

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **United Way of Illinois Launches '21 Week Equity Challenge'**

*The statewide association invites all Illinois' residents to take the learning challenge*



**LAKE COUNTY, IL** (January 11, 2021) - United Way of Lake County joins United Ways across the state in the **United Way of Illinois Equity Challenge**, a 21-week program launching this week designed to encourage Illinois residents to engage in racial equity conversations. Following a year of unrest and strife, this free, online learning program will provide lessons and resources for Illinoisans to learn about racial issues and systemic inequalities, together.

"Our association, in partnership with local United Ways, is so excited to be taking this journey with our communities," said Eithne McMenamin, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy for United Way of Illinois. "This is an excellent opportunity to learn -- personally and professionally -- have necessary conversations and equip our communities to engage meaningfully in the work of racial understanding and healing."

The United Way of Illinois 21 Week Equity Challenge encourages individuals, families, friends, and co-workers to have racial equity conversations to gain a deeper understanding about the impact systemic racism and inequality have on our state and in

our local communities. United, we can help create a stronger, more equitable Illinois economy and stronger, more inclusive Illinois communities.

From Martin Luther King Jr. Day (1/18) to Juneteenth (6/19), participants will complete weekly learning assignments about equity, racism, bias and more. The 15-minute assignments include readings, videos, and questions for participants to consider. Upon completion, they will receive a digital certificate and tips and tools to help continue the conversation in their local community.

The 21 Week Equity Challenge is supported by Healing Illinois, the State of Illinois, The Chicago Community Trust and United Way of Illinois. The weekly curriculum was designed by United Way of Champaign, using evolving content originally created by United Way of Washtenaw County in Michigan. New challenge content will be released on a weekly basis.

United Way of Lake County is proud to join United Way of Illinois and 43 other local United Ways across the state to embark on the 21 Week Equity Challenge. United Way staff and leadership will participate, as well as corporate partners, volunteers and donors.

“Tackling disparities and racism is about even more than the work we do in Lake County addressing education and connecting individuals and families to life-changing support through 211. It is about the work we do in our individual lives, too. Building an equitable community requires all of us to learn, expand our thinking and take action. The 21 Week Equity Challenge will help us begin building that foundational knowledge,” said Kristi Long, President and CEO, United Way of Lake County. “Our team at United Way of Lake County has accepted the challenge. We invite our neighbors, partners and donors across the county to join, too.”

You can take the pledge today by visiting [www.unitedwayillinois.org/equity-challenge](http://www.unitedwayillinois.org/equity-challenge).

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## **ABOUT UNITED WAY OF LAKE COUNTY**

*United Way of Lake County's mission is to unite leadership and resources to create lasting change that will improve lives in Lake County, Illinois, by breaking the cycle of poverty through education, empowering families to become and remain self-sufficient, and connecting people to life-changing support. United Way recently launched 211, a free, confidential, 24-hour information and referral helpline, providing personalized help guiding individuals and families in Lake County to available health and human services.*

*Through the support of our partners and supporters, we are transforming communities by delivering programs and services that are timely, effective, and scalable, with results we can measure. For more information, visit [LIVEUNITEDlakecounty.org](https://liveunitedlakecounty.org).*

## **ABOUT UNITED WAY OF ILLINOIS**

*United Way of Illinois is an association of local United Ways representing communities across Illinois. The organization. We advance the common good through public policy. We monitor the activity of government, review legislation, and educate the general public and our public officials related to their impact on human services and on our local communities. To learn more, visit [www.unitedwayillinois.org](https://www.unitedwayillinois.org).*