**Amber Kilawee - Relevant Resources**

**April 23, 2020 - Facebook Live Event**

**Transcript**

My son is trying to get my dog out of here, my puppy, but she wants to stay to support her mother, so you know, gals supporting gals! Hi everybody! Here I am. 7 o’clock! Told you I’d be on time. So, again, for those of you that don’t know me, I’m Amber Kilawee. I am the executive director of the Fond du Lac Area United Way. I have been in my role for about five years. When a very strong woman stepped into retirement mode, for those of you that don’t know, Tina Potter is my predecessor, I am so grateful to Tina for teaching me so many things. Honestly, a mentor to me and she actually happens to also be the Women’s Empowerment Series chair so big shout out to Tina. I am just so grateful for everything you’ve taught me over the years. You’ve truly inspired me. You taught me to know my value and I appreciate you paving the way for me as a young leader. You had been in the position for ten years prior so I can’t believe I am five years in at this point. I have held almost every single position within an organization that you can imagine.

Hmm. (Background noise) Okay, just making sure. So everybody can see me? Not just hear me, but see me okay? I think somebody said they couldn’t see me. Are we good? Everybody see me? So, I’m just going to keep going here. I’m not an expert at this, going to put that disclaimer out there. Kind of a newbie, but just doing my best here.

So I’ve held about every position at United Way possible. Started as a volunteer helping with a golf event. I had reached out and I said, “Hey, looking for a volunteer opportunity,” for a college class I was taking, it was a fundraising class and Tina had said to me, “Hey, we’re doing a golf event at South Hills. Come on out!” So a week later I was on the golf course helping out with the event, just being supportive but also at that time, I didn’t realize but I was networking, I was learning. I was at this amazing golf course and meeting with folks that I would learn would become future donors and local stakeholders. Then had a conversation with Tina right there while we were waiting for the groups to come through and I said, “I’m looking for an internship experience, really excited to get into this world. My background is in nonprofit management, I’m an alum of Lakeland - well, it was Lakeland College, so for all of you, the Marian University folks who have a hard time saying Marian University because you’re used to Marian College, I’m with you. So Lakeland University, I graduated in 2007 from there, but looking for an internship experience I need two internships so a whole bunch of hours. I think altogether I did about 400 hours between interning at United Way, then I also did an internship with Lisette Aldrich, also a friend of the Women’s Empowerment Series. Lisette, if you’re watching - hello! Another one of my mentors and I would say an incredibly strong woman. If you’ve not had the chance to meet with Lisette, she also is a County board supervisor. Go Lisette! But Lisette gave me an opportunity to then intern with Advocap through Head Start and I actually got to work with families. It was my first direct service experience and I knew nothing. I was a college student, I had never worked with children before, and here I was having lunch, family style, with kiddos at Head Start and helping them brush their teeth after they ate, taking the bus, helping these kids get on and off, just such a great experience.

So then after I, let’s see, I graduated May, I interviewed for the position of Office Manager, I stepped into that position two months after I graduated and worked with Tina as I had said up until 2015 until I started in this role. So I feel it’s an honor, quite frankly, to be in a position where I am able to interact with so many incredible community volunteers. Volunteers, let’s just be honest, volunteers make the world go round. We could not operate as a nonprofit organization, the Women’s Empowerment Series, these groups rely on volunteers. And not just volunteers, volunteers with passion. Volunteers that have so much to bring to the table - expertise and experience in various things. So we are forever thankful to all the volunteers. I can say that from a health & human service network. And I also just wanted to pause and give a shout out to all the ladies. I said in my intro before I went live that I feel like I’m meeting Oprah right now for the first time. I’m nervous, I’m super excited. Oprah, just a shout out! Oprah is a strong woman, one of my favorite, favorite mentors. I feel like there’s only like two people that if I had a chance to meet I might get a little faint. Oprah would be one of them, okay? Talk about a woman who has overcome adversity. And not just in her formative years, but continues to overcome adversity. So I feel like I’m a little nervous right now, but I am just so proud of all the women who are a part of this series. All of the women who were former participants. You guys are all rock stars in my eyes. Each and every one of you. You inspire me. You guys are the reason I said yes to Theresa even though Theresa is terribly convincing, so you know, I’m kind of the same way, we’re kind of hard to say no to. So anyway, I’m here though, I said yes because you all inspire me. Your journey, knowing that you all are coming to us at different parts of your life and you’re all different, but at the end of the day, your ultimate goal is to know your value and be able to share that with the world. I’m excited for you all to be jumping into this. Your optimism and your change agent mindset is incredibly inspiring, I want you to know that I am proud of you. I know the group is proud of you. And you should be proud of yourselves, so you’re all rock stars to me.

