

2024 | Filling The Gaps



Executive Director & Co-Founder Letter



Dear Community Members,

As we reflect on the past year, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the progress we have made together. UR Community Tech Center, since its opening, has become a beacon of learning and community engagement. Our doors have been open to all residents on Mondays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 10 am to 3 pm, providing a welcoming space within the Eastside Neighborhood Resource Center in Manchester, CT.

During these hours, we have not only hosted a variety of scheduled events but also offered numerous opportunities for residents to drop in and seek assistance. We transformed this space into a vibrant hub of activity and support.

A significant highlight of our efforts has been the classes designed by Senior Planet, which are specifically tailored to meet the needs of our community members. These classes have been instrumental in attracting more people to the center and filling the gaps in programming that were previously absent in the Greater Hartford region. By providing these valuable resources and activities, we are fostering a more engaged and connected community.

Our achievements this year would not have been possible without the unwavering support of our dedicated staff, volunteers, and community partners. Together, with the Town of Manchester, we have created a space where learning, growth, and community spirit thrive.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to expanding our programs and services to better serve our residents. We are excited about the future and the continued positive impact we can make together.

Thank you for your ongoing support and participation. We look forward to another year of growth and success.

Warm regards,

Michelle Puzzo

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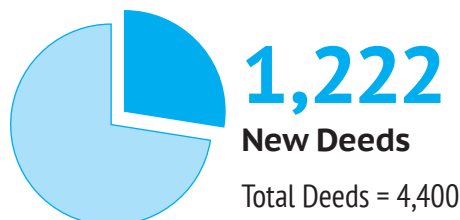
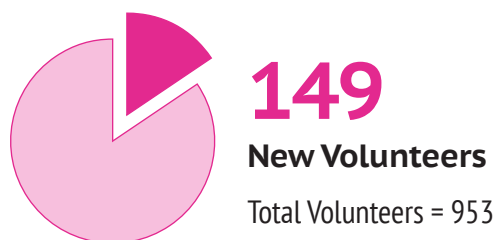
Mission & Vision

Mission: To connect older, disabled and special needs neighbors with caring community volunteers to provide in-home non-medical support services that enable individuals to live more fulfilled, independent, happier lives at home, by safely “aging in place” with the dignity, care and respect they deserve.

Vision: To create a world where seniors and disabled individuals have all the support they need to live vibrant, dignified fulfilled lives at home, regardless of financial ability.

2024 Impact Snapshot

Neighbors Helping Neighbors



Highlights of the Year:

- **Manchester ARPA Grant** - Opened UR Community Tech Center in April 2024
- **CVS Grant** - Provided operating support
- **1st Licensed Senior Planet in Connecticut**

Outcomes/ Achievements:

- **Cox Communications TV Programs**- UR Community Reach - serving the towns of Manchester, South Windsor, Glastonbury, Rocky Hill, Wethersfield and Newington
- **Monthly food distribution/donation to Manchester Cougar Pantry** - CT State Community College Manchester

Awards, Sponsors:

- **Michelle presented** at Area Agency on Aging Summit and National Federation for the Blind CT State Conference
- **Member** of Manchester Community Services Council and Manchester Chamber of Commerce
- **Interns** - College and high school
- **Artist, Iris Carde** - NBC interview discussing her artwork that she created for the organization and is hanging in UR Community Tech Center

Building Thriving Communities - Meeting the Growing Need for Community Support



As the U.S. population continues to age, projections indicate that by 2060, over 95 million residents will be 65 or older—outnumbering all other age groups. Today, 54 million older adults and 61 million individuals with disabilities face challenges in accessing essential services due to financial constraints or eligibility barriers.

Recognizing this urgent need, UR Community Cares (UCC) was founded in 2019 to bridge the gap between those requiring assistance and volunteers eager to help. Our innovative platform fosters meaningful connections between elderly or disabled Community Members and local Volunteers, strengthening neighborhoods through compassion and technology.

Filling the Gaps

Our four comprehensive programs, detailed on www.urcommunitycares.org, are designed to meet the evolving needs of older adults in our community. These programs not only provide essential support but also enrich the lives of our senior residents through various avenues:



1. Community Support: Beyond recreation, education, and technology, we provide a network of support services that address the daily needs of older adults. This includes transportation assistance, help with household tasks, and companionship programs that foster meaningful connections.



