



2024 CUMBERLAND COUNTY THRIVE2027 INVESTMENT REPORT

Prepared for Cumberland County Commissioners
December 20, 2024

Summary

We don't need to look hard to see that far too many people across our Cumberland County community are struggling. Food insecurity. Lack of affordable housing. A shortage of affordable child care. Mental health challenges. Addiction crises. The community's challenges are all around us. But thankfully, so are the solutions.

These are complex and interconnected challenges that no one organization alone can address. But when united, we can tackle the root causes of barriers holding people back. Thanks to the continued support of the Cumberland County Commissioners in 2023, we did what United Way of Southern Maine (UWSM) does best: We brought together the people, ideas, and resources to respond to both our emerging needs and tackle the persistent issues preventing individuals and families from thriving.

We also continue to rally partners to achieve the three bold, ten-year goals reflected in the community-developed vision of Thrive2027. Together we are building a community where children have a strong start and succeed in life, adults are empowered to pursue careers with sustainable wages, and individuals have access to the mental health services and substance use treatment they need to thrive. Through an aligned blend of UWSM-led and partner-led work, we target strategies intentionally designed to move our community forward in attaining these goals by 2027.

Staff and volunteers come together each year to identify the community partners poised to bring about the greatest positive change towards achieving Thrive2027's three goals, specifically as their work employs these strategies. Partners also identify shared outcomes that they track under each of their chosen strategies. Through this use of selected strategies and shared outcome measures, we can aggregate results from multiple programs, enabling us to better gauge community progress towards Thrive2027 goals.

At the direction of the Commissioners, funds were invested to support work in Cumberland County in the following strategies under each of the three goals:

- **\$15,000 was directed to address access to food for children and families.**
- **\$25,000 was directed to support access to critical needs programs.**
- **\$50,000 was directed to focus on shelter and housing.**
- **\$10,000 was directed to focus on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).**

A list of programs in Cumberland County funded under each Thrive2027 strategy selected by the Commissioners is provided below; including program descriptions and their program-specific and aggregated program outcomes. The shared outcome measure charts report the total number of individuals served for that outcome, the number that achieved the outcome, and the resulting percentage of those served that achieved the outcome. Finally, the report concludes with a selection of impact stories (one for each strategy the Commissioners selected).

Funds directed by the Commissioners contributed to the support of twenty-two direct service programs in Cumberland County. The programs provided an array of services, including: food to individuals, children, and families; shelter to individuals who were experiencing homelessness or fleeing from domestic violence situations; services to low-income families at risk of losing their home and/or attempting to purchase a home; and treatment for adolescents for substance use disorder and Adverse Childhood Experiences. The funding from the County also leveraged other funding, thereby helping achieve greater results.

The total number of individuals served for these outcomes is 7,695, with the following achieved:

- 1,539 children and families had their immediate food needs met;
- 556 individuals were able to access or maintain safe, stable housing;
- 57 families received shelter and advocacy services after escaping domestic violence situations;
- 588 children were provided with services that enabled them to mitigate the impact of their exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences; and
- 645 households (individuals and families) were able to access community supports (to move towards stability).

Goal 1. By 2027, every child in Southern Maine has quality early learning experiences beginning at birth.

Strategy 1.1 Provide expanded access to high quality, nutritious food in neighborhoods, early care, and education settings.

Funded Programs

Freeport Community Services (FCS), Youth and Family Food Programs

The Youth and Family Food Programs promote the health and safety of families by helping them address hunger. FCS maintains four key food programs: the Vaughndella Curtis Food Pantry, Freeport Community Backpack Program, Free Summer Lunch Program, and Community Gardens. These programs continually assess the needs of those within the community and provide essential resources to address hunger. Existing resources are being utilized and new resources cultivated to ensure families have access to an onsite food pantry filled with familiar foods, basic needs, educational opportunities, transportation to medical appointments, and much more.

The Locker Project, Providing families with young children at risk of hunger with reliable access to healthy food

The Locker Project (TLP) works with local partners to reach families with children who lack the means to purchase adequate, healthy food. TLP provides access to healthy foods and food staples through established pantries in the public school system. They operate across three school districts and help divert local foods from being wasted by putting them in the hands of those in need in the community. They have added programs and strengthened existing programs for ages 0-8, making a larger impact with weekly and bi-weekly distributions to families.

