Our society is aging. In Michigan, seniors are projected to outnumber kids by 2025. As we age, our needs change, and, too often, seniors right here in West Michigan struggle to meet their basic needs. Tragically, some become victims of abuse.

In Kent County,
- In 2018, 1,006 seniors experienced homelessness in Kent County
- 10.3% of Michigan seniors are food insecure
- 3 in 5 seniors who qualify for food assistance don’t participate
- 73,000 older Michiganders are victims of elder abuse

Heart of West Michigan United Way is committed to helping seniors in a variety of ways. Rather than funding just one initiative, we fund initiatives that support and empower seniors to lead healthy, safe, and fulfilling lives.

The impact of our Community Grant Fund:
- Nearly 7,500 seniors served overall
- 3,549 received home-delivered or congregate meals
- 3,219 shopped for healthy, low-cost groceries
- 550 helped during a housing crisis
- 52 cared for after domestic or sexual violence
- 3 became homeowners

When Ann lost her husband of 57 years, she felt like she was all alone. She didn’t have a driver’s license, and the challenges of living by herself were overwhelming. Ann grew depressed. Some days she didn’t have enough energy to get out of bed. Ann’s son John told her about the Sparta Senior Center, operated by Senior Neighbors, a United Way partner agency. The center’s coordinator persuaded her to become a member, and Ann was assigned a “buddy” to introduce her to the different services and opportunities the center had to offer.

Today, Ann and her buddy, Virginia, have become close friends, and Ann has been embraced by the community at the center. She’s able to bond with other seniors who have lost a spouse, share a good meal, and play a game with her friends. These days, Ann attends the center four days a week. Her sense of purpose and belonging have been restored. Recently, she remarked, “I feel alive and happy.”