

2025 IMPACT REPORT



Trident  
**UNITED WAY**

**STRONG FAMILIES.**

**→ STRONG COMMUNITY.**

# CONTENTS

- 01** THE REALITY FACING ALICE® FAMILIES
- 03** FROM THREE PILLARS TO ONE BOLD GOAL
- 05** THE FAMILY COACHING MODEL
- 06** RACHEAL'S STORY
- 07** THRIVE@™: MEETING FAMILIES WHERE THEY ARE
- 09** SAUNDRA'S STORY
- 10** 211 & CHANGEMAKER GRANTS
- 11** VOLUNTEER UNITED & DAYS OF CARING
- 12** THE NEXT DECADE OF IMPACT



# THE REALITY

## FACING TRI-COUNTY FAMILIES

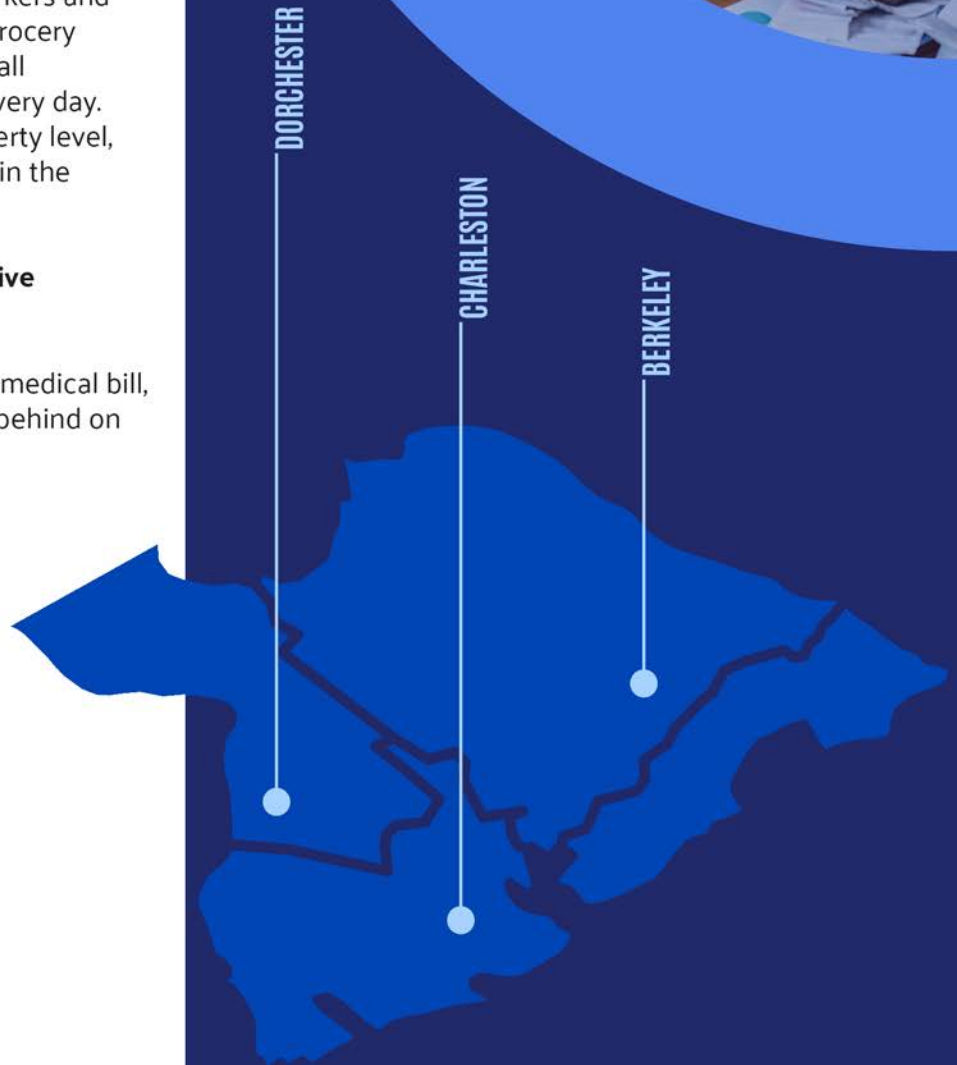
Across Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester counties, thousands of families are working hard every day, yet still struggling to make ends meet.