Youth and Family Outreach (YFO), Early Care and Education Program

Every year, YFO provides access for approximately 60 children to learn in a socio-economically, racially, and ethnically diverse environment. 53% of the children that attend YFO are from diverse racial and cultural communities in which multiple languages are spoken, and 8 (50%) of YFO teachers incorporate languages other than English from their countries of origin, as a support to families and children. YFO enrollment is based on age group, and no less than 60% of children are low-income. Children in crisis are given priority of care, including situations such as foster care or experiencing homelessness.

Shared Outcome Measure: Children/families who get their immediate food needs met	Number Served for this Outcome	Number Achieving Outcome	Percent Achieving Outcome
Freeport Community Services, FCS Youth and Family Food Programs	334	334	100%
Locker Project, Healthy food for Greater Portland families	2883	1137	39%
Youth and Family Outreach, Early Care and Education	68	68	100%
Totals	3285	1539	47%

Goal 2: By 2027, individuals and families in Southern Maine have the education, employment opportunities, and resources to achieve financial stability.

Strategy 2.21 Promote and ensure access to and availability of critical needs programs that lead individuals and families toward household stabilization.

Funded Programs

Avesta Housing, Homeless to Housing Support Program

Homeless to Housing ("H2H") provides consistent/experienced/direct support for the highest-risk residents so they succeed in affordable housing and gain stability creating the foundation to a better/healthier life. Many Avesta residents are formerly homeless individuals. They may be living in Housing First! properties (Logan Place/Florence House/Huston Commons) or in family/senior properties in the 44 towns we serve.

Catholic Charities of Maine, Refugee and Immigration Services, Immigration Legal Services

Immigration Legal Services (ILS) provides trauma-informed, free, and affordable legal services to refugees and immigrants to attain work authorization and legal permanent residency, reunify families, and various other immigration legal services. The US Department of Justice (DOJ) grants formal "recognition" to specific agencies to provide immigration legal services, and the DOJ also accredits staff and volunteers to deliver these services. Catholic Charities of Maine is one of two agencies in Maine to achieve and maintain this DOJ recognition and accreditation.

Goodwill Industries of Northern New England, Southern Maine Wraparound Workforce Services

Goodwill NNE's wraparound workforce services help participants remove barriers to employment and build a sustainable future. Comprised of a career advisor and a life navigator, the GWNNE workforce services team employs a holistic approach to helping participants set, achieve, and maintain their work and life goals. Together they address root causes of instability such as homelessness, domestic violence, or a lack of transportation or childcare and help participants establish credit and savings for both immediate needs and long-term stability.

Legal Services for the Elderly (LSE), Cumberland County Senior Legal Helpline

The Cumberland County Senior Legal Helpline provides services to older adults who face legal problems that interfere with their ability to afford or access goods or services that are needed to meet their basic human needs. This includes seniors who face legal barriers to accessing health care services, safe and affordable housing, and essential public benefits. Helpline attorneys assist seniors with problems that cannot be resolved without the help of a legal advocate.

Legal Services for the Elderly (LSE), Elder Abuse Law Project

The Elder Abuse Law Project restores financial stability and safe housing for Cumberland County seniors who are victims of financial exploitation and abuse. The primary focus of the Project is to provide direct legal services to victims. The desired outcome is to move seniors who face elder abuse from crisis or vulnerable status back to stability. This is accomplished by recovering the income and assets needed for the senior to afford needed goods and services and restoring personal safety in the home.

