united in

local love

Join the recovery.

Donate today.

United Way 2021 Campaign Communications Playbook
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These key brand elements capture the essence of who we are, what we stand for and what we are trying to accomplish during this year’s Campaign.

Brand

united in

local love

Social media hashtag

#LOCALLOVE

Tagline/Call to action

Join the recovery.

Donate today.

Our promise

100% LOCAL. ALWAYS.
Your “elevator pitch”

Our community is driving toward pandemic recovery. For many of us, this means heading back to the office, seeing family and friends, and participating in community activities again.

But for many people who were already experiencing poverty, hunger and mental illness before the pandemic hit, these past 18 months have widened the gap between thriving and just getting by.

Others are experiencing challenges for the first time—job loss and precarious work, the deep impact of virtual learning on kids’ mental health, and the impact of many months spent in isolation without connection to friends, family and neighbours. There’s a recovery happening all around that they can’t participate in.

We're ready to come out of this crisis. And we have an opportunity now to make sure no one is left behind.

Throughout the first year of the pandemic, our community united in local love and what we accomplished was amazing. Your donation helped United Way agency partners scale up and deliver programs safely. Your support helped us advocate to address systemic inequality and plan now for a fair and equitable recovery. And your commitment helped us sustain a vital social safety net that thousands of local people—our friends, neighbours and family—depend on every year.

Looking ahead, hope is on the horizon, and United Way is still working hard to ensure a bright future.
This year, we’re mobilizing the community to fight deepening poverty and issues like inequity, mental illness and intimate partner violence—issues that were already unignorable before the pandemic hit.

Your local love has never been more important. When you give to United Way, you help people, families and entire neighbourhoods thrive.

If you’re able, please give what you can. Every donation, each hour of volunteering, every act of kindness, no matter the size, helps ensure United Way funded programs and services are there when people in our community need them most.

Join our community recovery. Together we can build a bright future: a safe, resilient and compassionate community where everyone matters.
2021 Campaign Case for Support

Topline key messages for conversations, presentations and written communications. Visit the Toolkit link at unitedwayem.ca to download the ‘Fundraiser Roadshow’, a PowerPoint version of this Case for Support.

Join our community recovery

• As we start to emerge from the COVID-19 crisis, we have an opportunity now to make sure no one is left behind. United Way is working to ensure a fair and equitable recovery for all through investments in essential social services, advocacy and collaborating with community partners.

• While vaccines provide tremendous hope when it comes to stemming the tide of infections, addressing deepening poverty in our region—and the unignorable issues at its root—is not a quick fix.

• Thanks to supporters like you across Elgin and Middlesex counties, United Way was able to provide a coordinated community response during this pandemic. That’s why we’re calling on you once again.

• You can help ignite the equitable recovery we all need and deserve by joining the United Way 2021 Campaign.

• Together we can build a bright future: a safe, resilient and compassionate community where everyone matters.

When COVID-19 hit, our community was already facing serious problems

Our community pulled together last year to try and prevent people who were already experiencing poverty, hunger, mental illness, and social isolation falling further into the margins.

What we accomplished was amazing. Your donation helped United Way agency partners scale up and deliver programs safely, sustaining a vital social safety net that thousands of local people—our friends, neighbours and family—depend on every year.
• Our community is driving toward pandemic recovery. But for many people the gap between just getting by and thriving, is growing:

  • Many have lost their jobs. Those working essential jobs are at increased risk of infection—and many lack access to paid sick leave.
  • Food insecurity is increasing and the housing crisis is getting worse.
  • There is a shadow pandemic of domestic and intimate partner violence.
  • Youth mental health is an ongoing challenge.
  • Many people are needing help for the first time.

