



United Way  
of Jackson County  
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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **ENERGIZING EDUCATION LAUNCHES FUNDRAISER TO SUPPORT, EXPAND OUTREACH IN JACKSON COUNTY**

*Literacy, Family Engagement Drive Long-Term Success for Students*

JACKSON, Michigan [Nov. 24, 2015] – Energizing Education, a program of United Way of Jackson County, launched a fundraising effort today to support its current work in child literacy and family engagement while setting the stage for long-term growth.

“Working with schools, families and the community, Energizing Education is driving tremendous gains in early grade reading outcomes,” said Kriss Giannetti, program manager. “We need support from all of Jackson County to keep that momentum going.”

As part of the campaign, Energizing Education (EE) released a video, “Get Energized! The Case for Energizing Education,” that includes testimonials from school administrators, teachers, mentors, parents and children. The video can be viewed on websites for [Energizing Education](#), [United Way of Jackson County](#) and on [YouTube](#). Also, EE will send brochures to Jackson County households describing the positive impact of the program.

Giannetti praised the generosity of area businesses, foundations and individual funders in supporting the program through its first three years. What prompted the current fundraiser was a decline in state dollars to Jackson County schools—dollars that participating schools had planned to invest in Energizing Education.

“We have an immediate need for funds to cover books, materials, training and family engagement through the current year,” said Giannetti. “We also need support until we put in place a more sustainable model for long term growth.”

Eventually, EE officials hope to expand the program to all school districts in Jackson County.

A product of Cradle 2 Career, Energizing Education is part of the continuum of learning in Jackson County schools. It focuses on reading proficiency and family engagement for students in kindergarten through third grade. EE uses a two-pronged approach: volunteer mentors, coached by a literacy specialist in the schools and working one-on-one with students in reading, writing and vocabulary in half-hour sessions twice a week; and family nights that help families take an active role in their children’s education.

According to Giannetti, 99 percent of EE students increased their reading proficiency at least one level in 2014-15. The average increase was 6.82 reading levels. In addition, 154 volunteer mentors invested 1,442 hours in EE students, and family night programs at six participating schools engaged 8,821 adults and children.

Giannetti said the success of EE pays near- and long-term benefits to the community.

“Through third grade, students are learning to read; beyond that, they’re reading to learn,” she said. “Reading proficiently at that early age makes kids four times more likely to graduate high school. That means they’re more likely to pursue post-secondary learning and land a rewarding career.”

Educational and career success increase financial stability, which in turn impacts a community’s economic strength and quality of life, Giannetti added.

“Energizing Education is a sound investment. It’s proven to increase kids’ reading ability, and it brings together schools, families, businesses and the community to expand the opportunities to learn and grow in Jackson County,” said Giannetti.

Energizing Education began in 2012 with a challenge match grant of \$125,000 from Consumers Energy. Initially piloted at Jackson Public Schools’ Frost Elementary, today EE operates in seven schools across the county.

### **About United Way of Jackson County**

United Way of Jackson County is *Connecting Our Community for the Common Good* by mobilizing people, organizations and funds to drive programs that help children succeed in school, make sure families are financially stable, and help people achieve good health. Visit our website at [www.uwjackson.org](http://www.uwjackson.org), or follow us on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

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