These families are known as ALICE® – Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. They are teachers, health care workers, hospitality staff, construction workers and caregivers. They are next to you in line at the grocery store, working in our hospitals, schools and small businesses, keeping our community running every day. They earn enough to be above the federal poverty level, yet not enough to afford the true cost of living in the Tri-County region.

**Nearly 4 in 10 households in our Tri-County live below the ALICE® Threshold.**

For many families, one unexpected expense, a medical bill, a car repair or a missed shift, can mean falling behind on rent or utilities.

**38% OF  
TRI-COUNTY FAMILIES  
CANNOT AFFORD  
THE TRUE COST  
OF LIVING.**



# THEN & NOW

In 2005, a family of four in the Tri-County could get by on approximately \$36,000 a year. Today, that number is over \$89,000.

Terms like “living paycheck to paycheck” are often used loosely. ALICE® puts a concrete number behind that reality.

That \$89,000 covers only the basics: housing, utilities, child care, food, transportation, health care and technology. It does not include eating out, summer camps or holiday gifts. It leaves nothing for savings. Nothing for emergencies. Nothing beyond the bills required to simply get by.

The cost of housing, child care, transportation and health care have risen sharply, and wages have not kept pace. Working a 40-hour, five-day workweek no longer guarantees financial stability.



**\$89,904**

**WHAT A TRI-COUNTY FAMILY OF FOUR NEEDS TO  
EARN ANNUALLY JUST TO COVER THE BASICS**

## WHAT IT MEANS TO BE ALICE®

Financial hardship does not always look the way people expect. ALICE® families are working families who face tradeoffs no one should have to make: paying rent or buying groceries, filling a prescription or repairing a car.

These financial pressures also shape a child's daily life. Across South Carolina, 53% of children live in households below the ALICE® Threshold.

ALICE® data brings this reality into focus, revealing the growing gap between what families earn and the true cost of living in the Tri-County.



**SCAN**

to compare  
income and  
the cost of  
basics in the  
Tri-County

EDUCATION

FINANCIAL STABILITY

HEALTH

**FROM  
THREE PILLARS  
TO ONE BOLD GOAL.**

# A CLEAR FOCUS

For more than 80 years, Trident United Way has stood alongside the Tri-County community in times of uncertainty and in times of opportunity.

Over the past several years, the pressure on hardworking families has intensified. Families are doing everything right and still finding it harder to stay ahead.

Beginning in 2023 and spanning two years, Trident United Way entered a season of deep research and even deeper listening. We examined the data shaping our region. We met people where they are, in schools, workplaces and places of worship across the Tri-County, completing more than 1,000 interviews with families, employers, nonprofit partners and community leaders.

The numbers told a story. ALICE® families told us the rest.

What became clear is this: financial instability sits at the center of many challenges families face. Families do not need scattered short-term fixes. They need support that moves them from crisis to steady ground.

For years, our work centered on education, financial stability and health. Those pillars remain essential. But the data and the voices of families pointed us to a unifying truth: financial stability is foundational.

**So we sharpened our focus and shifted from three pillars to one bold goal:  
Uplifting 15,000 families out of poverty by 2035.**

This is not simply a strategic shift. It is a commitment to measurable, lasting change. This refined focus marks a significant and transformative chapter in our 80-year history. A goal we will pursue by walking alongside families through one-on-one **Family Coaching**, providing practical guidance, connections to resources and coordinated support over time. And we will do it together, alongside our trusted community partners.

This work is about helping ALICE® families move from surviving to stable. Because when families are strong, our entire community is stronger.



**David "DJ" Hampton**  
President and CEO, Trident United Way



# FAMILY COACHES

**Family Coaches** are the heart and soul of what we do. Today, seven Family Coaches are working alongside 107 families across the Tri-County, with more families connecting to coaching every day.

Family Coaches help hardworking families:

- Increase income
- Reduce debt and build credit
- Create workable budgets
- Connect to benefits and resources
- Set goals and track progress

This model moves beyond emergency assistance and supports long-term financial stability.

**7** FAMILY COACHES and growing

**107** FAMILIES ON THE PATH TO STABILITY and growing

# CENTERS FOR STRONG FAMILIES

Trident United Way operates four Centers for Strong Families across the Tri-County. Formerly known as Resource Connection Centers, these locations have served families for more than 30 years and have evolved to now focus on our bold community goal.

