



**2024
Impact Report**



University of Northern Iowa

**Center for Energy &
Environmental Education**

UNI

University of Northern Iowa.
Center for Energy & Environmental Education

ceee.uni.edu

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Our Staff

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Brittany Latch, Environmental Health Program Associate

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Jodie Huegerich, Local Food Program Manager

Sarah Steinmeyer, Nourish Iowa VISTA Program Coordinator

Kathryn Gilbery, Local Food Access Coordinator

New Director, Same Mission

Ashley Coffin, **NEW** CEEE Director 2025 - Present

The new year brought with it a change in leadership here at the CEEE. Our beloved Director and my dear friend, Kamyar Enshayan, transitioned to a well deserved retirement, and I have been given the incredible opportunity to step in as our new Center Director. And though our leadership has changed, our vision for the work of our Center and its focus on serving Iowa communities remains the same. Since I began working here in 2010, our Center has been laser focused on how we can be an **agent of positive change for Iowans, our communities, and our environment.**



We know **action and relationship building** are necessary to navigate the ever growing and changing needs of our state. Whether we're addressing access to **healthy, local foods**, improving **energy affordability for families**, creating space for young people to **connect to the natural world**, or working to **improve environments where we work and play**, we understand the importance of **DOING and doing it together**. I am excited about what the future holds for our Center and the important role I feel we can play as a statewide hub for resiliency at the neighborhood scale. I look forward to building more relationships in the days and months ahead and encourage you to reach out and connect with me. Cheers!

Kamyar Enshayan, CEEE Director 2008 - 2024

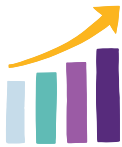


There is one word that best describes CEEE: **Action**. Action at the neighborhood and community scale. The careful task of **working with community leaders** to translate what we know into tangible action: **home energy improvements**, more **neighborhood trees**, better access to **good food, healthier school environments**. Involving the younger generation in change-making. Helping UNI students see that we have agency to create **positive change in our communities.**

This essential work is needed more than ever. It has been a huge honor to be part of a dedicated team of staff at CEEE for the past 16 years, and I am thrilled that senior staff Ashley Coffin is leading this Center now. She has developed CEEE's most impactful program, Green Iowa AmeriCorps, which is truly the heart of this Center, **growing and inspiring the next generation of leaders** in creating community resilience across Iowa and beyond. Ashley brings a wealth of organizational expertise and a sharp focus on **services to Iowa communities**, and I am very excited to see UNI and this Center continue to thrive under her leadership.

Our Mission

Empowering individuals and communities in Iowa with the knowledge, experiences, tools, services, and inspiration needed to create sustainable and resilient futures for our communities.



Looking Ahead

Our goals for 2030

By 2030, the Center for Energy & Environmental Education will be...

- A trusted leader, offering innovative services and programs that meet the needs of individuals and communities helping to build a more resilient and sustainable future.
- Working collaboratively with the UNI community to enhance and support research, and create learning opportunities.
- A financially stable Center with diverse funding sources that provide sustainable support for core programs as well as opportunities to foster innovation, new programs, and services.
- A team of trusted leaders within their professional fields who foster a collaborative culture across programs, assisting with the growth and professional development of individuals who seek careers focused on the Center's expertise.
- A Center with a strong foundation of strategic volunteer engagement with the ability to connect volunteers, programs, and communities to create deeply impactful experiences for all.

We achieve our mission by:

- Creating opportunities for the UNI community and beyond to work with community leaders to arrive at evidence-based, solution-oriented responses to the problems they wish to address.
- Offering technical assistance, services, educational programs, and leadership in energy and environmental conservation, community-based agriculture, and environmental health.

The CEEE serves cities, counties, school districts, teachers, farmers, businesses, elected officials, state agencies, organizations, and individuals.



AmeriCorps: Our Boots on the Ground

A significant portion of our Center's accomplishments and work would not be possible without the help of AmeriCorps members from our Green Iowa AmeriCorps and Nourish Iowa VISTA AmeriCorps programs.

We want to highlight and recognize all the individuals who have chosen to dedicate their time to serve with our programs and help us towards our goals of making Iowa a better place to call home.

CEEE Services & Resources

Visit our website at CEEE.uni.edu to learn more about our programs, services, and resources. Get in touch with our staff to see how you can get involved, access resources, and support our Center.