This pandemic hasn’t affected everyone equally

• COVID-19 is exacerbating the inequities that divide our community

• Our friends and neighbours who are experiencing poverty, many of whom live with low incomes, are Black, Indigenous or from other equity-seeking groups, are disproportionately impacted

• Systemic inequities, racism and discrimination continue to keep our friends and neighbours from the opportunities they need and deserve

• Opportunities like a stable income, an affordable place to live, nutritious food on the table, mental and physical health, and a community where each and every person is safe and valued, are not available to all

During this crisis:

• South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre is still seeing 1,000 families a month for emergency food and basic needs—no change from the height of the pandemic and 10 times more families than pre-pandemic.

• Ontario’s annual unemployment rate jumped to 9.5 per cent in 2020, the highest it’s been since 1993.

• Rates of intimate partner violence soared 20-30% and the need for services for children and families is not slowing down. The Caring Dads program at Changing Ways is experiencing a 32% increase in the number of men, children and mothers involved in programming.

• As the crisis shifts from COVID-19 to mental health, requests for subsidized counselling at Daya Counselling Centre are up 20-25%, many from people needing help for the first time:
• Mental health is worsening for multiple populations, particularly Indigenous and racialized people.

• Youth are reporting the biggest declines in mental health in the country. As kids return to school, educators and agencies like Ignite Youth Centre in St. Thomas that support them will be at the frontlines learning about the deep impact this past year has had on learning and kids’ mental health.

Your support has helped us meet these challenges

• While we couldn’t have foreseen the pandemic, the network we’ve built and our decades-long commitment to investing in the people and places facing the greatest barriers—informed by our deep connections and partnerships—meant that when COVID-19 touched down in Elgin and Middlesex counties, we were able to respond quickly.

• Thanks to the generous support of donors like you, we were able to flow much-needed emergency funds into community agencies so they could adapt and scale services quickly, impactfully and equitably.

Here are three ways we turned your support into meaningful action last year:

1 - Meeting Basic Needs

• Although supporting people to meet basic needs has always been part of our work, your support last year allowed United Way to provide funding to our agencies so they could continue to meet those needs throughout the pandemic.

• When schools closed, in-school nutrition programs closed too. United Way made connections to funders like the Ontario Student Nutrition Program and service providers like South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre to keep food and basic needs flowing to innovative emergency food programs anchored in neighbourhoods, not buildings.

• Eat2Learn, a United Way partner agency providing in-school nutrition programs in Elgin County, started Food Box Fridays, a physically distanced food pick-up program supporting school families struggling to make ends meet. The program was able to support 6,811 children and youth and 3,850 adults with food hampers and grocery cards during the school closures last year.
2 - Coordinating a community response

• Bringing community partners together has always been an integral part of how we work, and this convening muscle has never been more important than during this last year.

• Thanks to your support, we continued to fight poverty through our community coordination work, building up local resources and supporting local leaders to create the change they want to see.

• For example, when the pandemic first hit, we co-hosted the Mayor’s Social Impact and Recovery Task Force, a cross-sector table of social service agencies, local government and other partners coming together to coordinate relief efforts United Way gained a unique vantage point to do what it does best:
  • Connect key stakeholders to make change happen
  • Now, we’re continuing this work at the London Community Recovery Network

• Our trusted voice champions solutions to end poverty and social exclusion at community and government planning tables such as the London Community Recovery Network, London Homelessness Coalition, the Child and Youth Network and the St. Thomas Community Leader’s Cabinet. United Way maximizes impact by coordinating efforts with other funders like local Community Foundations. These are just a few of the ways we provide strategic leadership and advocate for our community.

• As the largest non-government funder of social services in our region, United Way is at the table with policy makers, politicians and change makers, using its deep connections to link people and organizations to get things done.

• This work allows us to learn from one another about the approach and strategies that succeed—and to ensure there are no gaps in services.