By bringing services together under one roof, our Centers make it easier for ALICE® families to access support, connect to resources and work one-on-one with a Family Coach to chart their own path to lasting financial stability.





# RACHEAL'S STORY

When Racheal and her young son moved to North Charleston in 2019, life seemed full of promise. But the COVID-19 pandemic upended her career in hospitality, and in 2021 she was diagnosed with stage 4 metastatic breast cancer. Soon, the savings she relied on were gone, and she faced the devastating reality of not being able to cover rent and utility bills.

That's when Racheal discovered Trident United Way's Dorchester Center for Strong Families. At her first appointment, center manager Torie Gardner welcomed her with warmth and compassion. "She treated me like a friend," Racheal recalled. With Torie's guidance, Racheal was able to access rental and utility support and avoid eviction, keeping her family stable during the hardest chapter of her life. By 2023, she was back on her feet and working again.

Her story is one of thousands. As the cost of living continues to outpace wages, more ALICE® families are turning to Trident United Way for help with bills, food, job searches and long-term family coaching.

Racheal went on to become an AmeriCorps member through Trident United Way. She was later able to transition that role into a full-time job as a community health worker at MUSC, helping others connect to the very resources that once sustained her. "They changed my life, just by being nice," she says. "Now I get to be that for someone else."

**"THEY  
CHANGED THE  
TRAJECTORY OF  
MY LIFE."**

**RACHEAL**  
Former client



**SCAN**  
to hear more  
of Racheal's  
story

WE MEET FAMILIES WHERE THEY ARE

# THRIVE@WORK™

SUPPORTS AND STRENGTHENS OUR WORKFORCE.

When an employee is worried about a medical bill, a car repair or rent, it affects more than their home life. It affects their work.

Through Thrive@Work™, employees are connected directly with a Trident United Way Family Coach. They can meet confidentially in person, by phone or online to receive short-term emergency support, guidance navigating community resources and one-on-one financial coaching tailored to their unique goals.

This program does not replace existing employee benefits. It adds a trusted, third-party layer of support that protects privacy and ensures employees can seek help with dignity.

The result is simple: less financial stress, greater stability, higher retention rates at work and a workforce that can focus, stay and succeed.

## A CEO'S STORY

Reid Banks, President and CEO of Banks Construction Company, which builds and repairs roads across the Tri-County region, began noticing something: financial stress does not stay at home when an employee goes to work.

Tight budgets and rising costs followed them onto job sites. When paychecks were stretched thin, retention became harder and morale began to slip.

Reid Banks knew this was not just a personal challenge for his own employees. It was a workforce challenge for employers across the region.

So in 2025, Banks Construction became the first company to pilot Thrive@Work™, and in the first year alone, more than 80 employees received support.

Less stress. More stability. Stronger workforce.



**80+** EMPLOYEES  
SERVED

# THRIVE@SCHOOL™

KEEP STUDENTS ENROLLED.  
SUPPORT FAMILY STABILITY.

A child cannot focus on math when they are worried about where they will sleep.

Thrive@School™ helps prevent ALICE® families from being uprooted mid-school year due to unpaid rent or financial hardship. When school staff notice early warning signs, Family Coaches help parents access rental assistance and avoid eviction, and help children remain in the same school.

In 2025, the program helped 30 families stay housed and maintain stability during the school year. When families stay housed, students remain in their classrooms with the same teachers, friends and stability they need to succeed.

# THRIVE@HOME™

SUPPORT RIGHT WHERE  
FAMILIES LIVE

In Charleston County, there are only 31 affordable homes for every 100 families who need one.

Nearly three out of four renters are paying more than they can afford for housing, leaving little left for remaining expenses. In 2025, nearly one in five renter households faced eviction.

Thrive@Home™ brings Family Coaches into neighborhoods, connecting families with support close to home.

**75%** OF TRI-COUNTY FAMILIES  
SPEND MORE THAN THEY  
CAN AFFORD ON RENT



## SUPPORTING FAMILIES JUST BEYOND THEIR DOORSTEP

Through a partnership between the Charleston Workforce Housing Fund and Ascent Housing, West Wind Apartments – a 212-unit community in West Ashley – was preserved as affordable housing for working families.

Rents were immediately lowered by \$275 to \$475 per month, and a 20-year affordability commitment ensures these homes remain within reach for the long term. Most importantly, every resident was able to remain in their home.