Preble Street, Critical Needs Program

Preble Street Critical Needs Programs provide an integrated, comprehensive approach to meeting the urgent needs of people experiencing hunger, homelessness, and poverty 365 days a year. These Critical Needs Programs include: Florence House: a Housing First program that includes an emergency shelter for women who are temporarily homeless because of an economic or situational crisis; Teen Services: an integrated overnight shelter and drop in center that connects youth experiencing homelessness to education, employment, physical and mental health services, and housing; Food Programs: comprehensive preparation and distribution of warm meals; soup kitchens; and food pantry boxes for 5,000 people experiencing hunger from the central Food Security Hub; Street Outreach Collaborative: mobile basic needs and casework services for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness who are not connected to other systems and resources;

and Elena’s Way Wellness Shelter: a 24/7 best practice shelter providing warmth, safety, and intensive services for 40 clients who are experiencing homelessness alongside complex physical health, mental health, and substance use related needs and cannot access any other emergency shelter.

Through These Doors, *Emergency Shelter for Victims of Abuse in Cumberland County*

Through These Doors (TTD) provides emergency shelter services for victims/survivors of domestic violence, and their children, who are in need of safe, stable housing. TTD’s goal is to provide victims/survivors and their children with a safe place to stay; basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter; as well as referrals and connections to resources for safe, permanent housing and long-term financial stability.

211 Maine

211 Maine is a partnership of the United Ways of Maine, the State of Maine, and The Opportunity Alliance as the contact center partner, that connects people to resources such as heating and utilities assistance, food pantries, housing and shelter, and mental health services through a toll-free telephone number (211), a text option (898-211), and a robust online directory at www.211Maine.org. 211 Specialists assess contacts’ needs and refer them to local help 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, utilizing a statewide database of more than 9,000 active programs and sites.

Shared Outcome Measure: Households that access safe, stable, subsidized housing	Number Served for this Outcome	Number Achieving Outcome	Percent Achieving Outcome
Legal Services for the Elderly, Elder Abuse Law Project	110	75	68%
Legal Services for the Elderly, Southern Maine Legal Helpline for Older Mainers	348	282	81%
Through These Doors, TTD Emergency Shelter for Victims of Abuse in Cumberland County	98	57	58%
Totals	556	414	74%

Shared Outcome Measure: Individuals and Families who access supports (e.g., SNAP, MaineCare, TANF, Heating Assistance)	Number Served for this Outcome	Number Achieving Outcome	Percent Achieving Outcome
Avesta Housing, Homeless to Housing Support Program	165	145	88%
Catholic Charities Maine, Immigration Legal Services Program, Refugee and Immigration Services	36	31	86%
Goodwill Industries of Northern New England, Southern Maine Wraparound Workforce Services	36	36	100%
Legal Services for the Elderly, Southern Maine Legal Helpline for Older Mainers	255	216	85%
Preble Street, Preble Street Critical Needs Programs	818	208	25%
211 Maine	75	9	12%
Totals	1385	645	47%

Strategy 2.22 Ensure individuals and families have safe shelter, temporary, supportive, and permanent affordable housing near employment hubs.

Funded Programs

Avesta Housing, Support for Previously Homeless Individuals/Families (Housing Support Workers)

Avesta has three innovative Housing First developments (Logan Place, Florence House, Huston Commons) that successfully help individuals who are experiencing chronic homelessness transition to permanent supportive housing. Avesta’s program provides consistent and experienced direct support for the highest-risk residents, so that they succeed in affordable housing placements and gain independent stability to build a better life. Recently, Avesta reached an agreement to provide these same services to 75 additional residents of Portland Housing Authority properties.

Preble Street, Critical Needs Program

Preble Street Critical Needs Programs provide an integrated, comprehensive approach to meeting the urgent needs of people experiencing hunger, homelessness, and poverty 365 days a year. Critical Needs Programs include: Florence House: a Housing First program that includes an emergency shelter for women who are temporarily homeless because of an economic or situational crisis; Teen Services: an integrated overnight shelter and drop in center that connects youth experiencing homelessness to education, employment, physical and mental health services, and housing; Food Programs: comprehensive preparation and distribution of warm meals; soup kitchens; and food pantry boxes for 5,000 people experiencing hunger from the central Food Security Hub; Street Outreach Collaborative: mobile basic needs and casework services for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness who are not connected to other systems and resources; and Elena’s Way Wellness Shelter: a 24/7 best practice shelter providing warmth, safety, and intensive services for 40 clients who are experiencing homelessness alongside complex physical health, mental health, and substance use related needs and cannot access any other emergency shelter.

