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**VIEWPOINT**

**The United Way: What's at Stake**

For 76 of the 80 years since our founding, Community Link has been a United Way-supported nonprofit agency. Like others in our community, we are disappointed and concerned with recent issues at United Way of Central Carolinas Inc. and the potential impact on fundraising.



**Floyd R. Davis, Jr.  
President & CEO**

Community Link helps break the cycle of poverty by helping the working poor obtain and sustain safe, decent and affordable housing. We provide education and counseling. Our goal is to help individuals become self-sufficient so they no longer rely on community resources.

Last year, we worked with more than 7,000 individuals in the Charlotte area. They included:

- 206 formerly homeless families that found rental housing.
- 287 children who rejoined or remained with their families, saving the Department of Social Services more than \$10 million in foster-care expenses.
- 227 families that became first-time homeowners, adding to the tax base and stabilizing neighborhoods.

A UNC Charlotte estimate of the number of working poor in our 16-county region says 35%, or 288,250, of local jobs pay less than \$13.50 an hour. For a family of three or four, \$13.50 an hour can't cover rent for a two-bedroom apartment, not to mention increasing prices for gas and food.

In a city known as a financial center, it may seem improbable that 35% of our jobs can't support a family. These workers pre-

pare and serve meals at our restaurants and perform maintenance jobs. They are health-care workers and drive our school buses. They help make our community and economy run smoothly. Moreover, our customers are also teachers, firefighters, police officers and others vital to our community the challenge of affordable housing exists for those who earn more than \$13.50 per hour.

Community Link co-founded the Family Financial Literacy Coalition to offer financial education and free tax preparation to seniors and families earning less than \$40,000. This past tax season, the coalition of more than 50 members and organizations helped file 5,917 tax returns. Our customers claimed \$1.2 million in earned-income tax credits and \$3.9 million in tax refunds while saving about \$200 in tax-preparation fees. Helping residents with taxes allows them to put more funds toward decent and affordable housing.

Community Link has received praise from two former U.S. Housing and Urban Development secretaries, including Jack Kemp. He says, "Community Link is the only umbrella organization I have found that provides end-to-end services from homelessness through welfare and job training, to counseling, home-ownership and self-sufficiency. They are a model for what

working poor in our country need in their battle against homelessness."

Community Link receives only 18% of its \$2.8 million annual budget from United Way. However, that 18% enables us to do a lot. That is why we are concerned about the situation at the United Way.

We hope that donors look past the controversy and support its efforts to restore the community's trust so agencies like ours, which do so much, can do so much more.

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**When Community Link Succeeds YOU Win!**

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