So I want to get right into resources. I want to just first start by saying that out of the 72 counties in the state of Wisconsin, Fond du Lac ranks in the top 10 for being resource rich and that comes to us, that information comes to us through a report called ALICE. So I’m going to show you this here, ALICE: A Study of Financial Hardship in Wisconsin. This is a report that United Way puts out every two years, this is actually out on our website so if anybody is interested in taking a look at this afterward, go to [www.fdlunitedway.org](http://www.fdlunitedway.org) and you can access the report and actually, we’re having a refresh coming with this (audio garbled), so our goal of course is to keep it fresh and keep it relevant, so we are looking at a dashboard on housing affordability, job possibilities, and then resources. We are a resource rich, a resource heavy, community. I love that. That means that we are doing a great job not only bringing the health and human service network together to best serve people, but we are doing a heck of a job securing grants. We have very supportive donors that have the ability to give our supporting agencies, and the agencies are doing a great job articulating their outcomes. So I wanted to start by saying that as far as resources are concerned.

I’m going to just talk about a couple of general resources that are available to folks throughout the community and actually beyond the community all the time. So one of them that I always like to talk about, and for those of you who know me you know that I have great passion for this, but it’s called 2-1-1. So United Way 2-1-1. This is an information and referral line, okay? So you can call 24/7 from a landline or any cell phone, so you could just literally pick up your cell phone or landline and call 2-1-1. There also is an online directory at [www.211now.org](http://www.211now.org) but we really like to encourage you to call 2-1-1, particularly when you’re in need and the last thing you want to think about is trying to remember that website. So it’s like dialing 9-1-1 for an emergency, 2-1-1 is for your non-emergent calls for community information and referral. We have been getting a ton of calls for various COVID related questions right now, that’s actually the number one reason why people are calling in. But it is confidential, it costs nothing of course, and you can basically when you call in you (audio garbled) they don’t track any of that information, you could you know, make up a name to remain anonymous, they don’t track that. And then they ask for your zip code because they want to make sure that the information you’re getting is specific to your zip code. So again, the cool thing about this is if you live here in Fond du Lac, for example, and you have a relative in let’s just say, in Texas, you could call on their behalf. We’ve had people that have done that before. You could call on their behalf as long as you have the zip code and you can find resources for them in order to be able to assist them. So it’s zip code specific, so you don’t have to be an expert at the community resources, that’s why we love this. Sometimes people will say, “Well golly, this is such a tight-knit community, (audio garbled,” I can tell you, I am in this business. My job is to know the resources and I can tell you that it is an ever-changing, it’s constantly evolving - the resources are - which actually is a great thing. Oftentimes there are new opportunities available, so the last thing we want people to have to feel straddled with is, “What are the resources?” and try to become a subject matter expert on all of those resources. So 2-1-1- is a great resource. I can tell you in our community that housing and shelter is the number one reason people call into 2-1-1. We know that will be an issue when, for rent assistance, when people are struggling right now as far as employment is concerned. As well as utilities, healthcare, and food. So you can call 2-1-1 for any number of things. They are trained experts, you will always get a live person which is amazing. Big shout out to our 2-1-1 call center (audio garbled) Smith, she is my lady, she will call us and find out - we’re constantly giving her daily updates right now because the resources are ever-changing throughout the COVID pandemic. So 2-1-1, we have lots of cards at the office. I can get you cards so if you’re listening in and you’re from an agency and you want cards, these are the small ones. We also have ones that are specific to the Wisconsin Recovery and Addiction hotline. We also know that those resources can be, can be challenging to find. And if you need that resource for addiction, particularly right now. We know that people's security and their networks for holding people accountable through recovery can be really challenging through isolation and having to social distance so we want to make sure that people feel supported during this time. You also can call 2-1-1 if you feel like you are being challenged in that space and you’re not able to reach out to folks that have supported you in the past. That is a great resource to be able to get those addiction and recovery services as well as immediate support like through a group.