Through These Doors (TTD), Emergency Shelter for Victims of Abuse in Cumberland County

Through These Doors (TTD) provides emergency shelter services for victims/survivors of domestic violence, and their children, who are in need of safe, stable housing. TTD’s goal is to provide victims/survivors and their children with a safe place to stay; basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter; as well as referrals and connections to resources for safe, permanent housing and long-term financial stability.

Shared Outcome Measure: Households that move from homelessness to being housed in safe or temporary housing (as measured by a self-sufficiency matrix such as Arizona, EMPATH, etc.)	Number Served for this Outcome	Number Achieving Outcome	Percent Achieving Outcome
Avesta Housing, Homeless to Housing Support Program	196	180	92%
Preble Street, Preble Street Critical Needs Programs	818	197	24%
Through These Doors, TTD Emergency Shelter for Victims of Abuse in Cumberland County	57	27	47%
Totals	1,071	404	38%

Goal 3: By 2027, Children, adults, and communities have resources and opportunities to achieve optimal health status.

Strategy 3.2 Prevent, identify, mitigate, and treat adverse childhood experiences

Funded Programs

Day One, Adolescent and Family Community Treatment Services

Adolescent and Family Community Treatment Services (FCTS) is an outpatient program that provides intervention and support to individuals who have been impacted by substance use and behavioral health issues. Families are provided the tools (resources, information, different approach techniques such as mediating risks, harm reduction, etc.) needed to support themselves and their children. FCTS services are provided over telehealth, in schools, and in offices. This program is part of the full continuum of care services provided by Day One.

Day One, Adolescent Medication Management Program

The Adolescent Medication Management Program educates youth to improve general understanding of the medications they have been prescribed and the importance of adhering to their medication regimen. An RN Case Manager provides essential but non-reimbursable services that include but are not limited to case management, education around the impact of medication(s), and scheduling.

Day One, Adolescent Residential Treatment Services

Adolescent Residential Treatment Services is a flexible stay program for teens aged 13-18. Consideration is given to young adults up to the age of 20. Teens and young adults receive counseling, attend school, participate in recreational activities, learn independent living skills, support each other, and learn together. They attend group and individual counseling, rehabilitative groups to help increase life skills, self-help groups, mental health counseling, and medication management as needed.

Day One, Street Program

The Day One Street Program provides mental health and substance use counseling and low-barrier outreach to vulnerable youth at the Preble Street Teen Center. The Day One Street Program is one of only two programs in Southern Maine serving youth experiencing homelessness, by helping them access the resources and opportunities needed to thrive.

Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Safe and Stable Families Thrive

The Safe and Stable Families Thrive program is a part of a coordinated community response in Cumberland County to end domestic and sexual violence. This program prevents and reduces domestic/dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and human trafficking. Funding supports one full-time attorney providing free legal representation to victims in protection from abuse (PFA) cases. Orders prohibit contact by the abuser, can be enforced by law enforcement, and address economic, housing, and social barriers to safety and well-being.

Spurwink Services Incorporated, Project Now: Ending Youth Exploitation

Project NOW uses an evidence-based, multi-disciplinary approach to address suspected child sexual exploitation and commercial trafficking. They bring together local partners, streamline information sharing, educate stakeholders, and ensure that child victims and their families are served by the best possible protocols, resources, and support available. Services can include coordination of services, housing support, sexual assault victim advocacy, juvenile prosecution, individualized education plan implementation, substance use treatment, and case management.

Spurwink Services Incorporated, Youth Mental Health

Spurwink improves access and delivery of behavioral health care for children, adults, and families in Cumberland and York County through an Access to Care and Basic Needs fund. Care coordinators and

clinicians allocate Flex Funds to address urgent needs for individuals and families including basic needs or treatments not covered by insurance, opening services for those waiting for Maine Care approval, and to prevent treatment delays or cessation of services for those that lose insurance coverage or are underinsured. The Access to Care and Basic Needs fund will enable youth in Cumberland and York County to reduce mental health symptoms, meet treatment goals, and have the resources and opportunities to achieve optimal health status, regardless of social and economic barriers.