2. Resources: Lifelong learning is a cornerstone of our mission. We provide educational programs that cover a wide array of topics, from health and wellness to arts and crafts. These classes are designed to stimulate the mind and keep our community members intellectually active.



3. Technology Support: In today's digital age, staying connected is more important than ever. Our technology support program helps older adults navigate the digital world with confidence. We offer classes and one-on-one assistance with using smartphones, computers, and other devices, ensuring that our seniors can stay in touch with loved ones and access important online resources.



4. Recreation: We offer Cycling Without Age Manchester that promote physical health, social interaction, and overall well-being. These activities range from group activities to community outings, ensuring that our older adults stay active and engaged.

Through these programs, we are committed to enhancing the quality of life for older adults, ensuring they have the resources and support they need to thrive.

Through UCC, volunteers build lasting friendships while towns become more inclusive and connected. Our platform ensures accessibility for all, including those without digital access, promoting equity and inclusion. By participating, Community Members save money while improving their overall well-being—mentally, physically, and socially.

Since our launch, demand for UCC's services has skyrocketed, driven by the pandemic and rising living costs. Our reach has expanded to 150 towns across Connecticut and into New York, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. As more communities recognize the value of UCC, we are poised to grow nationwide—ensuring that no one is left without the support they need.

Join us in making a difference. Together, we can build stronger, more connected communities.



Ensuring Accessibility for All

At UR Community Cares, we recognize that not everyone has access to the internet or a mobile device, and some may not have anyone to assist them in setting up an account. To bridge this gap, Community Members can call UCC directly for assistance in creating and managing their profiles, ensuring that no one is left out due to technological barriers.

Organizations can also participate through Partner Profiles, which allow groups to manage accounts for multiple members. Additionally, every municipality in Connecticut has the ability to create accounts for social workers or senior centers, enabling them to assist residents who cannot access the internet on their own.

To help combat loneliness and isolation, our program connects individuals to volunteers by phone, ensuring that those without internet or computer access can still engage with others. Whether discussing current events, sharing life updates, or simply enjoying a friendly conversation, these calls provide meaningful social connections that many would otherwise go without.

For volunteers who may have health limitations preventing in-person visits, virtual volunteering offers an opportunity to make a difference from home. By fostering companionship through regular phone calls, they help improve the emotional well-being of isolated individuals, proving that even a simple conversation can have a profound impact.



Bridging the Gap Between Those in Need and Those Who Care

UR Community Cares was founded to address the shortfalls in traditional at-home support services. Our mission is to connect volunteers with older adults and individuals with disabilities who need assistance. Through our user-friendly digital platform, Community Members can submit requests for help, which are then shared with local Volunteers. This system allows Volunteers to choose opportunities that fit their schedules, offering flexibility while making a meaningful impact.

Beyond individual volunteers, we collaborate with Partner organizations that play a vital role in expanding our reach. These Partners help spread awareness, recruit both Community Members and Volunteers.

We also assist municipalities in establishing their own UR Community Cares programs, providing guidance on fundraising, member enrollment, and community outreach. By working together, we empower towns to build stronger, more connected communities where everyone has access to the support they need.



Expanding Community Support: How Towns Can Replicate UR Community Cares Programs

As the demand for aging-in-place solutions and community support continues to grow towns across the country are seeking innovative ways to connect residents in need with volunteers willing to help. UR Community Cares has developed a proven model that fosters strong community ties, promotes independence for older adults and individuals with disabilities, and encourages volunteerism. Now, we're looking to collaborate with town managers in 2025 to bring our programs to new communities.

Why Replicate the Model of UR Community Cares?

Our platform and programs provide a scalable, flexible, and cost-effective solution for municipalities looking to enhance local services. By integrating UCC into a town's existing infrastructure, positive outcomes are expected to:

- Reduce the strain on local social services by mobilizing volunteers.
- Foster intergenerational connections and increase civic engagement.
- Provide residents with essential assistance, from transportation to companionship.
- Improve overall well-being and reduce isolation for those who need support.

How Towns Can Get Involved

We've designed a straightforward process for town managers and municipal leaders to launch and sustain a local UCC initiative:

1. Create a Local UCC Chapter

Town leaders can establish a UCC partnership by working with us to set up a town-specific volunteer network. We provide guidance on structuring the program, engaging local organizations, and integrating digital tools to streamline requests for assistance.