Environmental Health Program

The Environmental Health Program raises awareness about the link between harmful chemicals and their impacts to people and the environment. Our initiatives focus on reducing the amount of harmful, unnecessary chemicals in our every day lives.

- Educational resources about the effects of pesticide usage on children, pets, and the environment and healthy alternative lawncare practices through our Good Neighbor Iowa program
- Supporting field days where farmers and community members can learn and share sustainable farming practices
- Research on the public health impacts of farming
- Resources to identify harmful chemicals in every day products

Green Iowa AmeriCorps

Our AmeriCorps program partners with mission-aligned host organizations throughout the state to engage members and communities in environmental service work. We address key environmental issues while providing on-the-job skills training to our AmeriCorps members to support local communities and help train the next generation of skilled workers.

- Residential energy efficiency services including energy audits and energy saver kits to help Iowans save energy and money
- Educational programming to increase awareness of environmental issues
- Community outreach and volunteer engagement to build connection and resiliency in our communities
- Tree planting and environmental management services
- Workforce development skills for our members

Local Food Program

The Local Food Program focuses on making food production and local food consumption accessible to everyone. We create and host events that connect communities with local consumers and growers to encourage a food system that uplifts sustainability and collective efforts to support local foods.

- Gardening assistance through our Garden in Every Lot initiative
- Networking and community engagement events for local buyers and growers to work towards meeting community food needs
- Community training and education opportunities
- Capacity-building support for food access organizations through our Nourish Iowa VISTA program
- Improving access to fresh fruits and vegetables through our Veggie Vouchers program

Resilient Iowa Communities

Resilient Iowa Communities (RIC) assists cities and counties to improve the resiliency, sustainability, and quality of life of their residents. We provide resources and information based on 6 Best Practice categories of action that can be tailored to fit the needs of each community.

- Climate action and greenhouse gas inventory support
- Access to Neighborhood Resiliency Services
- Networking and technical assistance opportunities for RIC members to share resources and knowledge
- Annual recognition for communities who complete actions from our Best Practice categories to achieve gold, silver, or bronze status for their community

2024 OVERVIEW

\$2,125,353

Funds leveraged

35,802

People reached through CEEE programming and projects

211

K-12 Teachers reached by CEEE programming

14,557

K-12 Students reached by CEEE programming

Environmental Health Program

- **97** Residents, **5** Childcare Centers, **1** School District, **5** Institutions, and **3** City Parks pledged as new Good Neighbor Iowans to reduce pesticide usage
- **5** UNI Student Fellows and **1** AmeriCorps member helped implement Good Neighbor Iowa Programming
- Environmental Health staff presented at and assisted with the implementation of **7** Professional Conferences, engaging over **3,300** participants through Farming for Public Health
- Assisted with the publication of the Reducing Environmental and Occupational Cancer Risks Toolkit
- Farming for Public Health supported **4** on-farm field days
- Provided **100** scholarships to Iowa childcare providers to learn about common environmental hazards that impact children's health
- Developed a course for UNI Students entitled, *Food Systems, Farming, and Public Health in Iowa*
- Raised **\$425,000** through the T.J. Carver Charitable Trust to engage the UNI campus community in illustrating the connections between environmental health and course content
- Hosted Dr. Sandra Steingraber to give a lecture on UNI's Campus to speak on the involuntary cancer risks posed by exposures to agricultural chemicals in the Midwestern Corn Belt.
- Established the NEW Climate, Toxics, and Health program

Green Iowa AmeriCorps

- **751** Educational Programs, engaging **22,920** participants.
- **980** Community Outreach Events, engaging **5,443** volunteers, serving **16,462** volunteer hours
- Green Iowa AmeriCorps service members and volunteers planted **5,031** trees
- Teams completed **414** Residential Energy Audits, helping to assess the air leakage in homes
- **1,260** Weatherizations completed and Energy Saver Kits Distributed to the community helping Iowans save money on their home energy bills
- **204** Water Quality Mitigation Projects completed
- **27** Host Site Partnerships throughout Iowa with cities, counties, conservation departments, non-profits, and other community organizations.
- **107** AmeriCorps Members in service dedicating a total of **73,584** Service Hours towards Getting Things Done for our communities across Iowa.



