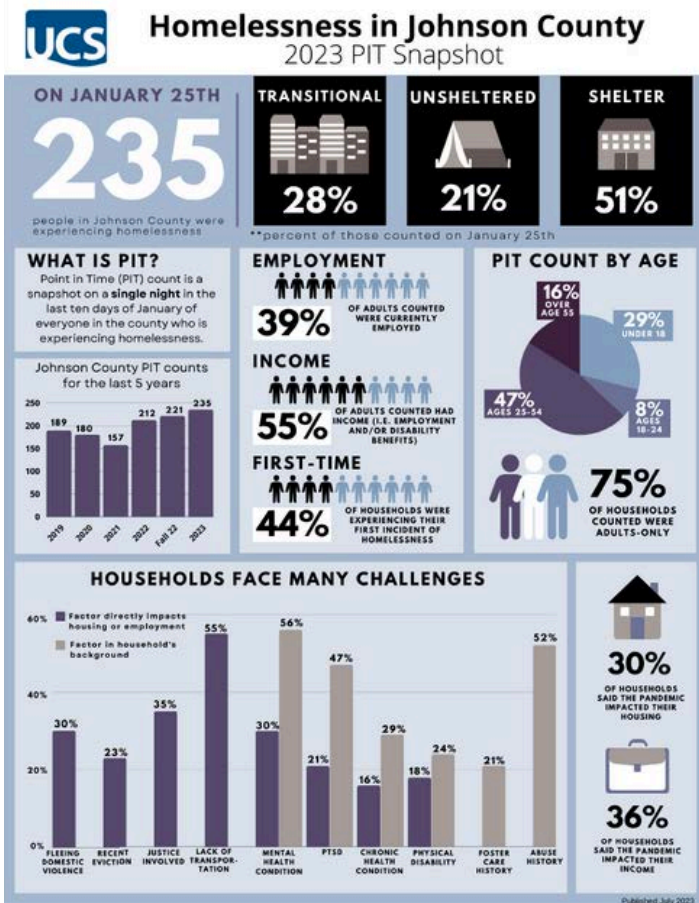


2023 Highlights

Homelessness Response

The Point-in-Time Committee of Johnson County's Continuum of Care on Homelessness (CoC) has recognized the need for coordination with neighboring CoCs to ensure that everyone experiencing homelessness on the night of the count is counted. In the past, if someone was experiencing homelessness near a state or county line, they would not be surveyed if they slept in the neighboring community the night before and might not be surveyed by either CoC. In 2023, Johnson County's CoC coordinated with all neighboring CoCs to choose a common date for the 2023 Point-in-Time Count. The CoCs also created a coordinated communication plan to ensure that everyone experiencing homelessness in the area had the opportunity to be surveyed. 2023 was the first year that all CoCs in Kansas and the greater Kansas City metro area intentionally held their counts on the same night.

The CoC also saw a significant expansion in its Lived Experience Advisory Board in 2023. This is a group of people with personal experience with housing instability and social services systems who serve as experts throughout the CoC including all CoC committees, the CoC Board, and multiple planning projects throughout the year.



2023 Highlights

Allocating Resources: Meeting Community Needs

In 2023, UCS developed a framework to expand the Alcohol Tax Fund (ATF) annual competitive grant process to incorporate a second funding source—local opioid settlement funds—which will allow for expansion in Johnson County’s continuum of care that addresses substance abuse. In 2024, ATF will be called the Substance Use Continuum of Care Fund or SUF, supported by the contribution of \$2,943,318 in alcohol tax and opioid settlement funds from Johnson County and ten cities. This substantial increase in funding allows funding for additional competitive applications as well as programs that fill gaps and create additional linkages in Johnson County’s continuum of care addressing substance use through substance use education and prevention programs, including mental health supports, as well as intervention, treatment, recovery and reintegration programs to ensure that Johnson Countians in recovery can remain in recovery.