2. Engage Community Volunteers

By leveraging existing town networks—senior centers, schools, faith-based groups, and civic organizations—municipalities can recruit dedicated volunteers ready to lend a helping hand. Our flexible system allows volunteers to choose opportunities that fit their schedules, making participation accessible for all.

3. Promote Awareness Through Community Outreach

We help towns implement targeted outreach campaigns to inform residents about UCC services. Hosting Community Days, collaborating with local businesses, and utilizing municipal communication channels can ensure broad participation from both volunteers and those in need.

4. Provide Digital and Phone-Based Access

Not everyone has internet access, and we recognize the need for inclusivity. Towns can appoint coordinators or social workers to assist residents in signing up by phone, ensuring that all who need support can connect with volunteers—whether online or through traditional methods.

5. Secure Funding and Resources

UCC assists municipalities in identifying funding sources through grants, sponsorships, and community fundraising efforts. We provide tools and guidance to help town leaders sustain and grow their local UCC initiatives.

Impact Stories - UR Community Cares Summary Narratives





Mrs. Nguyen's Story: Bridging the Digital Divide

Mrs. Nguyen, a woman with a lifetime of stories etched on her face, had always found comfort in the family. Then, she heard about UR Community Tech Center. With a mix of trepidation and hope, she walked through our doors, her smartphone clutched in her hand. She was greeted not with judgment, but with warm smiles and patient guidance. Volunteers, trained not just in technology but also in empathy, sat beside her, explaining the basics in clear, simple terms. They showed her how to navigate the touch screen, send her first text message, and even make a video call. The look of joy on her face when she saw her granddaughter's face light up on the screen was a moment that resonated deeply with everyone present.

Over several visits, Mrs. Nguyen's confidence blossomed. She mastered not only her smartphone but also decided to take on a new challenge: a laptop. The volunteers were there again, patiently guiding her through setting up an email account, browsing the internet safely, and exploring online resources. Now, Mrs. Nguyen stays connected with her family, manages her appointments online, and even explores new hobbies through online tutorials. She's no longer left behind; she's an active participant in the digital age, thanks to the support of UR Community Cares.

- For many seniors, the digital world can feel overwhelming. UR Community Cares provides the bridge, empowering them with the skills and confidence to connect with loved ones, manage their health, and stay informed.
- Imagine the joy of a grandparent seeing their grandchild's face on a video call for the first time. Your support makes these moments possible.
- By investing in our Tech Center, you're investing in the independence and well-being of our senior community. You're helping us bridge the digital divide, one person at a time.



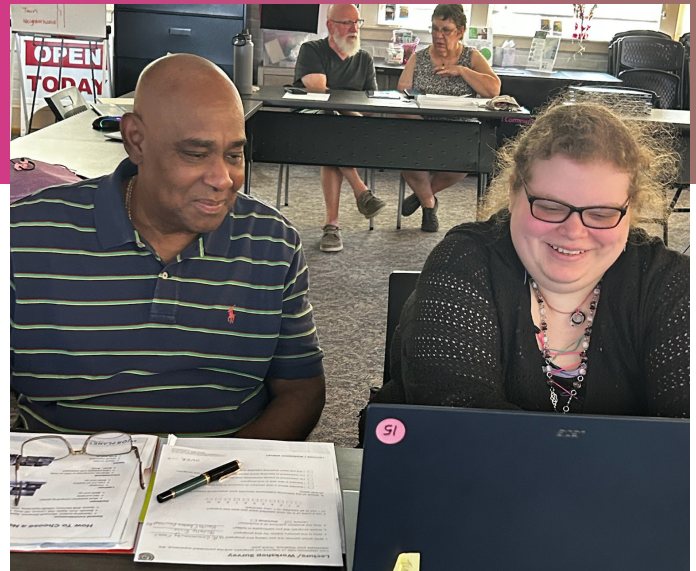
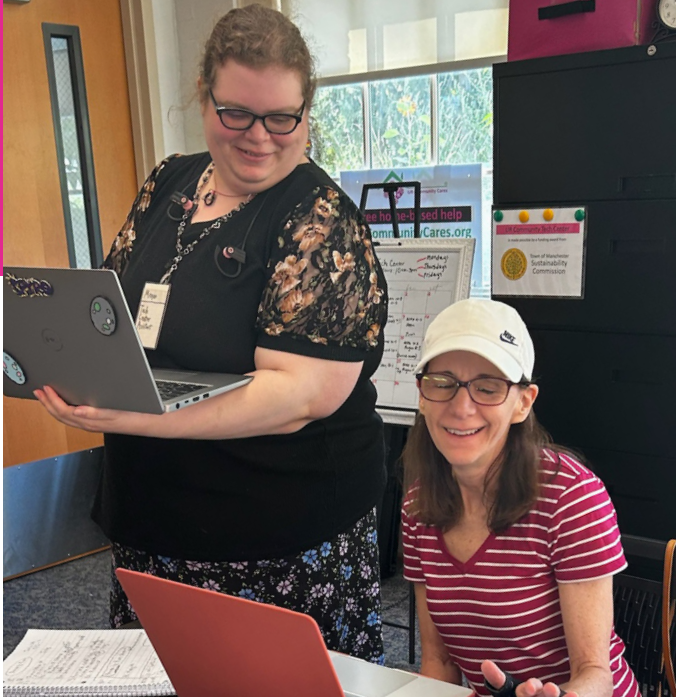
Ellen's Story: Finding Peace Through Mindfulness