3 - Leading with equity

• As a strong, non-partisan advocate, United Way worked to keep important issues like paid sick days, living wage, safe working conditions and affordable housing front-and-centre with leaders at all three levels of government during the pandemic:
• Locally, we advocated for grassroots issues like living wage, paid sick days, safe working conditions and affordable housing

• Provincially, we signed on to Ontario for All, an advocacy organization calling on the province to address systemic inequality, income security, childcare and mental health support and more to ensure a just and inclusive recovery

• Nationally, we contributed a hyper-local view to United Way Centraide Canada’s advocacy efforts for policy solutions aimed at non-profit sector sustainability

We’re getting through this together, but there is more work to be done
• Although our region is starting to emerge from this pandemic, there is still more work to be done. The damage this crisis has done demands a united effort.

• When you support United Way through your employee giving campaign, you will play a vital role in creating a recovery that harnesses the incredible power, resiliency and skills of the people that make our region such a vibrant, diverse and welcoming place to live.

• You’ll join with us, our agencies, local government and your neighbours to transform our community into a place where each and every person can thrive.

There are still critical issues to address
• Since the beginning of this pandemic, United Way has been working with local agencies to provide funding so no one in our community is left behind.

• As we start to recover, poverty is deepening. 1 in 5 kids in our community live in a household that struggles to pay rent and 1 in 7 households don’t have enough income to maintain a diet that is nutritious, adequate and deemed culturally acceptable. Over half of newcomers to our community and 36% of Indigenous people live at or below the poverty line.

• Demand for emergency food and basic needs remains high. South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre is still seeing 1,000 families a month for emergency food and basic needs—no change from the height of the pandemic and 10 times more families than pre-pandemic.
• Intimate partner violence is increasing. Rates of intimate partner violence soared 20-30% during the pandemic and the need for services for children and families is not slowing down. The Caring Dads program at Changing Ways is experiencing a 32% increase in the number of men, children and mothers involved in programming.

• Mental health is declining. As the crisis shifts from COVID-19 to mental health, requests for subsidized counselling at Daya Counselling Centre are up 20-25%, many from people needing help for the first time.

  • Mental health is worsening for multiple populations, particularly Indigenous and racialized people.

  • Youth are reporting the biggest declines in mental health in the country. As kids return to school, the educators and agencies like Ignite Youth Centre in St. Thomas that support them will be at the frontlines learning about the deep impact this past year has had on learning and kids’ mental health.

• Without action, we will leave people behind. For people who were already experiencing poverty, hunger and mental illness before the pandemic hit, the gap between just getting by and thriving, is growing. Others experiencing challenges for the first time—job loss and precarious work the deep impact of virtual learning on kids’ mental health, and the impact of many months spent in isolation without connection to friends, family and neighbours—will need our help too.

Here’s what your donation can do:

Meet basic, fundamental needs

• As we move through this pandemic, access to healthy, affordable food, a safe place to call home and a stable, good job have surfaced as critical needs. We know that as we emerge from this crisis, people will continue to need support as they get back on their feet.

• Your donation provides basic needs like emergency food, hygiene supplies, diapers and baby formula close to home. With your support, 33,443 people in our community accessed United Way funded basic needs programs last year and 4,250 children and youth from low-income families increased their access to healthy food.

• By donating today, you will:

  • Provide funds to our community agencies so that they can continue to pivot, adapt and respond in real time to meet these fundamental needs in a constantly evolving environment.
Support initiatives close to home like emergency food cupboards, access to fresh, healthy local food, and social and physical activities for kids, seniors and adults.

Fuel our advocacy efforts, like the call to action we and 120 United Ways and agencies across Ontario issued together advocating for paid sick leave.

In all these ways and more, your donation provides our agencies with the resources they need to adapt and respond to emerging needs in our community in real time.

Tackle growing mental health issues and intimate partner violence

A shadow pandemic of domestic and intimate partner violence is growing. Youth mental health is an ongoing challenge. Many people are needing help for the first time.

Your donation helps residents maintain mental wellbeing, social connection and safety. With your support, 10,313 people increased their ability to cope and improve their situation after receiving support from a United Way funded program. 2,632 more said they were able to increase their sense of wellbeing.

