Leroy’s story

50 years ago, Leroy moved to the Twin Cities from New York to attend graduate school. He studied chemical engineering and got a job when he graduated. Leroy worked there for more than 30 years before retiring.

“Actually, I used to donate to United Way through my workplace!” he said.

Now, Leroy has been retired for about ten years and consistently visits the food shelf at Hallie Q. Brown, a Greater Twin Cities United Way partner.

“It gets me out of the house, saves me money, and helps supplement my groceries,” he said. “Hallie means a lot- not only to me, but to the community. For some, it is a matter of eating or starving.”

Leroy lives just one block away from Hallie and says coming to the food shelf also gives him a sense of connection with his neighbors.

“Hallie has something for everyone, and everyone is welcome. I can’t imagine a place like this not being here,” he said.
Diana’s story

Diana grew up in a big family in Chicago. After getting her GED, she started working, found a studio apartment, and had children with her partner at the time.

The family moved to the Twin Cities because Diana’s sister lived in St. Paul. They stayed with her until they were asked to leave because too many people were in the apartment.

**Diana and her kids had nowhere to go** and landed at a shelter downtown St. Paul. There, she heard about Neighborhood House- one of Greater Twin Cities United Way’s 15 housing providers that helps families in crisis- and made a call.

At Neighborhood House, coaches worked to identify Diana’s needs and created a plan.

“*I was in the shelter when I got the call they found a home for us and I cried,*” she said. “For the first time, I had people that really cared about me and my kids.”

Now, Diana lives in a townhouse with her children. She has a part-time job working for a security company.

“I am thankful to United Way and Neighborhood House because *otherwise we wouldn’t have the home we do today,*” said Diana.
TraNeicia is a strong, optimistic, loving mother. When she had her oldest child, DaNae, there were complications that resulted in her daughter suffering from brain damage and hearing loss.

“As a new mom at 19 years old, I was confused, scared, and didn’t know where to turn,” TraNeicia said. “Thankfully, we had the support of amazing programs.”

The family received home visiting services, where a team of specialists worked with DaNae to assist in her development. But once TraNeicia went back to work, DaNae’s care took up nearly her entire paycheck. She applied for and received an early learning scholarship in order to ensure her daughter received a high-quality education and would be prepared for kindergarten.

Because of the support DaNae received, she grew into a happy, social girl who is now flourishing in second grade at a French immersion school. TraNeicia was so inspired by her daughter she became a parent advocate for early childhood education, working with Greater Twin Cities United Way to share her story and testifying before the Minnesota state legislature.

“DaNae’s start to life gives me strength every day and I am thankful for the support we received,” said TraNeicia. “However, many families are still in need, so we’ve got work to do.”
Kushe’s story

When Kushe fled Burma with the clothes on her back she faced an uncertain future. As a refugee starting over in a new place, she had to learn a new language, culture, and skills to provide for her family.

She found the support she needed at the International Institute of Minnesota, a United Way partner. There she learned English and studied hard for a job in the health care field.

Today, she’s working at a nursing home in St. Paul, where she provides important care for elders in our community. Living in Minnesota, Kushe said she has never felt better about her life, stating “I feel loved here.”