Ellen, a retired lawyer, had always been a source of strength for her family and community. But a series of personal losses and health challenges left her feeling adrift. Anxiety became a constant companion, and a sense of isolation settled in. Traditional methods of coping offered little relief. Feeling a need for a new approach, she found UR Community Cares.

She began by having weekly virtual conversations with a volunteer which helped to lift her spirits. Then she learned about the Tech Center and its mindfulness program. With a mix of curiosity and skepticism, she attended her first class. Donna, the skilled instructor, gently introduced the practice of mindfulness – focusing on the present moment. Ellen learned simple yet powerful techniques like focused breathing and mindful observation. For the first time in a long time, she began to quiet the constant chatter in her mind.

The Tech Center became a sanctuary for Ellen. The supportive community and the consistent practice of mindfulness brought about a profound transformation. Her anxiety lessened, her sleep improved, and she rediscovered joy in everyday moments. “UR Community Cares has given me a new lease on life,” Ellen shares. “I feel more in control of my emotions and more connected to the world around me. It’s like I’ve rediscovered a sense of peace that I didn’t know I was missing.” Now, Ellen volunteers with UR Community Cares, sharing her experience and encouraging others to find their own path to inner peace.

- Loneliness and anxiety can deeply affect the well-being of older adults. UR Community Cares provides vital support through mindfulness programs and a caring community, fostering emotional resilience and a sense of belonging.
- Your donation helps us provide access to mindfulness programs and support groups, offering a lifeline to seniors seeking peace and emotional well-being.
- By supporting UR Community Cares, you’re investing in the mental and emotional health of our community’s seniors, helping them find peace and rediscover joy.

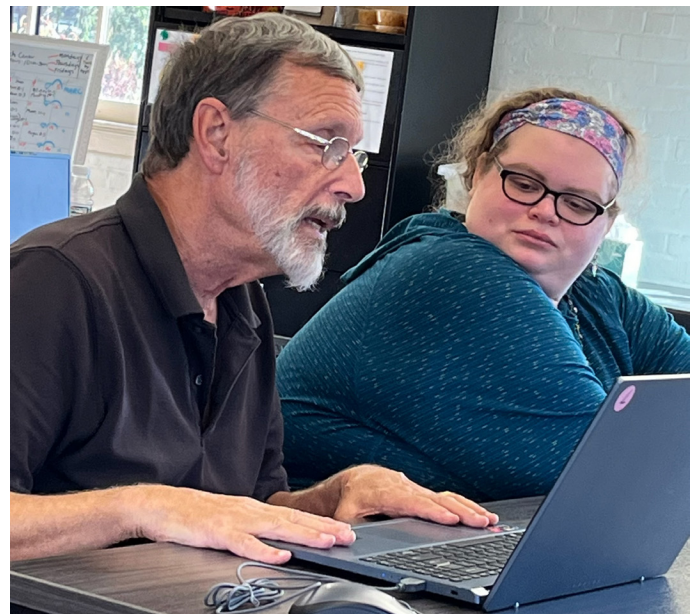


Megan's Story: The Power of Giving Back

Megan, a young woman with a passion for technology, faced a personal challenge: a speech impediment that made interacting with others difficult. The idea of teaching, especially technology, seemed daunting. But Megan had a desire to help others and a deep-seated belief in the power of connection. She found an opportunity to volunteer at UR Community Tech Center.