The next thing that I want to share with you all which has been a really incredible resource is called FamilyWize. FamilyWize - I’m just going to show you this health impact report here - FamilyWize is a free prescription discount card. There is no eligibility. You do not, the only catch, and I wouldn’t really call it a catch, but the only catch is you cannot use your, say you have insurance through your place of employment. You cannot use your insurance card and then use your FamilyWize on top of that to bring the cost of your prescription down. Let’s say, for example, so here’s me, working in the non-profit sector. Insurance? Not so great. So I personally use the FamilyWize card. The cool thing about it is there’s actually an app that you can get on your phone so you can just go to the App Store or the Apple Store and you can type in “FamilyWize” and it’ll come right up. The cool thing about it is that you can actually search. So if there’s a medication you take every day and you’re trying to figure out like is it cheaper if I go to WalMart or WalGreens or Pick N Save, Target - you can actually search that. You put in how much you take, what the milligram is, and it’ll come up. So you don’t have to call or drive around and stay on hold if you call or if you go to the store and trying to figure out how much everything is. You can actually just look it right up on the app. You can use this if you, so here’s me. High deductible. So I have a really high deductible I have to get to before I have anything covered. So I’ve had a couple of sinus infections, trying to figure out what my issue was. Turns out I have allergies, so yay to getting older. So I have allergies and now I have sinus infections, so use the card. You can use the card at any pharmacy throughout the nation, honestly, but all the pharmacies in Fond du Lac County have been phenomenal so far, to date, and I checked this before we went live, $773,000 has been saved by people right here in Fond du Lac County on their prescription medications. 4,088 people have used that card. Let’s get that number up. Our goal, and I know this is a lofty goal, but we know that people are in need. We have heard the stories of people that are struggling to afford their prescriptions. We hear the stories about people having to cut them in half, if they’re supposed to take them twice a day they’re taking them once a day. We know that people are making choices and difficult choices right now due to finances. We don’t want prescriptions to be one of them. You can go to, I’m sorry! Our goal, let me go back, our goal is to get $1,000,000,000 in savings. I feel like that’s reachable. It is something we want for people to use so get the word out. The number one impact. Okay, so I’m going to talk about therapy class, so that’s like the medication. The number one prescription medication that people are saving on right now at 25% is mental health medication. Number one. Number two is heart disease, just a little bit underneath that. And then after that it is things for pain, pain medications. So altogether a billion dollars saved. Do you need a number? No. No information. They don’t collect any kind of information. You literally use your ID which is just a number, and that is what we’re able to then do our impact report so we know what people are saving on. The average savings is 45% on medication. So please give us a call, you can go on to our website, and again you can take a look at, go out and download that app. It gives all types of comparisons and it gives the cost and then how much you can save using the card. So it’ll show you right then and there which I, especially, love.