28

UNI Faculty
Participated in CEEE
programming

90

UNI Students
Participated in CEEE
programming

470

UNI Students
Reached by CEEE
programming

Local Food Program

- **25** attendees at the annual Local Food Producer & Buyer networking event
- **100** community members attended the annual Farm to Fork dinner
- **30** Farmers Market Vendors attended the Cedar Valley Farmers Market Workshop
- **\$1,985** worth of produce purchased with the help of Veggie Vouchers at the Hispanic Heritage Family Night Farmers Market
- The annual Cedar Valley Farm Crawl engaged **28** people who caravanned to **5** participating gardens, **14** people biked to participating farms, and **65** people attended the Farm Crawl after party.
- Garden in Every Lot: Installed **52** gardens, hosted **40** community members at our first ever event at Highland Park Community Garden, assisted Congolese producers at the Highland Park Garden sell **\$26,137** of produce to the Northeast Iowa Foodbank, Established the Central Christian Church Garden
- Nourish Iowa VISTA AmeriCorps: Engaged **14** VISTA members in service, with **890** hours spent on community outreach, **154** volunteers engaged, **255** outside volunteer hours, **\$36,797** value of cash resources leveraged, **\$3,406** value of in-kind resources leveraged, and **7** host site partnerships across Iowa.
- Veggie Vouchers: **1,169** clients served (**29%** minors, **23%** seniors 60+, **67%** of vouchers distributed were redeemed), **29** Farmers at Cedar Valley Farmers Markets participated in the program, **\$20,325** in Veggie Vouchers utilized.

Resilient Iowa Communities

- **4** Communities recognized at our RIC-ognition award ceremony at the Iowa State Capitol Building. City of Ames, City of Bloomfield, Linn County, City of Meservey
- Collaborated with the UNI Geography Department to engage **16** students for a total of **432** hours on two projects in partnership with the City of Waterloo and the City of Fairfield to create practical application for skills in research, science communication, greenhouse gas inventory benchmarking and GIS.
- Created a Best Practice Scorecard to help cities and counties determine their baseline scores key areas of resiliency.
- Secured funding through the Iowa Energy Center to execute energy and carbon sequestration projects in Iowa communities.
- Represented Iowa as part of the Sustainable States Network annual conference in Boston.

Environmental Health Program

Highlighting upstream solutions to protect children, climate, and health.

Audrey E. Tran Lam
Environmental Health Program Director

Brittany Latch
Environmental Health Program Associate



Good Neighbor Iowa

Protecting Iowa's children and biodiversity by choosing pesticide-free lawn care practices.

Our Newest Good Neighbors

In 2024, we welcomed **97 Residents, 5 Childcare Centers, 1 School District, 5 Institutions, and 3 City Parks** who have pledged as Good Neighbors to reduce unnecessary pesticide usage for the health of our children, pets, and environment.

UNI Community Engagement

In 2024 Good Neighbor Iowa engaged **120 members of the UNI Community!** Special thanks to the **5 UNI Student Fellows and 1 Green Iowa AmeriCorps member** who supported our programming through community outreach, social media, and tech support!



Pesticide Reduction in Urban Spaces

Program staff worked with the Johnson County Board of Health to **author a position paper on pesticide reduction in urban spaces.** This is an accomplishment that has been an extremely long time coming, and we are so glad to see it finally come to fruition. Scan the QR code to read it!

Climate, Toxics, and Health

**New in
2024!**

Reducing the chemicals in your life can **improve your health and reduce your carbon footprint.**

Many chemicals found in our everyday lives are known or suspected carcinogens, and can have impacts on hormone functioning in our bodies. These chemicals are called **Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals**, or EDCs. The Endocrine Society describes the broad impact of these chemicals as “profound and life threatening.”

This program provides **resources to help you identify where you could be exposing yourself to potentially harmful EDC's** in everyday products like shampoo, fragrances, paints, cookware, clothing, and more and help you make healthier, choices for yourself and the environment.

Learn more and find resources on our website at cee.uni.edu/environmental-health-program/climate-toxics-and-health



Building understanding among healthcare providers, public health professionals, and farmers about agricultural strategies that support soil health, clean water, biodiversity, conservation, healthy food, and rural economic vitality - collectively, public health.