Your donation helps women and children access a range of supports so they can leave an abusive situation and rebuild their lives. Last year, United Way partner agencies supported 337 children and youth who experienced violence in the home and helped them feel safer. An additional 179 parents increased their coping skills.

By donating today, you will:

- Provide funds to our community agencies so that they can continue to pivot, adapt and respond in real time to meet these fundamental needs in a constantly evolving environment.

- Support innovative initiatives like single-session psychotherapy at Daya Counselling Centre and Caring Dads, an internationally acclaimed program started in London that focuses on the role of men in ending intimate partner violence, and shelters and supports for women and children fleeing domestic violence.

In all these ways and more, your donation provides our agencies with the resources they need to adapt and respond to emerging needs in our community in real time.
**Build an equitable recovery**

• Your support will help build an equitable recovery by challenging and changing how we work with and for community.

• While we’ve always invested in the people most impacted by poverty, we’re strengthening that commitment by increasing investments in organizations led by, focused on and serving equity-seeking groups.

• We have recently revised the United Way Community Fund grants to:
  • prioritize poverty reduction and prevention
  • increase funding opportunities to organizations and programs that serve equity-seeking populations who are disproportionately affected by social challenges in our region
  • be open to all registered charities meeting the program criteria as part of our ongoing work to dismantle systems of racism and oppression in our region
  • be an open and competitive process

• Funds raised during this year’s Campaign will be allocated next year using this new funding model.

• In the year ahead, we will continue to work with our network of agency partners to help people living in poverty

By donating today, you will:

• Help us to continue our critical work towards an inclusive, equitable recovery.

• Strengthen our work by supporting local leaders to build the change they want to see.

• Support our participation in community planning tables. These tables were at the centre of our COVID-19 response and will be vital to our rebuilding efforts. The shared resources, knowledge, and cohesive strategies will maximize the impact of your dollars during recovery.

• Allow this work and more to happen at both the community and systems level, to ensure we are getting at the roots of local poverty in innovative, responsive and adaptable ways to improve lives and entire communities.
Sustaining the safety net

When you give to United Way, you help to sustain our region’s vital social safety net and fuel systems-level change. We are committed to putting your dollars to work in the most effective way possible.

Thanks to you we give every person in every community across our region a fair shot at their best life by:

• Advocating for issues that matter

• Investing in a network of more than 80 essential programs

• Getting the right people to the table to create change

Your donation gives thousands of people—your friends, neighbours and family—much-needed support, year-round. United Way is here every day, during times of stability and times of crisis. Over 100,000 people in our community used a United Way funded program or service last year – that’s nearly 1 in 5 of us.

Our promise to you:

• You love where you live, and we do too. That’s why we tackle issues linked to poverty and social exclusion through systemic leadership, advocacy and investments in more than 80 programs proven to get results.

• All donations to United Way stay 100% local to fund impact strategies, community-building initiatives and vital programs that create opportunity right here at home. When everyone gets a fair shot at their best life, our whole community thrives.

• United Way is committed to putting your dollars to work in the most effective way possible.

A successful recovery from this pandemic involves all of us

• Here at United Way, we believe a successful recovery from this pandemic involves all of us. We’re in this together.

• That’s why we are asking you to stand with us today to ensure everyone in our community has a fair shot at their best life.
• Together we can build a bright future: a safe, resilient and compassionate community where everyone matters

Here’s how you can help our community recover

• **Give** – Make a payroll or one-time donation to United Way

• **Learn** – Sign up to receive our eNewsletter or book an impact speaker for your workplace

• **Get involved** – Contribute to the conversation on social media and your workplace United Way Committee
About United Way
United Way works so that every person in every community across our region has a fair shot at their best life. As the largest non-government funder of essential social services in Elgin-Middlesex, we tackle issues linked to poverty and social exclusion through strategic leadership, advocacy and investment in programs proven to get results. Donations stay 100% local, always.