With each interaction, her confidence grew. Her communication skills improved, and she found a rhythm in her teaching. UR Community Tech Center became more than just a place to volunteer; it became a place of personal growth and belonging. Megan's story is a powerful reminder that giving back benefits both the giver and the receiver. She not only bridges the digital divide for seniors but also discovers her own strength and potential.

- Volunteering is a powerful act of giving back, and at UR Community Cares, it's a two-way street. Our volunteers not only make a difference in the lives of seniors but also experience personal growth and a sense of purpose.
- Your support empowers individuals like Megan to overcome personal challenges and contribute to their community in meaningful ways.
- By supporting UR Community Cares, you're investing in a community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive, both those who receive help and those who give it.





Supporting Older and Disabled Adults During the Changing Seasons

As the leaves turn vibrant hues and the air grows crisp, a shift occurs not only in nature but also in the lives of many older and disabled adults. The shorter days and colder weather can bring increased isolation, impacting both physical and mental well-being. At UR Community Cares, we understand these seasonal challenges and are dedicated to providing vital support and connection during these times.

Last fall, we saw firsthand how our programs made a difference. With fewer opportunities for outdoor activities, UR Community Tech Center became a hub of activity, with nearly 100 individuals seeking assistance in just a few months. Volunteers provided personalized guidance, helping seniors connect with family and friends online, access vital telehealth services, and discover online resources for staying active indoors.



Our Neighbors Helping Neighbors program continued to be a lifeline for many. Volunteers like Gail provided companionship and practical assistance to individuals like Stella, ensuring they didn't feel alone or unsupported. These weekly visits offered not just help with housework but, more importantly, a vital human connection.

Beyond individual support, we also focused on community outreach. We presented at events like the Connecticut Trail Symposium and the Aging CT Summit, raising awareness about the importance of addressing social isolation and promoting healthy aging.

- The changing seasons can bring unique challenges for older and disabled adults. UR Community Cares provides essential support, companionship, and resources to ensure they thrive year-round.
- Your contribution helps us keep UR Community Tech Center doors open, providing a warm and welcoming space for seniors to connect, learn, and stay active, especially during the colder months.
- By supporting our Neighbors Helping Neighbors program, you're helping us combat social isolation and provide vital companionship to those who need it most.



Mystic Film Festival – Cycling Without Age

There's a unique joy in feeling the wind in your hair, a sense of freedom and connection to the world around you. But for many older adults and those with limited mobility, this simple pleasure can become a distant memory. UR Community Cares is changing that through our Cycling Without Age program.

In Fall of 2024, we attended the Mystic Film Festival, where they showcased a film about the transformative power of this program. The event brought together community members, volunteers, and seniors, sparking conversations about the importance of intergenerational connection and active aging.

Our Cycling Without Age chapter in Manchester, launched in the fall of 2023, has already provided over 90 free recreational rides in parks, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and at various community events. These rides, powered by volunteer “pilots,” offer seniors the opportunity to experience the joy of cycling once again, fostering social interaction and a sense of belonging.

- UR Community Cares is bringing joy and connection to older adults through innovative programs like Cycling Without Age. We're giving them the opportunity to experience the freedom of cycling and connect with their community.
- Your support helps us expand our Cycling Without Age program, providing more opportunities for seniors to enjoy the outdoors, connect with others, and experience the joy of movement.
- By partnering with events like the Mystic Film Festival, we're raising awareness about the importance of active aging and building a more inclusive community.



Honoring Donna's Impact: A Wise Guide in Our Journey

For five years, Donna has been an invaluable part of the UR Community Cares family, serving as a mentor, advisor, and friend. Despite facing her own health challenges, Donna has consistently provided strategic guidance and unwavering support, helping shape our organization into what it is today.