UCS continues to manage the Human Service Fund, an important city/County partnership that invests funding resources from 14 cities and Johnson County, in nonprofit programs which provide our residents essential health and human services that promote self-sufficiency and build well-being. In 2023, HSF grantees provided more than 175,000 units of service to more than 58,000 Johnson County residents. These “units of service” included a full spectrum of programmatic interventions designed to offer support and build self-sufficiency and well-being.

HSF Success: Darren

Individuals involved with the criminal justice system often face challenges in rebuilding stable lives. NCircle, a Human Service Fund grantee, helps by offering skills training, certifications, financial education, job placement, and mentorship through its College of Trades programs, supporting those in the Johnson County Department of Corrections Adult Residential Center (ARC), Therapeutic Community, and adults on probation. Darren, originally from the Crow Lands of Montana, joined NCircle's program in 2022 after serving a five-year prison sentence, hoping to use his new skills to support his community's self-sufficiency. Through NCircle, he completed construction training and, with mentorship and resources from his tribal elders, aims to help address a shortage of construction managers within his tribe. Darren continues his studies at Johnson County Community College, where he's working toward completing his educational goals and contributing to the Crow community's economic growth and cultural preservation.



2023 Highlights

Racial Equity in Communities

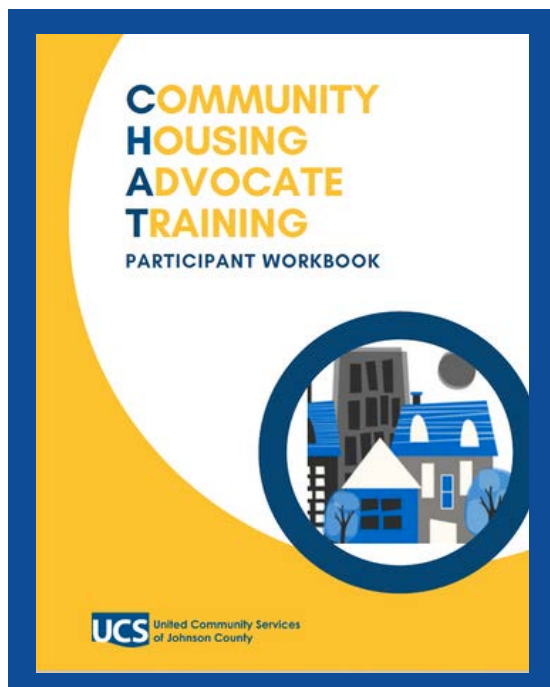
In the fall of 2023, UCS launched the second cohort of the Racial Equity in Communities (REIC) program, partnering with the cities of Overland Park and Leawood. For this second cohort, UCS created a roundtable of thought partners to develop and implement the six-to-eight-month program, providing a customized series of workshops and technical assistance for residents, staff, and elected officials from Leawood and Overland Park.



The thought partners were guided by the goal of REIC to support Johnson County jurisdictions that want to move beyond a symbolic awareness of racial equity towards substantive analysis, action, and accountability. REIC supports jurisdictions' capacity to:

- **learn**—define key racial equity terms and concepts,
- **respond**—address residents' needs/call for action related to racial equity, and
- **govern**—shape and adopt a policymaking framework that centers racial equity.