Local love in a global crisis
When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, United Way stepped up as a leader and convenor, advocate and funder. By the pandemic’s one-year anniversary, almost $3 million from the following sources was working in the community to keep 125 essential programs and services running, and to scale up the most critical ones: $1 million from United Way’s Local Love in a Global Crisis community response fund; and $2,768,754 from the Federal government’s Emergency Community Support Fund and $119,782 from the Seniors Response Fund.

Our focus is poverty
United Way emphasizes poverty as a way to focus our work and impact in the community. We define the state of poverty as one in which income is too low to provide an adequate standard of living. But poverty is about more than just income. It is also about exclusion from resources, opportunities, and connections.

What’s raised local, stays local
All donations to United Way stay 100% local to fund impact strategies, community-building initiatives and vital programs that create opportunity in London, St. Thomas, and other communities across Elgin County and Middlesex County. Almost 70% of the money we raise comes from the pockets of individual people in our community, just like you. When everyone gets a fair shot at their best life, our whole community thrives.
Largest local non-government funder of social services
United Way Elgin Middlesex is the largest non-government funder of social services in our region and supports a network of 80 essential programs and services at 49 local agencies. Last year, over 100,000 people in our community used a United Way program or service—that’s more than 1 in 5 of us.

Why United Way
United Way works to build a community where everyone matters. Our deep local knowledge, relationships and proven expertise empower people to make a personal impact in the communities they care about. United Way ignites awareness about the issues our community is facing, inspires action to help solve them, influences systems and policies, and invests in local solutions that get results.

United Way is accountable
United Way is honest and transparent in all that we do. Full, independently audited financial information is available on our website or by visiting Canada Revenue Agency online.
Our Impact

Funder, leader, advocate, connector

1 in 5
United Way sustains a vital social safety net that provides thousands of people—your friends, neighbours and family—with much-needed support, year-round. More than 1 in 5 people across our region used a United Way funded program or service last year—that’s more than 100,000 of us.

Strategic leadership for long-term solutions
Our trusted voice champions solutions to end poverty and social exclusion at community and government planning tables such as the London Community Recovery Network, London Homelessness Coalition, the Child and Youth Network and the St. Thomas Community Leader’s Cabinet. United Way maximizes impact by coordinating efforts with other funders like local Community Foundations. These are just a few of the ways we provide strategic leadership and advocate for our community.

Advocating for issues that matter
As a strong, non-partisan advocate, United Way works to keep important issues like the opioid crisis, paid sick days, living wage, safe working conditions and affordable housing front-and-centre with leaders at all three levels of government:

• Locally, we advocated for grassroots issues like living wage, paid sick days, safe working conditions and affordable housing

• Provincially, we signed on to Ontario for All, an advocacy group calling on the province to address systemic inequality, income security, childcare and mental health support and more to ensure a just and inclusive recovery from the pandemic

• Nationally, we contributed a hyper-local view to United Way Centraide Canada’s advocacy efforts for Federal policy solutions aimed at sustaining the non-profit sector
United Way is a Community Connector

As the largest non-government funder of social services in our region, United Way is at the table with policy makers, politicians and change-makers, using its deep connections to link people and organizations to get things done:

• As part of the London Community Recovery Network, United Way's President and CEO Kelly Ziegner co-chaired the Supporting London’s Most Vulnerable Communities working group which generated and reviewed strategies to support London’s social and economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

• As a founding member of Inclusive Economy London, United Way is working with partners on initiatives like Community Benefits Agreements that combine economic development with social impact to improve community wellbeing through decent work, green initiatives and local purchasing power.

• United Way played a key role in coordinating Community Volunteer Income Tax Clinics across the region. These clinics helped 7,730 low income people in Elgin Middlesex file an income tax return, ensuring access to government income benefits and support programs.