Donna's deep understanding of strategy and community engagement, combined with her lifelong dedication to making a difference, has been instrumental in our growth. She helped us develop a strategic plan that prioritizes connecting with older adults and disabled residents, ensuring they have the resources and support they need to remain active and engaged.

Donna's resilience and unwavering spirit have been an inspiration to us all. Her commitment to our mission, even in the face of adversity, has strengthened our resolve and reminded us of the importance of the work we do. Her legacy will continue to guide us as we strive to build a community that cares for everyone.

- Behind every successful organization are dedicated individuals who provide guidance and support. At UR Community Cares, we are fortunate to have dedicated volunteers like Donna, whose wisdom and commitment have been instrumental in our growth.
- Your support enables us to cultivate a strong network of volunteers and mentors, ensuring the continued growth and impact of UR Community Cares.
- By honoring Donna's legacy, we reaffirm our commitment to building a compassionate and supportive community for all.



Town of Manchester Downtown Arts & Culture Grant

UR Community Cares was awarded a grant to install two vibrant community murals on the Cycling Without Age Manchester building. We collaborated with RiseUP for Arts on this beautiful artwork for the community to enjoy.

Our programs, from technology training to in-home support, are designed to enhance the quality of life for older and disabled individuals, ensuring they have the resources and connections they need to thrive. We believe that by fostering inclusive and supportive communities, we can create a brighter future for everyone.

- UR Community Cares is proud to be recognized for our commitment to building diverse, equitable, and inclusive communities.
- This grant highlights the impact of our programs in enhancing the lives of older and disabled individuals and fostering stronger connections within our community.
- Cycling Without Age Manchester goes to nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and community events to get residents outside.



Fire Safety Awareness is Critical in Connecticut

With dry conditions and increased fire risks in Connecticut, UR Community Cares took proactive steps to educate our community on fire safety. We partnered with Manchester Fire Inspector Roger Thrall to host an informative presentation at UR Community Tech Center.

The presentation covered vital topics such as proper use of electrical equipment, smoke detector maintenance, and emergency preparedness. Participants received valuable tips on how to mitigate fire hazards in their homes and stay safe during periods of increased risk.

- UR Community Cares is committed to the safety and well-being of our community. We provide vital education and resources to help seniors and disabled individuals stay safe in their homes.
- By partnering with local experts like the Manchester Fire Inspector, we're empowering our community with the knowledge and tools they need to prevent fire incidents.
- Your support helps us provide these essential safety programs, ensuring the well-being of our community members.



Cycling Without Age Manchester Expansion: Reclaiming the Joy of the Ride (Opened Charter Oak Park - 2024)

The wind in your hair, the sun on your face – the simple joy of cycling can be a distant memory for many older adults or those with limited mobility. UR Community Cares is bringing back that joy with the expansion of our Cycling Without Age program.

- Our new facility at Charter Oak Park provides even more opportunities for seniors to experience the outdoors and reconnect with the community.
- Through specially designed electric bikes piloted by trained volunteers, individuals can rediscover the freedom and exhilaration of cycling.
- This program fosters not only physical activity but also social interaction, creating lasting memories and strengthening bonds within the community.
- Be a part of this transformative experience! Support Cycling Without Age and help us empower seniors to reclaim the joy of the ride.



UR Community Tech Center: Bridging the Digital Divide (Opened Eastside Neighborhood Resource Center - April 2024)

Technology is an essential part of modern life, but navigating the digital world can be a challenge for many older adults and individuals facing barriers. That's where UR Community Tech Center comes in.

- In April 2024 we opened a center at the Eastside Neighborhood Resource Center, to provide a safe and supportive environment for people to learn and explore technology.
- From free workshops and courses to one-on-one support, our experienced staff will help individuals gain the confidence and skills they need to connect with loved ones online, manage finances, and access vital resources.
- UR Community Tech Center is more than just a place to learn; it's a community hub where individuals can overcome digital barriers and unlock the full potential of technology.
- Your support makes a difference! Help us bridge the digital divide and empower individuals to thrive in a tech-driven world.



UR Community Reach TV Program: Building Partnerships for Impact

UR Community Cares is dedicated to making a difference in our community. Through our UR Community Reach TV program, we provide a platform for businesses and individuals to showcase their services and support our initiatives.