Community Engagement

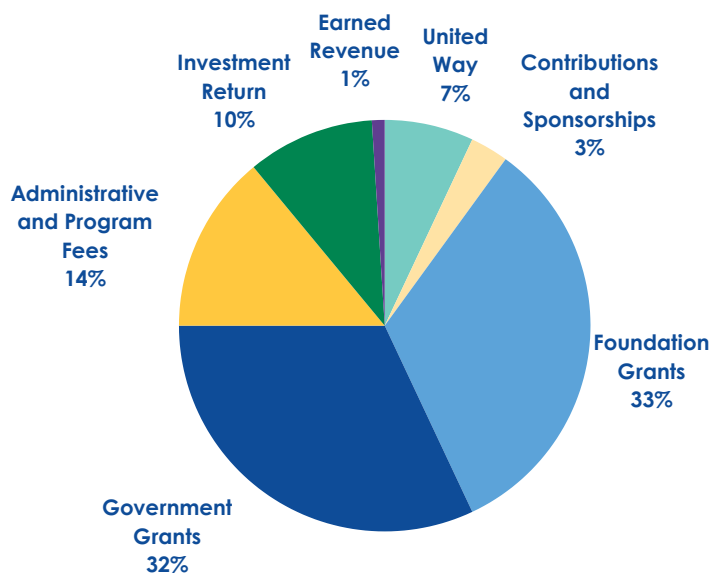


UCS continued to develop the Community Housing Advocacy Training (CHAT) in 2023, with a second training cohort in the city of Edgerton. The CHAT training modules were revised and updated to reflect participant feedback and facilitator observation. As a result, a sixth module was added to address civil discourse, a participant workbook was developed and piloted, and a facilitator guide was created.

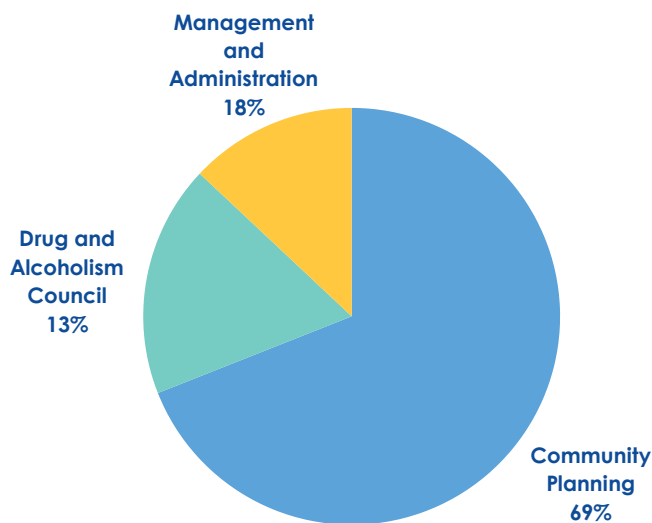
CHAT participants came away from the training with an increased understanding of the power and responsibility they have as constituents. Building awareness about the role elected officials have in representing the interests of their constituents ultimately places significant responsibility on constituents to make their voices heard.

Financial Overview

Revenue
\$1,066,480*



Expenses
\$725,863



**Revenue includes grant funds received in 2023 for use in 2024
2023 audit available at ucsjoco.org*

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Funding Partners

THANK YOU TO OUR PLANNING PARTNERS



CORPORATE, FOUNDATION, GOVERNMENT, AND OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

- Health Forward Foundation
- Johnson County CDBG
- Johnson County Community College Fdn.
- Johnson County Court Administration
- Johnson County Mental Health
- Mid-America Regional Council
- OneGas
- Overland Park Rotary Club Fdn.
- Pickett, Chaney & McMullen LLP
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- The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation

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- Leo Nunnink
- Carol Sader
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- Ronnelle Steward
- Steve Tatum
- Vanessa Vaughn West
- Daniel Yoza

JURISDICTION FUNDERS

ATF participating jurisdictions: De Soto, Gardner, Johnson County, Leawood, Lenexa, Merriam, Mission, Olathe, Overland Park, Prairie Village, and Shawnee

HSF participating jurisdictions: De Soto, Edgerton, Gardner, Johnson County, Leawood, Lenexa, Merriam, Mission, Olathe, Overland Park, Prairie Village, Roeland Park, Shawnee, Spring Hill, and Westwood

REIC participating jurisdictions: Leawood, Overland Park



MISSION

The mission of United Community Services of Johnson County is to provide data analysis, lead collaborative planning, and mobilize resources to enhance the availability and delivery of health and human services.

VISION

Our vision is that all people have the opportunity to fulfill their potential and contribute to the health and well-being of the community.



Data-driven



Collaborator & Convener



Advocate



Solutions-oriented



Impactful



Partner



Trusted



Awareness Builder

PROMOTING UPSTREAM SOLUTIONS

UCS promotes moving upstream to address health and human service issues. This proactive approach involves identifying and addressing the root causes of problems before they escalate into more significant challenges. By focusing on prevention and early intervention, our community can create long-term, sustainable solutions that improve the overall well-being of its residents.