7 professional conferences, reaching more than 3,300 participants on the topics of agriculture's impact on human health!

- Public Health Conference of Iowa
- Iowa Cancer Consortium
- Industrial Farm Animal Production, the Environment, and Public Health Conference planning committee
- Iowa Environmental Health Association Conference
- Iowa Nature Summit
- Iowa Cancer Summit
- Midwest Rural Agricultural Safety and Health Conference

Uplifting Farmers as Public Health Practitioners

Farming for Public Health supported **4 on-farm, field days** in 2024!

These field days are a critical tool in emphasizing the role farmers play as public health practitioners in the state.



100 Scholarships to Iowa Childcare Providers

Environmental Health Program has been pleased to be able to provide up to 100 scholarships to Iowa Child Care Providers to take the EcoHealth Child Care e-learning course for continuing education credits.

Developed by the Children's Environmental Health Network, this course instructs on common environmental hazards that impact children's health (including pesticides) and increases awareness of environmental health issues (and how to remediate them) in child care centers.

UNI Engagement



- Audrey and Kamyar developed a course for UNI students entitled, **Food Systems, Farming, and Public Health in Iowa** that explores the central role farming plays in Iowa's environmental health.
- Raised **\$425,000 through the R. J Carver Charitable Trust** to engage the UNI campus community, especially through partnerships with faculty in various UNI departments including Philosophy, Communication Sciences and Disorders, Economics, Earth Science, and others to illustrate the connections between environmental health and course content.

- Hosted **Dr. Sandra Steingraber to give a lecture on UNI's Campus** in partnership with the School of Health & Human Sciences, the College of Social & Behavioral Sciences, and the College of Humanities, Arts & Sciences. This talk explored the involuntary cancer risks posed by exposures to agricultural chemicals in the Midwestern Corn Belt, based on the latest findings from epidemiological and toxicological studies, as well as examined the promises of agroecology as an alternative to industrial agriculture.

2024 Ceres Trust Final Report

Read more about our work in 2024 in our Final Report to the Ceres Trust. Find more details about each of the conferences the Environmental Health program presented at and participated in, information about our on-farm field days, our Pesticides and Public Health Working Group, and our other accomplishments from this year.

Our programs capacity, influence, and recognition has been built from the support of the Ceres Trust. We are exceedingly proud of all of the work that we have been able to complete thanks to our partnership with the Ceres Trust over the past six years.



Green Iowa AmeriCorps



Empowering Iowa for a greener future through service, education, and engagement.

Ashley Coffin
Director

Shawn Fluckey
Program Manager

Brandy Case Haub
Assistant Director

Leah Poole
Communications Coordinator

Laura Mast
Recruitment Specialist



2023-2024 Service Term Impact

751 Educational Programs

414 Residential Energy Audits

22,920 Programming Participants

1,260 Weatherizations/Energy Saver Kits

980 Community Outreach Events

204 Water Quality Mitigation Projects

5,443 Volunteers Engaged

27 Host Site Partnerships

16,462 Volunteer Service Hours

107 AmeriCorps Members in Service

5,031 Trees Planted

73,584 Total Member Service Hours



Host Site Partnerships

Burlington School District • Northeast Iowa Community College • UNI Tallgrass Prairie Center • Center for Energy & Environmental Education: Trees & Garden team, Energy Team, Environmental Health Team • Cedar Falls Community School District • Linn County Sustainability Office • Trees Forever in Marion • Trees Forever in Des Moines • Whiterock Conservancy • Polk County Climate Pollution Reduction • Polk County Conservation • Greater Des Moines Habitat for Humanity • Dubuque County Conservation • City of Dubuque Sustainability Office • City of Fairfield • Table to Table • Iowa City Climate Action & Outreach • Jackson County Conservation • Iowa Lakeside Labs • Black Hawk County Solid Waste Management Commission & Public Health Partnership • Oskaloosa William Penn & Mahaska County Conservation Partnership

Program Highlights

86%

of members rated their service experience a **4/5** or higher, with **46%** rating their service experience a **5/5**

80%

of members feel they have a deepened sense of **connection to their community**

74%

of members feel they have a deepened sense of **connection to the environment**

73%

of members feel they have a better understanding of their **professional goals**

89%

of members feel they have **learned new skills they will use in the future**

83%

of members feel they have **grown in their ability to work with others**

74%

of members feel they have **deepened their understanding of how to connect with their community**

30

UNI Students served with Green Iowa AmeriCorps in the 23-24 Service term.



