

United Way of Greater Cleveland

Contact Us
 Site Map
 Site Search
 Donate

Community Investment

How You Can Help

211 / First Call For Help

Our Programs and Agencies

Campaign Center

News and Events

Nonprofit Resources

Who We Are

*Community Solutions*

**Strong Families - Successful Children**

[Priorities & Core Services](#) | [Resources](#) | [Success Stories](#) | [Measuring Success](#) | [Make a Donation](#)



**Success Stories**

**LaVerne's Story**

Four years ago, LaVerne was a substance abuser and one of Greater Cleveland's 4,000 homeless people with very little hope. One phone call to [United Way's 211/First Call For Help \(FCFH\)](#) made all the difference. FCFH referred her to [Hitchcock Center for Women](#), a United Way community partner and a recovery resource. LaVerne began her journey first toward freedom from substance abuse, then to [Transitional Housing, Inc.](#), another United Way community partner that provided housing and support while she rebuilt her life. Now at age 48, she is on her own and works as a counselor at a women's shelter. Grateful for the life-changing help she received, LaVerne returns to Transitional Housing, Inc. several times a week as a volunteer. Through the referral specialists at FCFH who answered the phone that day and the helping hands of two other United Way community partners, LaVerne is a success story. You made the difference. If you would like to help United Way help others, please [click here](#).



Laverne's Story

With your help, Laverne has gained her independence....  
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**Ilah's Story**

Growing up in and out of foster homes, Ilah Adkins had very little self esteem, confidence or potential for a life that was secure, full of love, hope and promise. After "aging out" of the system, Ilah struggled to live on her own. Without a steady job and a growing alcohol problem, she found little hope and even less opportunity for a happy future. At 19, Ilah married, but shortly after her two children, Samantha and Mason arrived, her husband was out of the picture, leaving her to raise their children on her own.

In spite of the hardships, Ilah harbored a desire to make a better life for herself and her children and one of the first steps she took to move on was to get a divorce. That is when she turned to [The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland](#), a United Way of Greater Cleveland partner agency for help. Legal Aid provides high-quality free legal assistance to low-income individuals. That visit changed her life. Ilah was referred to Alexandria Ruden, a Legal Aid



staff attorney who specializes in domestic violence cases. "It overwhelms me to realize that I have had that kind of an influence over the direction of so many of my client's lives," Ms. Rudin reflects upon the over 10,000 women she has helped in the last 21 years, including Ilah.

Soon after the divorce, Ilah attended Cuyahoga Community College and then Cleveland State University. She was the first person in her family to get a college degree. Her excellent grades earned her acceptance into CSU's Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, where she graduated in 2003. Now she is giving back to others. She is an attorney for Charter One Bank and she is a volunteer leader for the Open Doors after school program and the Heights Community Congress, which is dedicated to fair housing and social justice.

If you would like to help United Way help others, please [click here](#).

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