Beginning in 2026, West Wind will become part of Thrive@Home™, placing a full-time Trident United Way Family Coach on-site to provide trusted, personalized support for over 300 ALICE® families.

# SAUNDRA'S STORY

Saundra discovered Trident United Way in an unconventional way. Not a flyer, not our website. But TikTok. She heard the story of another local woman who partnered with us to regain stability. In a personal TikTok video, the woman shared her experience in her own words, prompting Saundra to give Trident United Way a try.

With less than 24 hours before she would lose her housing, Saundra, a mother of four who moved back to the Tri-County area to be closer to her daughter and help raise her grandchildren, arrived at one of our Centers for Strong Families overwhelmed and unsure. However, she left feeling seen and heard thanks to two of our Family Coaches.

Saundra knew immediately this experience would be different. Previous attempts to find support had been frustrating and impersonal. But this felt personal, and it was the human connection that made a lasting mark.

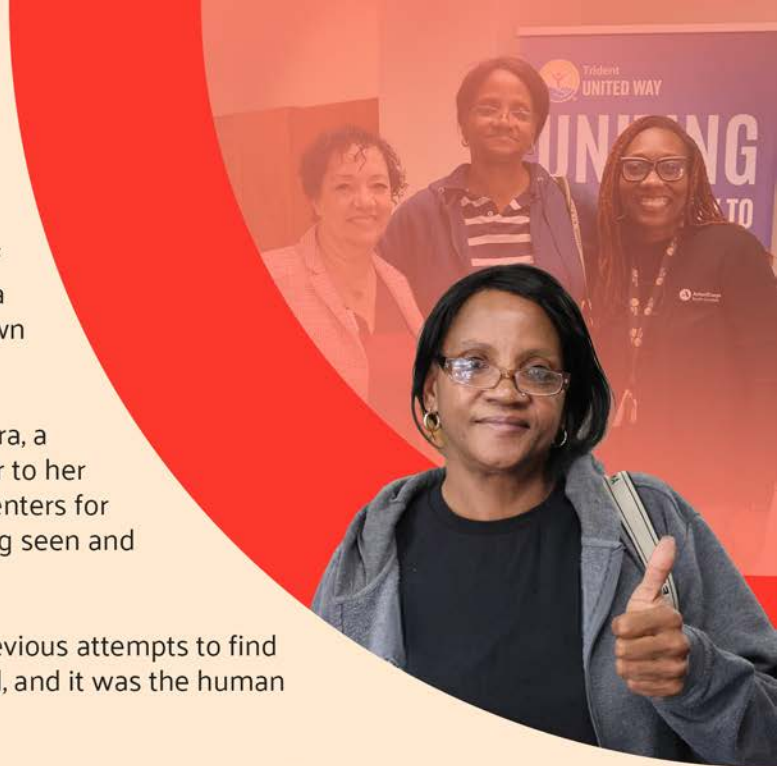
“Miss Karen and Miss Angie are human beings,” she said. “They’re doing it from their heart.” She wasn’t viewed as a statistic, but as a person, something she notes is a rare find in today’s times.

Angie Williams, Director of Community Initiatives and Karen Chew, Family Coach, went above and beyond to help Saundra secure housing. Less than 24 hours from losing everything, they stepped in, sat with Saundra and listened. They asked what happened, not why it happened, because stability starts with understanding, not judgment.

Nearly a year later, Saundra is still in her home, earning an income and moving forward. The road has not always been easy, but today she stands on steadier ground.

Now Saundra comes back to our Center weekly, not for help, but for hugs. “They didn’t have to go above and beyond the way they did,” she said. “So I come back to give them a hug and let them know how much I appreciate what they’ve done for me.”

And for anyone who may be nervous to walk through our doors, Saundra’s message is clear: “Don’t be afraid. Push your pride aside. They see you as a human being.”



**“THEY SEE YOU AS A HUMAN BEING.”**

**SAUNDRA**  
Former client



**SCAN**  
to hear more  
of Saundra's story

FROM HELLO  
TO HELP,  
211 IS HERE.

**33,162** REFERRALS  
PROVIDED

211 is a free, confidential helpline available 24/7. Supported by local United Ways across South Carolina, including Trident United Way, it connects people to help with rent, utilities, food, housing and more.

For many ALICE® families, 211 is the first call when a paycheck no longer stretches as far or an unexpected expense makes it hard to keep up.