Member Reflections

"There is truly something for everyone and something that everyone can gain from GIA service. You can devote yourself to projects big and small, and build off of something existing or create your own thing depending on what you are comfortable with. I appreciated the support of site supervisors and GIA to try and allow for many different kinds of projects and ideas to count towards service."

Matisse Arnone served with the City of Iowa City

"I feel much more confident in taking initiative and throwing myself into projects that I am passionate about, whereas before my service term I would simply wait for an opportunity to come my way rather than actively seeking it out."

Allie Greethurst served with UNI Center for Energy & Environmental Education

"The energy that gets passed from person to person when we collaborate to complete a project is unbelievable. The sense of satisfaction I get at the end of every shift of GIA is worth every single second of the work. There is no job that is quite as rewarding!"

Gavin Powell served with UNI Center for Energy & Environmental Education

"I loved spending the summer working on sustainability projects! I gained so much hands-on experience working at a city level and finding out how to coordinate city-wide events and projects. Since I am an elementary education major (and don't have ample experience with sustainability), I loved working with the city and learning about sustainability initiatives!"

Amanda Soat served with City of Dubuque Sustainability

Local Food Program

Connecting consumers, farmers, and communities through education, collaboration, and economic development.

Jodie Huegerich
Local Food Program Manager

Kathryn Gilbery
Local Food Access Coordinator

Sarah Steinmeyer
Nourish Iowa VISTA Program Coordinator



Local Food Highlights

Local Food Producer & Buyer Networking event

25 People attended our annual networking event to make connections and learn about locally available products.

Farm to Fork Dinner

100 community members came together to share a table, a story, and a meal, while supporting our local food system. This locally sourced meal was prepared by Diamond Event Center chefs.

Cedar Valley Farmers Market Workshop

30 farmers market vendors attended our workshop to network and gain knowledge about farmers markets in the region.

Hispanic Heritage Family Night Farmers Market

Families received \$10/person in veggie vouchers to purchase fruits and veggies from the WeArose farmers market. Families purchased **\$1,985 in produce in one night!**



Cedar Valley Farm Crawl | August 11th, 2024

This annual event gave the public an opportunity to meet local producers and learn more about our local growers and producers.

28 people caravanned to participating farms

- Cook's Fruits and Vegetables, Fitkin Popcorn, Litteaur's Garden Produce, Varda Farms & Apiary, and We Arose Demonstration Garden.

14 people biked 15 miles to participating locations

- We Arose demonstration garden, Jesse Cosby Neighborhood Center garden, Litteaur's Garden Produce, Northeast Iowa Food Bank garden, and Peoples Community Health Clinic garden.

65 people attended the Farm Crawl After Party

- Food was available from Concept Kitchen; tomato test tasting; tours of We Arose demonstration garden and high tunnel. Other vendors at this event included Rooted Carrot Co-op Market, Practical Farmers of Iowa, SILT, and We Arose.



A Garden in Every Lot



Renewing our community's culture of gardening.

Helping individuals and community organizations overcome barriers to starting gardens. Since 2020, over 190 backyard gardens have been installed for community members!



- **52 Gardens** Installed in 2024
- In 2022, we helped establish a Tool Library at the Waterloo Public Library. Since then, as of 2024, **64 gardening tools circulated a total of 304 times!**
- **87% of new gardeners felt more confident** in growing their own veggies, and plan to continue gardening!
- Hosted our **first gathering event at Highland Park Community Garden** on September 24 and had great attendance (about 40 people) and lots of delicious food!
- Assisted Congolese producers at Highland Park Garden sell their produce to the Northeast Iowa Food Bank - **\$26,137 in produce sold.**
- Established the **new Central Christian Church garden** location in April of 2024

Nourish Iowa VISTA

Increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables in Iowa's communities.

Nourish Iowa VISTA is an AmeriCorps program working towards the elimination of poverty through capacity-building projects.