The Center for Grieving Children, Bereavement Support

The Center for Grieving Children’s Bereavement Program serves children aged 3-18 years old, parents and caregivers, young adults ages 19-30, bereaved parents, and young widows who have experienced the death of someone close. Services are provided through three activities: peer support groups; parent education and support which includes information, resources, and referrals; and community outreach and education to help identify and support grieving children and teens in the places where they live, learn, and play.

Through These Doors, Advocacy and Victim Services for Victims of Abuse

This program provides advocacy, safety planning, and support to victims and survivors of domestic abuse. Activities include assistance filing protection orders, navigating the court system, safety planning, community resource referrals and linkages, support groups and in-home follow-up visits from law enforcement and advocates. A 24-hour helpline is also available to victims/survivors of abuse 365 days a year for support, safety planning, and referrals.

Shared Outcome Measure: Children and adolescents who demonstrate improvement in emotional/behavioral functioning	Number Served for this Outcome	Number Achieving Outcome	Percent Achieving Outcome
Day One, Adolescent Medication Management	40	29	73%
Day One, Adolescent Residential Treatment Services	40	19	48%
Day One, Street Program	89	21	24%
Totals	169	69	41%

Shared Outcome Measure: Children who screen positive for exposure to ACEs and are referred for, or already receiving, appropriate services to treat underlying ACEs	Number Served for this Outcome	Number Achieving Outcome	Percent Achieving Outcome
Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Safe and Stable Families Thrive	39	39	100%
Project NOW: Ending Youth Exploitation	89	71	80%
Spurwink Services Incorporated, Youth Mental Health	73	73	100%
The Center for Grieving Children, Bereavement Support	287	200	70%
Through These Doors, Advocacy and Victim Services for Victims of Abuse in Cumberland County	205	205	100%
Totals	693	588	85%

Shared Outcome Measure: patients screened for ACEs	Number Served for this Outcome	Number Achieving Outcome	Percent Achieving Outcome
Day One, Adolescent and Family Community Treatment Services	367	244	66%
Day One, Adolescent Medication Management Program	40	25	63%
Day One, Adolescent Residential Treatment Services	40	23	58%
Day One, Street Program	89	75	84%
Totals	536	367	68%

A Selection of Impact Story Excerpts

These are in the words of our partners, though names – when used – have been abbreviated to protect anonymity.

Strategy 1.1, Provide expanded access to high quality, nutritious food in neighborhoods, early care and education settings.

Our site coordinator at Woodfords Family Services reported that she “had a dad call at the end of the year. He expressed just how much he appreciated the Locker Project bags. He was saying that post-covid, there's a lot of barriers for families and when he waits in line at the food bank, there's a lot of pressure to not take as much as he really wanted to take because there's a line behind him, a line in front of him. So to have his kiddo bring home a bag of food each week just reduced his stress and allowed him and his family to access food more easily. They ate everything in that bag every week and they really appreciated it.”

Strategy 2.21, Promote and ensure access to and availability of critical needs programs that lead individuals and families toward household stabilization.

A 75-year-old widow was living in her own home. The home was valued at over \$80,000. She and her deceased husband had paid off the mortgage long ago. The woman had some health problems and a family member from northern Maine offered to help. After helping with the housework and routine chores for only two days the family member arranged for a notary to come to the house and a deed was executed transferring the woman’s house to the family member. The woman was told that this transfer would protect her home if she needed long term care. Three months later she received an eviction notice. She called the Legal Services for Maine Elders’ Helpline after being told to pack up and move to senior housing. An LSE attorney brought a civil action in Superior Court to recover the home and soon after the family member agreed to convey the home back to the woman.

Strategy 2.22, Ensure individuals and families have safe shelter, temporary, supportive, and permanent affordable housing near employment hubs.

When he first shared his story in the fall of 2022, A was spending his nights at the Preble Street Joe Kreisler Teen Shelter or outside on the streets. But for the past six months, A has been living in a one-bedroom apartment in Portland with a roommate and working as much as possible at his job as a dishwasher to save up for the next step.