• United Way staff are involved in many activities even though direct funding is not provided. Local initiatives invite United Way to the table because they know the expertise provided will benefit the work of the collaboration. These activities are often coordinating bodies, problem solving groups, information sharing or mobilizing efforts. Usually, these efforts are focused on looking for solutions, increasing the capacity of the non-profit sector or increasing awareness of issues.
United Way Invests in Proven Results

These aggregated indicators show United Way’s impact at a systems level

Poverty

• Your donation provides basic needs like emergency food, hygiene supplies, diapers and baby formula close to home. With your support, 33,443 people in our community accessed United Way funded basic needs programs last year and 4,250 children and youth from low-income families increased their access to healthy food.

• Your donation helps vulnerable people find shelter and stay housed. Over 600 individuals and families obtained or maintained their current housing last year through United Way funded programs that help people find a safe place to live and avoid homelessness.

• Your donation helps fund high-quality learning programs, mentoring and supports for children of all ages. Last year, 783 children and youth in Elgin Middlesex increased their literacy skills, 721 increased their numeracy skills and 481 were matched with a mentor at a United Way funded program. An additional 186 children and youth were able to graduate with their cohort.

• Your donation provides meal and snack programs. Last year, 6,083 children and youth from low-income families participated in United Way funded activities that promote healthy eating.

• Your donation provides basic needs like community meals, emergency food, hygiene supplies, diapers and baby formula close to home. United Way funded basic needs programs distributed 844,090 meals and 1,633,780 emergency food items to members of our community last year.

• Your donation provides opportunities for recreation and connection. Last year, 3,074 children and youth from low-income families increased their physical activity and belonging at United Way funded programs.

Mental health

• Your donation helps residents maintain mental wellbeing, social connection and safety. Last year, 39,381 people were able to access services close to home because of information and connections they received at a United Way funded program.
• Your donation helps residents maintain mental wellbeing, social connection and safety. With your support, 10,313 people increased their ability to cope and improve their situation after receiving support from a United Way funded program. 2,632 more said they were able to increase their sense of wellbeing.

• Your donation helps residents maintain mental wellbeing, social connection and safety. Last year, 25,790 residents said they felt less lonely and more connected to their community after participating in a United Way funded program.

Intimate partner violence

• Your donation ensures individuals and families who have experienced or been affected by intimate partner violence get help in our community. Last year, 541 people accessed support for intimate partner violence at a United Way funded program and an additional 179 parents increased their coping skills.

• Your donation helps women and children access a range of supports so they can leave an abusive situation and rebuild their lives. Last year, United Way partner agencies supported 337 children and youth who experienced violence in the home and helped them feel safer.
$52 provides 33 individuals experiencing mental health distress with inclusive and welcoming phone support from a trained volunteer at the CMHA-Elgin Middlesex Support Line

$52 provides a fun and exciting virtual movie night including treats and snacks for 10 matches (10 Bigs and 10 Littles) through Big Brothers Big Sisters of London & Area

$52 provides an entire family with an Emergency Food Hamper from Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre that includes fresh fruits, vegetables and enough non-perishable food items so they can make a healthy and culturally appropriate meals

$52 supplies an individual struggling to meet their urgent basic needs with bus tickets so they can attend important community appointments/supports like job training, interviews, medical appointments and legal counselling

$52 provides two weeks of nutritious, subsidized meals for a senior on a low income, delivered by Meals on Wheels

$52 pays the mileage for a trained volunteer from Mennonite Community Services of Southern Ontario to take a person from their home in East Elgin to a medical specialist appointment at a London hospital

$52 provides 10 youth struggling with mental health with all the art supplies and support they need to participate in art classes for a month at South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre

$52 provides a street-involved youth with a survival kit from Crouch Neighbourhood Resource Centre that includes a fresh change of clothing, dry shoes, nutritious snacks and hygiene supplies
$365 Proof Points

$365 provides 40 volunteers from CMHA-Middlesex’s Support Line with the mental health education and training they require to support individuals experiencing distress within our community.

$365 ensures that a professional youth worker at Ignite Youth Centre in St. Thomas is available for one week of evening programming to support and guide young people in our community.

$365 provides a person, couple or family struggling with depression, anxiety, trauma or other mental health challenges with three sessions of professional counselling at Daya Counselling Centre.