- Imagine businesses aligning their values with ours, sponsoring vital programs, and contributing to a stronger community.
- By appearing on UR Community Reach, our TV program, businesses reach a targeted audience while supporting impactful initiatives.
- Your partnership makes a difference! Join us in building a stronger community for everyone.



UR Community Tech Center: Empowering Through Technology

In 2024, UR Community Tech Center in Manchester, Connecticut, emerged as a beacon of support and empowerment for older adults and individuals with disabilities. Aligned with our mission to bridge the digital divide, the center serves as a vital resource for those seeking to enhance their tech skills and navigate today's increasingly digital world.

Operating Monday, Thursday, and Friday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and offering Tuesday appointments, the center provides free assistance with mobile devices, laptops, and secure internet access. It also offers a safe space for practice and learning, tailored to the unique needs of our community.

Signature Events and Programs

The year 2024 saw the center host a variety of engaging events and workshops, including:

- Monthly Tech Talks - Covering trending topics like online security, streaming platforms, and AI.
- Parkinson's Disease Support Groups - Offering a blend of tech training and emotional support to help individuals manage their conditions more effectively.
- Social media - Helping participants master platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to connect with family and friends and explore new opportunities.

These programs have helped individuals regain confidence, connect with loved ones, and explore new interests in the digital space.



Holiday Closures

We honor both state and federal holidays and celebrate them through community events that foster connection and joy. To stay informed about upcoming celebrations and other activities, please visit the Events tab on our website. Our closures align with the Town of Manchester.



Looking Ahead

Based on community demand, we aim to expand UR Community Tech Center offerings with:

- **Advanced workshops on emerging tech trends.**
- **Increased accessibility features for participants with specific needs.**
- **Collaboration with local schools and businesses to foster intergenerational learning opportunities.**

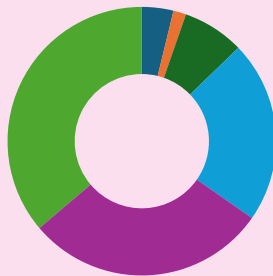
These initiatives highlight our unwavering dedication to serving our community. From empowering individuals through technology to creating inclusive programs, UR Community Cares is proud to lead the charge in making our world a better place—one connection at a time.

2024 Grants

AARP 2024 CT Livable Communities
 American Savings Foundation
 Cheshire, Town of
 Clinton, Town of
 Community Chest of New Britain and Berlin
 Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut
 Community Foundation of Greater New Haven
 Community Foundation of Middlesex County
 Connecticut Community Foundation
 CVS Health Hometown Fund
 East Hampton, Town of
 Farmington Community Chest
 HFPG Small Agency Technology Grant
 Killingworth, Town of
 Manchester, Town of
 Manchester ARPA Sustainability
 Manchester Downtown Arts & Culture Program Grant
 Stonington, Town of

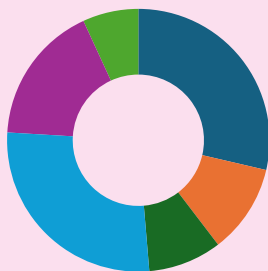
2024 Financials

UCC Income



Individual Donors	4%	\$ 8,649
Organizations	2%	\$ 3,500
Fundraisers	7%	\$ 16,936
Corporations	22%	\$ 50,000
Foundations	29%	\$ 66,300
Government	36%	\$ 82,503
Total		\$227,888

UCC Expenses



Neighbors Helping Neighbors	29%	\$ 54,272
Cycling Without Age	11%	\$ 20,789
UR Vision Resources	9%	\$ 17,152
UR Community Tech Center	27%	\$ 51,697
Administration	17%	\$ 32,553
Fundraising	7%	\$ 13,027
Total		\$ 189,490

Staff & Board of Directors

Michelle Puzzo, PT
 Executive Director

Erica Weida
 Treasurer

Christine Kelly, RN
 Secretary

Ramarao “Ram” Kaza
 Director

Bradley Petty
 Director

Missy Cipriano
 Director

James (Jim) Lovkay
 Director



Join Us

Whether you need tech support, want to attend a class, or are interested in volunteering, we have a wide range of important community-focused programs and services.

Visit www.urcommunitycares.org or call 860-430-4557 for more information, or to explore ways to get involved. Together, we're building a more inclusive, connected, and caring community.