“I want to keep moving up in the housing department,” shares A. “I want to get from our one-bedroom to a two-bedroom and then just keep leveling up until we can get a loan or a down payment on the house or even a small trailer. I want to be able to get stable.”

Preble Street Teen Services helps young people break the cycle of homelessness by providing young people with the skills and support necessary to create a different path for themselves moving forward.

“Right as I became homeless, I had all my stuff stolen, including all my paperwork. I wouldn’t have been able to get my housing without birth certificates and a social security card. This paperwork seems so mundane but then when you need it, it’s so important,” says A. “Before I was homeless, I didn’t know a single thing about what it would be like. I didn’t know where homeless shelters were; I didn’t know how to apply for vouchers; I didn’t know where I could get clothes. Preble Street helped me with literally every single thing to get my health insurance and SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits figured out.”

A was emancipated from his family at 16 to get away from his family and spent the next year and a half living with friends and their families. When he was 18, he lost the support of these families and became homeless. There are countless reasons why a young person might experience homelessness. Intergenerational poverty, lack of affordable housing, family instability or abusive situations, and multi-systems involvement for young people who may have been involved in the foster care system and the juvenile justice system are just a few of the reasons. Some young people are victims of human trafficking. Some youth struggle with mental health and substance use disorders. There are a disproportionately high number of youths who identify as LGBTQ+ who are experiencing homelessness. There are also young people who are fleeing their countries of origin due to war, political turmoil, or violence.

“Honestly, I’m going to just keep busting my butt at work,” A shares when asked what his plans for the future are. “I know if I stay consistent, I’ll be able to move up someday to a position that pays more, and then I can get a better place to live. I see a future no matter what else is going on. I’m just going to look ahead and try to set a goal for that future.”

Strategy 3.2, Prevent, identify, mitigate & treat Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES).

The Through These Doors Portland advocates had an opportunity to interface with M. She came into Portland PD after receiving a request from an officer to do so due to needing to serve her with paperwork. The officer served M with a Protection from Abuse order from her husband, E. After speaking with M about what she was experiencing from E, the officer quickly recognized that she was the ongoing victim in the relationship and reached out to the Portland advocates to meet with her. The advocate brought M into her office and called a French interpreter and asked M if she wanted to share. M spoke to the advocate about the abuse she had been experiencing at the hands of her husband for the past three years, since they were married when she was 19. M has two small children that she absolutely loved. E had used physical violence against her; ensured that all of the income from their business came into accounts only in his name while putting all of the debts in hers; and forced himself through any boundary she drew for her own bodily autonomy. M had left the relationship a few months prior to give herself and her children a more peaceful life, but E continued to try and sabotage her ability to stabilize herself, and the two were still married. The advocate and M strategized the most important next steps.

M had already called Through These Doors helpline a few times after getting our number from a friend and was working on her divorce paperwork with the Volunteer Lawyers Project. The advocate referred M to Pine Tree Legal Assistance to defend her in the upcoming PFA proceedings and reached out to the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project for technical assistance due to E coercing M to use her citizenship to get his own. M was already connected to local resources for one of her children needing extra learning support and was working as a CNA at an assisted living facility.

Flash forward three months, M is on waiting lists for continued stable housing, does not have a Protection Order against her, has filed for divorce, and is starting school to become an RN in the fall. The legal representation she received at the Protection Order proceeding ensured she left the court date with the best available option, the ability to have full decision making over her two children while the divorce progresses. This has empowered her to be able to continue to limit the impact of E’s choices to cause the mother of his children and, therefore his children, ongoing harm.

Summary

Outcomes accomplished by these funded programs through the Thrive2027 Goals Framework were achieved despite mounting and often interconnected challenges. Through these stories of impact, it is clear how collaboration and providing a cohesive continuum of care for individuals is critical for achieving the community owned Thrive2027 goals. As the backbone organization driving this collective impact, UWSM provides essential supports to reinforce and amplify these efforts by guiding investment in strategies, ensuring rigorous evaluation, tracking community-level progress, engaging public policy advocates, and mobilizing volunteers through community ownership. We are grateful to the Cumberland County Commissioners for their grant and ongoing support that helped to make these services possible for our most vulnerable residents. We look forward to our continued work together.