



**WOMEN
UNITED®**



UNITED WAY
Pierce County

WORKING HARD AND STILL FALLING SHORT

In Pierce County, a person can work full-time, do everything right, and still fall behind – not because of effort, but because the math no longer works.

Today, one in three households in Pierce County is ALICE – Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed.

That's 123,117 households earning above the federal poverty line but below what it actually costs to live here.

These are the people holding our community together – and quietly carrying impossible choices.

A STRUCTURAL PROBLEM - AND A GROWING ONE

Between 2010-2022, total households in Pierce County grew 18%, while ALICE households increased 44%.

That's 25,000+ additional families struggling to stay afloat, despite working harder than ever.

This shows up in everyday decisions:

- Delaying education because tuition competes with rent
- Skipping car repairs that jeopardize employment
- Staying in low-wage work because taking time off to learn a new skill feels too risky.

THE REALITY: SURVIVING IN PIERCE COUNTY

To survive in Pierce County, a family of four (two adults, one infant, one preschooler) needs **\$98,000 per year or roughly \$49 per hour.**

Now look at where this reality lands most heavily. The majority of ALICE households are led by women, and the jobs most ALICE women hold pay far less:

- Retail: \$15/hour
- Food service: \$16/hour
- Early childhood education: \$17/hour
- Home healthcare: \$18/hour

Even with careful budgeting and consistent work, wages do not meet the cost of living. To reach the survival budget, many would need to work three to four full-time jobs.

These are essential roles.
They are also structurally underpaid.



A SOLUTION: EDUCATION AS ECONOMIC MOBILITY



For many women, the pathway forward exists - but access does not. Here's what decades of data tell us: **When a woman gains education or credentials, she doesn't just lift herself - she lifts her entire family.**

Education and credentialing consistently produce income gains that change family stability. It's one of the strongest investments we can make.

Research shows:

- Each additional year of education increases earnings by approximately 10%.
 - A college degree delivers a 9-10% annual return over a lifetime
- Credentials often lead to immediate wage increases and career pathways

REAL EXAMPLES

Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)

A short program - often completed in 4-12 weeks

- Many women start in home healthcare earning around **\$35,000-\$40,000** a year.
- With certification, CNA wages typically rise
- From there, women can move into:
 - LPN roles earning around \$60,000+
 - RN roles earning \$85,000+

This path turns an hourly job into a career ladder.

Medical Assistant Certification

Completed in under a year.

- Wages start around \$42,000-\$46,000, compared to entry-level jobs in retail or service work that hover around minimum wage.

That increase alone can mean:

- Rent paid on time
- Fewer job changes
- Employer-provided health care

Legal Assistant/Paralegal Pathway

- Certificate or associate-level training
- Median earnings around \$55,000-\$60,000
- Stable schedules, benefits, and advancement opportunities.
- Replaces unpredictable shift work with professional stability.

Engineering and Technical Degrees

- Require a Bachelor's Degree
- Typical earnings range from \$70,000-\$90,000+, depending on the field
- Strong job demand and long-term security

This is how education turns talent into sustained earning power.

The Degree Level Matters

Across the U.S., earnings increase with education. Education doesn't guarantee ease, but it dramatically improves the odds of stability.

THE STRATEGY: WOMEN'S SCHOLARSHIPS

FOR MANY ALICE WOMEN, THE BARRIER IS NOT ABILITY OR MOTIVATION. IT'S COST.

A \$2,500 scholarship can determine whether a woman ever starts - or gets to the finish line.

A Scholarship Can Cover:

- Tuition
- Books and materials
- Exam and licensing fees
- An unexpected expense

What That Creates:

A path that can change the trajectory of an entire household.

What That Determines:

- Whether a woman starts a program or delays indefinitely
- Completing a program or dropping out just short of completion due to lack of funds.

THE STRATEGY: Scholarships for ALICE Women

In 2026, Women United will award \$2,500 scholarships to ALICE women pursuing education or credentials in Pierce County that lead to economic mobility.

2026 GOAL: Raise \$50,000 to Support 20 Women

20 women whose incomes increase.
Twenty households stabilized.
Twenty futures redirected.

THE BOLD GOAL

United Way of Pierce County has committed to lifting 15,000 families out of poverty by 2028.

Women United is staking a direct pathway to that goal.

Twenty women this year.
Fifty by 2028.

Generational change that lasts.

THE RIPPLE EFFECT: HOW THIS MEETS OUR BOLD GOAL

When ALICE women increase their income by \$10,000-\$30,000 per year:

Housing Stability Improves

- 62% reduction in evictions among families where mothers complete training.
- Fewer school disruptions for children.

Children's Outcomes Improve

Children of mothers with associate's degrees:

- Are 2.3x more likely to complete college
- Have higher high school graduation rates
- See improved health outcomes and fewer ER visits

The Local Economy Strengthens

- \$10,000 income increase = \$1,200 in additional tax revenue
- 20 women earning \$15,000 more = \$300,000 circulating locally.



ALICE families aren't falling behind because they're failing.

They're running harder just to stay in place.

Education is a proven way forward.

HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS

- Enrollment stability of 80% or more
- Income increases within 12 months of completion*
- Housing stability
- Family financial security
- Long-term movement above the ALICE threshold

We will know their names. Their jobs. Their progress.

This is accountability with dignity.

*Based on staying in school through completion

THE INVITATION

The women we're talking about already believe in work. They believe in showing up. They believe in their families. What they need is women like you - willing to invest in their future. **Will you be part of this?**

01. JOIN WOMEN UNITED

To be part of Women United, members commit to a minimum annual gift of \$1,000 to United Way. Your membership fuels:

- Basic needs & emergency financial assistance
- Resource navigation & case management
- Advocacy & systems-level change

This gift sustains the foundation that supports ALICE women and families.

02. INVEST IN ALICE WOMEN'S EDUCATION

OPTIONAL, ADDITIONAL GIVING

After joining Women United, members may choose to make an additional gift to the ALICE Women's Scholarship Fund. Many members choose both - sustaining the system and changing a woman's future.



03. PARTICIPATE IN MEMBER ACTIVITIES

Women United members have opportunities to participate in volunteer opportunities, learning experiences, and planning committees.

Be part of a network that works together to empower others!





COMMITMENT FORM

Women United membership is required to participate.

Additional investments expand access and accelerate opportunity.

1 Women United Membership (Required)

To be part of Women United, I commit to a minimum annual membership of \$1,000 to United Way of Pierce County.

- \$1,000 - Annual Women United membership (minimum)*
- \$2,500
- \$5,000
- \$10,000

I prefer to fulfill my membership commitment through:

- One-time gift
- Monthly installments

2 Women's Scholarship Fund (Optional, Additional Investment)

In addition to my Women United membership, I choose to invest in the Women's Scholarship Fund, supporting education and workforce training for ALICE women.

\$_____

3 My Leadership Commitment

I would like to commit to my Women United support over:

- One Year
- Two Years
- Three Years
- Other:

Multi-year commitments provide stability, reduce interruption, and allow Women United to plan and respond with confidence.

4 Engagement Commitment

- I'm interested in being part of the Women United community through committee service
- I value opportunities for thoughtful connection and learning with other Women United members
- I'm open to conversation about deeper engagement over time.

MY INFORMATION

Name _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

NEXT STEPS

- I will complete my gift online
- I will send or attach a check
- I prefer to give via DAF, IRA, stock or other assets
- I would like to discuss a multi-year commitment



Make your membership gift at
www.uwpc.org/women-united



THANK YOU

Thank you for making a commitment that allows women to move forward when opportunity is within reach.

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Questions? Comments?

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