

United Way Community Update

A Personal Message from Our CEO



United Way of
Waco-McLennan County

June 4, 2020

To Our Community:

Our team is eager to bring you the second quarterly Community Impact Update, which you will see in your inbox next week. As I was developing my CEO message for that Update, I stopped to reflect on the circumstances of our current reality. My original message to you was going to be one of pride and gratitude for the good work the United Way team is doing, and the gratitude I feel for your support and engagement with that work. That pride and gratitude remain. But, considering what is happening around us, that message would be turning away and being silent. This is certainly not the time for either of those things. In my original message, my first sentence was, "Our world has changed dramatically in the past few weeks and months." But it hasn't.

On April 4, 1967, exactly one year before his assassination, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke these words in a speech delivered about the Vietnam War, "*There comes a time when silence is betrayal.*" He also said if our country was going to get on the right side of world events it must declare eternal hostility toward poverty and racism. I lived through this time when Dr. King spoke these words. I am profoundly sad that in 2020 we still have not gotten on the "right side."

Recent events have only shed light on what has always been broken about us as a nation. Today, we are a nation grieving for all the injustices and certainly all the lives lost; for the disproportionate number of black and brown lives who are among the 100,000+ people lost to COVID-19; for the overt racism that led (most recently) to the deaths of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and heartbreakingly countless others; for the economic injustice and huge divide that is being revealed each day as we watch more and more lives become unstable as people are hurting and scared. This confluence of events is simply intensifying awareness for the health and economic disparities that communities of color have been experiencing for generations.

Across the United Way system, our peers and United Way of Waco-McLennan County (UWWMC), moved into action as soon as COVID-19 hit. The primary and initial response was to mobilize our communities and establish funds to support the critical work of our nonprofit partners. Today, United Ways are raising their voice and amplifying their efforts toward meaningful systemic change. We are acknowledging that unless we remain committed to changing the systems, and to being an active voice and presence to help end the visible and invisible racism in our communities, the bright future we are striving for cannot happen.

We are grieving, deeply and profoundly. United Way certainly does not have all the answers or believe we can change the course of history or future alone, but we can continue to work in partnership and strive to create positive impact in support of our community's greatest needs. We, like so many of you, are struggling to process it all, to better understand what we can do as an organization to best support our community. It is inherent in the United Way vision and mission to mobilize and unite our community, but what that meant yesterday is very different than what it will and should mean going forward.

I have no specific path we will take to share with you today. However, what we know in this moment is this: we will stand with our local community. We will continue to engage with the work already underway in our community to address systemic racism. We will continue to act on our stated values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We will continue to learn and do whatever we can to help address the effects of racism in our organization and community. We will walk alongside you to help lift each other up, talk to each other, and to go deep to understand one another. We will attempt to be a shining light in this darkest of times, and we will ask you to stand together and to raise your voices with us to let us know what is happening in our world today so that we can collectively define our tomorrow.

"Live United" and "Change Doesn't Happen Alone" are tag lines most recently associated with UWWMC. Today, they have taken on a whole new meaning. Thank you for all you do for your United Way and this community. We look forward to sharing more details of our work with you in the Community Impact Update early next week.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Mosacchio".

Barbara Mosacchio
CEO

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