When families need more than a referral, 211 can also connect them to additional support, including Family Coaching. In moments of uncertainty, 211 offers a clear way forward.

**17,401**  
CALLS  
a 39% increase  
from 2024



**2,229**

TEXTS

**26,385**

WEBSITE VISITS

## CHANGEMAKER GRANTS

**\$305,048**  
INVESTED  
TO SUPPORT  
24 AGENCIES

Trident United Way provides ChangeMaker Grants to strengthen local nonprofits serving ALICE® families across the Tri-County, helping them better support working households struggling to afford the basics.

Rather than funding programs alone, these grants focus on capacity building, strengthening the foundation of an organization. That includes technology upgrades, staff and volunteer training, facility improvements, and stronger planning for the future. These investments help nonprofits operate more efficiently, expand their services, and serve families with steady, reliable support.

By strengthening the organizations that serve ALICE® families every day, ChangeMaker Grants help more households access consistent help close to home.



# VOLUNTEER UNITED

In 2025, thousands of volunteers gave their time and talent across Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester counties – tutoring students, packing food boxes and supporting local nonprofits.

These numbers represent more than volunteer hours. They show that big things happen when our community comes together to support one another.

**3,394**

VOLUNTEERS  
ENGAGED

**13,620**

HOURS  
VOLUNTEERED

**\$424,399**

VALUE OF  
VOLUNTEER TIME

**\$65,200**

VALUE OF  
DONATED GOODS

“I still remember the second annual Day of Caring on September 11, 2001. I was volunteering alongside other corporate leaders when we learned the twin towers had been struck. We stood in shock, trying to process it. We did not have answers, but we knew our community still needed us. So we picked up our tools, rolled up our sleeves and kept serving.

That day made one thing clear: the importance of showing up for one another. The camaraderie and spirit of community that took root has only grown stronger over the last 25 years, and it continues to remind us that even in the hardest moments, community carries us forward.”

## ANITA ZUCKER

Chair, The InterTech Group, Inc.  
Life Director, Trident United Way

# DAYS OF CARING

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

For 25 years, Trident United Way’s Days of Caring has united the Tri-County in service. What began as a simple idea has grown into the region’s largest volunteer effort. Each year, nonprofits and schools partner with our volunteers for three days of hands-on projects that strengthen our community.

We match organizations with volunteer teams to organize classrooms, beautify campuses, assemble supplies and improve shared spaces, freeing staff to focus on supporting hardworking families.

Twenty-five years later, Days of Caring remains the Tri-County’s largest volunteer initiative, helping local nonprofits do more good for the families they serve.

# GIVE BACK

Invest in long-term solutions that help ALICE® families learn, earn, keep and grow.

- Donate online
- Gifts of Stock
- Donor-Advised Fund
- IRA
- Planned Giving
- Corporate Giving
- Workplace Campaigns
- Matching Gifts



For more information  
email Bridget Laird at [blaird@tuw.org](mailto:blaird@tuw.org)

# GET INVOLVED

- Days of Caring
- Committees and Councils
- Women United
- Young Leaders United
- PULSE



For more information  
email [volunteer@tuw.org](mailto:volunteer@tuw.org)

# THE NEXT DECADE OF IMPACT

Strong Families. Strong Community. That is our commitment. And together, alongside ALICE® families, partners and employers, we will uplift 15,000 families out of poverty by 2035.

## EVERY WORKER

earning enough to plan ahead.

## EVERY PAYCHECK

stretching beyond the basics.

## EVERY CHILD

learning without disruption.

## EVERY FAMILY

moving toward stability.

## EVERY HOUSEHOLD

building savings and breathing room.

Helping 15,000 families reach lasting stability by 2035 will require all of us. But the work outlined throughout these pages shows what is possible when a community listens, responds and acts together.

# 2025-2026 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**David “D.J.” Hampton II, J.D.**, Trident United Way  
**Melanie Stith**, Culture Wins/The McNair Group  
**Peter LaMotte**, Chernoff Newman  
**Barbara Melvin**, Community Volunteer  
**Chris Glenn**, Cape Fear Valley Health System  
**Don Smith**, Hendrick Charleston  
**Michael Samuel**, SouthState Bank  
**B. Shawan Gillians**, Santee Cooper  
**Brenda Szymanowski**, AstenJohnson  
**Cathy Almquist**, Community Volunteer

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TUW.org



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