Okay, so, referencing going back to the ALICE Report that I talked about before when we were talking about being a community that is rich in resources. Going back to the ALICE Report - we know, for those of you who have kiddos, okay, so I am a single mom, I have two kiddos, thank God they are not in daycare anymore. I have a nine-year-old and a twelve-year-old, but for years and years we paid for daycare. I love our daycare providers, our daycare providers in our community are phenomenal. They are underpaid, we know that, so big shout out to any essential care workers who are working in child care facilities. Many are not open right now, we know that, but many are. Child care is the number one household expense. So for those of you who it’s been a minute since you paid for child care - it’s really expensive. So if you have two kiddos in daycare, say an infant and a preschooler, so full time daycare, you’re looking at… $1,187. So over a thousand dollars a month to have your kiddos in a center-based child care center. So why am I mentioning that? Yes, we know Amber, it’s expensive. It’s crazy expensive, why are we mentioning that? So, there’s some options, okay? We have a partner agency within the YMCA - awesome child care center - my kiddos actually went there, they went there for 4K, love the YMCA, they have become part of our family. They are an agency partner, so United Way, through our campaign, we are able to give out, last year we gave out over a half million dollars in investments and the YMCA is one of those program partners. So the YMCA received a grant to be able to help families struggling to pay their child care bills. So they have X amount of dollars, all you have to do if you are at the YMCA is talk to Sandy, the director there, they’re awesome. No judgment, no strings attached. Let them know your situation and they have some money from us to be able to help people within that child care. Because another thing that you probably know if you have kiddos in daycare, or if you’re, maybe you’re expecting, is it’s really hard to secure a child care slot. Not just in Fond du Lac, this is actually like a nation-wide crisis, child care slots are hard to come by, especially infants. There can be a lag of up to two years to be able to get into a child care slot. So we don’t want families to miss that. We don’t want families to lose out on that because they can’t pay their child care bill. So okay, so for example, if you’re not at the Y, you’re at any other child care facility or licensed and certified child care center or even home-based in the community. We work with an agency called Family Connections. So Family Connections is a child care resource. They serve Manitowoc, Sheboygan, and Fond du Lac counties. Matricia Patterson I believe is a friend of the series, so hello Matricia if you are watching! Matricia is a huge partner within the space of early childhood social and emotional wellbeing. She is a member of our early childhood community partnership for young children, otherwise known as SPROUT. So we have worked with Family Connections for the last few years.

Also, for this exact same thing, child care scholarships. So if you are struggling in any way and you are at any child care center with the exception of the YMCA - that’s another program - you are able to reach out to your director, just have very frank conversations with them - “We are struggling, this is how, this is why.” They have a brief application that you are able to then complete and you can also get some dollars from this program. It will also help you if you are, say, new to a child care center and there’s that application fee. This application fee can be covered through these scholarships as well. Do they have a 3K program? Hmm… That’s a good question. I want to say they do, if this question is specific to the Y, I do think they have a 3K program. I don’t know that for sure, I would reach out to the Y specifically because they are rock stars there. They will help get you directed to that.

So I’m just going to stay on the lines of child care assistance right now because this is specific to COVID, okay? So this came out recently - “Need help finding child care?” So, if you are one of our awesome essential workers right now, who are in frontlines working and having to bring your kiddo to daycare. If you are an essential worker and you are without child care, maybe your child care center has closed for example. We are asking you to call 920-886-1211. We will then, Family Connections, that organization I was talking to you about before, will provide you with an up-to-date list of regulated, family child care homes and group child care centers who are remaining open to serve our very, very awesome essential workers who are out there making sure that we are safe, that we are healthy, and that we are able to go to the grocery stores and you know, get food in our carts and actually our child care workers who are still working are essential workers so big shout out to all of them.