14 AmeriCorps Members in Service
890 Hours spent on Community Outreach
154 Volunteers
255 Volunteer Hours
128 Hours of Grant Writing
\$36,797 Value of Cash Resources Leveraged
\$3,406 Value of In-Kind Resources Leveraged

7 Host Site Partnerships Across Iowa

UNI Center for Energy & Environmental Education • Feed Iowa First •
 Field to Family • ISU Farm Food Enterprise Development •
 Iowa Valley Resource Conservation & Development • Table to Table • We Arose



Veggie Vouchers

The Veggie Voucher Program collaborates with local clinics and non-profits, providing them with veggie vouchers to distribute to their clients who are food insecure. These vouchers can be used at farmers markets and farm stands during the growing season to purchase fresh vegetables.

1,169 People served in 2024

29% were minors and 23% were seniors ages 60+ and 67% of vouchers distributed were redeemed

29 farmers at Cedar Valley farmers markets

participated and earned additional revenue and customers from the Veggie Voucher program.

\$20,325 in Veggie Vouchers used by food insecure clients at area farmers markets

Resilient Iowa Communities (RIC)



Helping Iowa cities and counties achieve their sustainability, resiliency, and quality-of-life goals.

Ashley Coffin
Director, CEEE

RIC Highlights

UNI Geography Department Collaboration

16 students were engaged for a total of 432 hours on two projects in partnership with the City of Waterloo and the City of Fairfield to create practical application for skills in research, science communication, greenhouse gas inventory benchmarking and GIS.

Best Practices Scorecard

Created a Best Practice Scorecard to help cities and counties determine the baseline scores in the areas of economic and community development, buildings and energy, environmental management, land use, transportation, environmental equity & inclusion.

Carbon Sequestration Projects in Iowa

Resilient Iowa Communities secured funding through the Iowa Energy Center to execute energy and carbon sequestration projects in Iowa communities

Sustainable States Network Conference

Ashley represented Iowa at the Sustainable States Network Conference in Boston

RIC-ognition Awards

In 2024, Resilient Iowa Communities hosted our first ever RIC-ognition awards!

Through these awards, we aim to highlight and celebrate cities and counties in Iowa that are taking actions to improve the sustainability, resiliency, and quality of life for Iowans. Communities who had completed actions in our six categories of Best Practices: Buildings & Energy, Land Use, Transportation, Environmental Management, Economics & Community Development, Environmental Equity & Inclusion, were eligible to be nominated and recognized for their work. This year, 4 communities were recognized for their work and dedication towards making Iowa a better place to call home.

RIC-ognition Award Recipients

The **City of Ames** has been awarded gold status across all six Best Practice Categories. Buildings & Energy, Land Use, Transportation, Environmental Management, Community & Economic Development, and Environmental Equity & Inclusion.

The **City of Bloomfield** has been awarded silver status in the Buildings & Energy, Transportation, and Environmental Management categories, and Gold status in the Economic and Community Development category.

The **Linn County Sustainability Department** has been awarded gold status in the Land Use and Economic & Community Development Categories.

The **City of Meservey** has been awarded bronze status in the Community & Economic Development Category.





On Our Website

ceee.uni.edu

Find more information about:

- Community Volunteer Opportunities
- AmeriCorps Service Opportunities
- Student Employment Opportunities
- Upcoming Events on our CEEE Calendar
- Services & Resources for each of our programs

Coming Soon: Friends of the CEEE and more!

The CEEE will soon be launching a few new Center newsletters to help you stay up-to-date on everything our Center and our programs have to offer! New Newsletters include:

Friends of the CEEE • Good Neighbor Iowa • Green Iowa
AmeriCorps • Local Food Program • Resilient Iowa Communities

Serve with us!

Volunteer for an hour, a day, or a whole year!

There are so many opportunities to get involved with our programs. From tree planting, to community gardening, cleaning and beautifying our neighborhoods, and more, our volunteers help us get it all done!

Each year, we also have a number of paid AmeriCorps service positions available through both of our AmeriCorps programs, which provide our members with a number of benefits including a living stipend, post-service education award, and more!



Support our Center

Your support helps us to expand our programming and continue to provide our services to all Iowans. We accept all sorts of donations including time, money, and supplies!

To provide a financial contribution to our Center, you can scan the QR code or visit our website at ceee.uni.edu/support-our-programs and use the “Financial Donation” button.

To learn more about upcoming volunteer opportunities or other ways to get involved and support our Center, please reach out to us at uni-ceee@uni.edu






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