



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

United Way of Benton & Franklin Counties Launches Lantern to Offer Free Parenting Tips to Families

KENNEWICK, Wash. June 1, 2026 — United Way of Benton & Franklin Counties is proud to announce the launch of Lantern, an early learning program and family engagement tool designed to help parents support their children’s development from birth through early elementary years.

Lantern lights the way for families, providing a bright beginning for every child to realize their full potential. The age-based text messages have been created in collaboration with experts in the child development field and include tips, conversation starters, learning games and activities and much more.

Lantern delivers evidence-based, personalized information directly to the fingertips of caregivers. Families receive weekly messages—supporting whole child, whole family development—tailored to their child’s age, their family’s needs and interests, and their zip code. Location-based messages are created in partnership with local organizations and connect families to free and low cost events and resources in their communities.

“Parents are a child’s first and most important teacher,” said Asta Bonheyo, Community Impact Director at United Way of Benton & Franklin Counties. “Lantern gives families practical tools and confidence to support learning during the critical early years, whether at home, in the car, or during everyday routines.”

Lantern provides families with simple, research-based activities, developmental guidance, and personalized learning resources that parents and caregivers can use every day to build strong foundations for lifelong success. The program is part of United Way’s ongoing commitment to improving early childhood outcomes and ensuring every child enters school ready to learn and thrive.

The Lantern platform is designed to be accessible, easy to use, and adaptable for busy families. Through age-appropriate learning prompts, milestone tracking, and engaging activities, parents can strengthen literacy, communication, social-emotional development, and school readiness skills.

The launch of Lantern reflects United Way’s broader mission to create stronger communities by investing in education, and by equipping families with accessible early learning resources, the organization aims to close opportunity gaps and help more children succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

“Early learning happens everywhere,” said Bonheyo. “Lantern helps families turn everyday moments into meaningful opportunities for growth and connection.”

Sign up for text messages to help you in your parenting journey, from pregnancy through preteen. Lantern covers it all: tantrums, nutrition, brain-building activities, local events, and more! Signing up takes less than 30 seconds. Text KIDSWA to 274448 or [CLICK HERE](#). Text messages are available in English, Spanish, and Arabic

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