So this is a great resource and I just want to say because I know we don’t have a ton of time, I can’t believe this time has just breezed right by. There are a ton more resources. So again, if you are looking for more resources you can call 2-1-1 or you can reach right out to us at the United Way office. I also just want to give a quick shout out because I know volunteerism is huge, I’ve seen a couple of comments come through talking about how rewarding volunteerism is. Yes! Yes, yes, yes! I can tell you right now having two kiddos at home, being a single mom, working, trying to raise money for the community right now to respond to COVID and people that are struggling and then as a recovery we know that the recovery to this is going to be long. I have been struggling a little bit on my own and thankfully have a strong support system which I didn’t always have. I’m not from Fond du Lac, but I have been embraced by this community. I am so blessed and thankful for my job. But I have actually found a network within volunteerism. I have found friends and I have found a sense of purpose and being and I’ve also been able to share that with my kiddos. So actually just last week, I deliver mobile meals, I love doing that, that is one of the most enjoyable things I do (audio garbled) talking, as you can tell, I love to talk. So I love to talk to my old folks when I’m going in and delivering mobile meals. I’m kind of sad right now because we’re supposed to have contact-less delivery for meals. However, even just hearing your, sometimes we’ll go into a nursing home and “Oh, leaving your meal out there for ya, how are you doing today?” Just a touch base. They love that and it’s just so fulfilling. So Adrian rode along with me last week and he got the bags set and the drinks and he was telling me where to go, what address we were going to next, of course he never got out. But instilling the value of volunteerism in your kiddos and how you feel about giving back with no expectation of something in return, other than the feel good. The kiddos are like, “Okay Mom, what are we doing now? Oh, we’re going to be course marshalls for a run/walk? Yep, that’s what we’re doing this weekend.” So such a great way for your family to get involved, to find some natural supports, especially if you’re not from here again like me. I now call this home, this is a place where I have so many networks and so many supports. Volunteerism has been amazing. So just a plug for [www.fondyvolunteers.org](http://www.fondyvolunteers.org/), it is essentially our website under our United Way umbrella, it is part of what we do through our Give, Advocate, Volunteer tagline. You can go out there and you can find a plethora of volunteer opportunities. Right now, a little tricky. There’s a couple of things out there for those of you who are really good on sewing, I am terrible at sewing. I don’t know how I missed this because literally, my mother can sew up a storm. I missed the boat on that, must be my ADHD or something. I can’t sit still. So I can’t even sew a button, it’s really embarrassing. But, so for those of you who are good at this though, mask making, they are looking for homemade masks. So I know there’s tons, the library has like a template out there so you don’t have to start from scratch, there’s the dimensions and everything. So that’s a volunteering opportunity you can do from home. And I believe the Red Cross has an opportunity, a virtual opportunity, so you can do it online, you know do it from the comfort of your home. So go to fondyvolunteers.org, once we get past the pandemic and we’re looking (audio garbled) there are so many, so many cool opportunities. They’re ongoing opportunities, if you’re like, “You know what, I’m going to commit to this. I’m going to hunker down, I’m going to do one day a week, or I’m going to do mobile meals,” like I do, I do it about two to three times a month, because again, kind of busy, but it takes me an hour, maybe an hour and 15 minutes every time I do it. That’s a great opportunity. There’s so many cool things out there. But if you don’t want to do the ongoing ones, there are just weekend, so say for example, a walk/run, that would be a great way to get out there. Fresh air, you can bring your family, a lot of them are family friendly so that is a great way to, again, engage, to give, to give of yourselves, and help your children understand just your really even, if you want to do it with coworkers, we always encourage people. There’s a little icon on each volunteer opportunity that says if it’s family friendly, are kiddos allowed, do you have to be over 18? In some cases you do of course. Is it group friendly? So a lot of them are group friendly so if you’re looking for something to do as a group, working with your colleagues, lot of places are looking for things like that.

So okay, 7:31, promised you I’d end on time. I ended on time, proud of that. Okay, I’ll say it again, you guys, all of you are so inspirational to me. I don’t want to get too choked up or whatever because, you know, we’re in emotional times right now. But you guys are rock stars. You guys are taking this series and making it work for you and inspiring other people. Please know that through your journeys, and through your challenges, we support you, we are your network. If there’s anything you ever need, we are here as United Way. There’s so many ways that we can (audio garbled), like a fraction, I had this huge list I was going to go through. But (audio garbled) and again, thank you so much to the series for what you are doing. This is just incredible, I think all communities should be doing this. And again, I’m so (audio garbled) know your value (audio garbled) so. Good!