ORANGE COUNTY’S
FACE 2024
REPORT
COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT
T-MINUS 8 YEARS

LIVE UNITED
Orange County United Way
Madisyn and her mother’s journey to stability is nothing short of miraculous.

Unfortunately it’s a story that is all too familiar for tens of thousands of local families that walk a financial tightrope.

Madisyn’s family struggled with homelessness, moving from place to place.

The frequent moves put added pressure on Madisyn who considered dropping out of school so she could get a job. While her mother had always worked hard, she went on medical leave from injuries that were incurred during her service in the military and she was laid off.

Thanks in part to United Way’s innovative program addressing the high school dropout rate, Madisyn is in college and has big plans for a bright future.

Her determination and the support of caring teachers is inspiring. But there are many more children and families that deserve a chance to succeed.

Please join us as we provide pathways to brighter futures.
We’re not just focused on helping people today; we are making a substantial and sustainable difference in our community for the long run.

With a divided political, economic and social climate, the work of United Way has never been more relevant or critical. We unite all local stakeholders to act collectively in support of the long-term success of our community.

Together, we fight for the education, health, housing and financial stability of every person in Orange County.

Two years into our FACE 2024 communitywide plan, we continue to focus on Orange County’s most critical needs by bringing the right people and ideas together, leveraging contributions, investing in proven strategies and using our collective voice to make a difference. Our model ensures collaboration, efficiency, accountability and inclusiveness.

**DEFINED GOALS**

- Cut the percentage of homeless and housing-insecure children in 1/2
- Reduce the percentage of financially unstable families by 25%
- Cut the high school dropout rate in 1/2
- Increase the number of healthy youth by 1/3, (as measured by childhood obesity rates)

**INTEGRATED STRATEGIES**

Integration between the goals is key. We can’t just focus on education, because if a child isn’t healthy and doesn’t have a home, he or she won’t be able to learn and later get a job.

**MEASURABLE BENCHMARKS**

This report represents our promise to measure and report community progress annually by including key indicators and cumulative outcomes concerning children and their families.

Each goal is designed to be measurably evaluated and strategically connected.
When FACE 2024 was developed, 1 out of 4 Orange County residents lived in poverty according to the California Public Policy Institute. 39% of our neighborhoods had a high concentration of families living in financially unstable circumstances. Today, 34% of our local neighborhoods have a high concentration of financially unstable families.

Orange County has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country at 3.9%, but the cost of living to income ratio continues to be disproportionate. The County has failed to address the skills gap which continues to widen, and while unemployment is lower, jobs in higher-paying industries require postsecondary education and/or specialized skills.

Due to the high cost of housing, many Orange County families find themselves priced out of the housing market. In 2016, the hourly wage needed to afford a one-bedroom unit was $25.46. A minimum-wage worker would have to work 102 hours per week to afford a one-bedroom unit at fair market rent in Orange County.

Reduction in financially unstable families by 25%

- 117 families received financial coaching and supportive services to stabilize their housing
- 82 families moved into permanent housing thanks to rapid rehousing

Increase in tax refunds and credits

- 17,539 hard-working individuals and families received tax refunds and credits up to $15 million
- 2,283 adults participated in innovative job training and financial literacy programs

Next steps - what can you do?

- Advocate to increase California Earned Income Tax Credit and other income supports to help working families.
- Invest in the development of new financial empowerment centers in targeted local neighborhoods.
- Advocate for financial literacy instruction in grades K-12.

- Engage city officials and private market housing companies to approve and construct more affordable housing units.
- Encourage higher tax incentives for the development of affordable housing projects.
- Advocate for another year-round multi-service center and emergency shelter in the County.
When FACE 2024 was developed, more than one-third of our children were overweight or obese. Currently one-third of our children are still overweight or obese.

Obesity rates are stagnant with a high percentage of overweight students in central Orange County where children and families lack access to affordable and nutritious foods and safe outdoor environments to play.

The County dropout rate continues to decline, with the exception of areas where a large percentage of high school students come from families living below the poverty line. These students are underrepresented in postsecondary education, creating an achievement gap.

When FACE 2024 was developed, more than 4,000 students were dropping out of high school every year in Orange County. Today, that number is down to 2,311 and the dropout rate is steadily declining.

The 2011/12 dropout rate was 8.9%, and it has steadily decreased to 5.7% in 2014/15.

United Way in Action

- 14,116 students participated in Destination Graduation
- 750 early grade readers reached key reading milestones
- 17,049 students participated in college and career readiness programs
- 687,000 nutritious and healthy meals were provided to local residents
- 23,635 children benefited from guided physical activity

Next Steps - What Can You Do?

- Volunteer as an early grade reading tutor.
- Promote early literacy.
- Provide real world career learning experiences for high school students (by hosting internships, tours, speaker engagements, etc).

- Advocate for local planners and real estate developers to create recreational spaces within developments and apartment complexes.
- Encourage local grocery chains to move into communities that are “food deserts” and ask cities to develop community gardens.
- Advocate for physical activity and healthier meal options in schools.
A key element of our work is to unite all local stakeholders to act collectively in support of the long-term success of our community. Together, we fight for the education, health, housing and financial stability of every person in Orange County. Two years into our FACE 2024 communitywide plan, we continue to focus on the critical needs of Orange County.

No single organization can solve our community’s problems alone, especially in these challenging times. It is more important than ever that we stay positive and united in our resolve to support local children and families, thereby creating a stronger community.

The scorecard results in this report represent how we as a community are doing to move the needle against the significant challenges. The data compiled in this report is a culmination of key research partners’ most recent published findings in Education (The California Department of Education 2015-2016); Income (Family Financial Stability Index 2015); Health (OCHealthierTogether portal and the Department of Education Physical Fitness Test for 9th Graders 2014-2015) and Housing (The California Department of Education 2015-2016).