



From the Ashes: Overcoming Disaster Together

On a cold morning in Reading, Pennsylvania, in September 2025, 38 people watched their lives burn as a fire ravaged three apartment buildings.

But thanks to the support of the community and donors like you, the story didn't end there.

The American Red Cross Pennsylvania Rivers Chapter had a Disaster Action Team (DAT) on the ground before the fire died. And then, the real work began. The Red Cross team mobilized to fight back against homelessness through the support of the United Way of Berks County.

Red Cross chapter executive director Peter Brown reached out to Ashley Chambers at United Way and convened the first community coalition of specialized partners, including

- Reading School District
- Berks County & City of Reading Emergency Services
- Reading Fire Department
- Reading Mayor's Office
- Catholic Charities, Diocese of Allentown
- Berks Coalition to End Homelessness

The result? **An impromptu, multi-agency relief center in Trinity Lutheran Church that became a one-stop location for meals, home essentials, and financial and housing assistance.**

Today, the community coalition has already responded to multiple local crises in partnership with the United Way of Berks County. This story spotlights how, as a community we can truly support individuals and families in times of crisis when we come together.

READY TO HELP?

United Way of Berks County brings people together, so no one faces life challenges alone. Scan the QR code to give and help build better a community for all.