$365 subsidizes 52 round trips to wellness related appointments provided by a volunteer driver from Meals on Wheels’ Transportation Program.

$365 provides 10 new mothers with a baby care package from N’Amerind Friendship Centre which includes diapers, formula, wipes, cream, a receiving blanket, clothing and a baby toy to help families welcome their new child into our community.

$365 provides 251 children with a healthy and nutritious breakfast at South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre.

$365 helps Women’s Rural Resource Centre put together care packages including crayons, paper, colouring pages, a journal, playdough and a toy for children whose family has been impacted by family violence in our community.

$365 provides a woman at risk of experiencing homelessness with a month of safe housing at YWCA of St. Thomas-Elgin Woman’s Residence.
$1,200 connects a woman who has experienced sexual violence to a supportive counsellor for four months of specialized, one-to-one counselling through Anova’s Counselling Services

$1,200 provides six children with a one-year membership at the Boys & Girls Club, a safe and welcoming environment that promotes physical health and helps them develop strong emotional well-being

$1,200 provides a father who has abused his children and/or the children’s mother with group counselling and individual supports to create healthy interactions and when possible, rebuild trust and healing within the family

$1,200 matches a youth with a mentor for 10 months, including guidance and training for the mentor, oversight of the program and ongoing support to families of the youth through Big Brothers Big Sisters of London & Area

$1,200 ensures that a professional youth worker at Ignite Youth Centre in St. Thomas is available for three weeks of evening programming to support and guide young people in our community

$1,200 provides translation services for individuals facing language barriers while attempting to access support. Translators are made available so individuals can access the appropriate services they need at shelters, crisis centers, and social service agencies in our community. Important literature materials are provided in their first language, so they can make the most informed decision possible

$1,200 covers the full cost for two families to receive a comprehensive assessment for their child experiencing mental health distress and 14 weeks of supportive family counselling in Vanier Children’s Services Focused Family Therapy program
The Issues: Poverty

Hunger, basic needs, equity, access

Statistics

London has the 3rd highest child poverty rate in Canada

1 in 5 kids in our community live in a household that struggles to pay rent and 1 in 7 households don’t have enough income to maintain a diet that is nutritious, adequate and deemed culturally acceptable.

78% of workers aged 18-29 in our community are employed in precarious jobs

55% of newcomers in our community live at or below the poverty line

36% of Indigenous people in our community live at or below the poverty line

Last year, over 4,000 people in Elgin and St Thomas used a United Way funded program or service—that’s 8% or one in twelve people getting the support they needed, where they needed it

A vacancy rate of 3.2% across the London and Middlesex region drives rent costs higher and makes it even harder to find decent, affordable housing if you’re a family living in poverty.

The current availability rate for housing in our region is 1.8% and there are currently over 5,300 households on the wait list for affordable housing. This means affordable housing is very difficult to find.

The number of youth experiencing homelessness in our community is growing and these youth are younger than ever. Across Canada, 20% of people experiencing homelessness are between the ages of 13-25.

$10 spent on housing supports for chronically homeless individuals equals $21.72 in savings related to health care, social supports, housing and involvement with the justice system.

Young people who participate in a mentoring program are 17% more likely to be employed as adults
Poverty is a daily struggle for too many people in our community. It forces families to make impossible choices like whether to pay the rent or put food on the table. It leaves kids, seniors and vulnerable populations feeling excluded and robs them of future opportunities.

Poverty and other social challenges impact everyone, but some groups and communities are disproportionately impacted because of deeply embedded social and structural inequities. The ongoing legacy of systemic discrimination and racism continue to influence our current system of laws, our institutions, and our culture. As a result, many people in the community are denied opportunities to reach their full potential.

Poverty touches almost every aspect of life, from food, shelter and employment to mental and physical well-being. It is a social and economic issue that impacts entire communities, including all of us who live here.

Depending on where they live, many people can’t access vital services and supports, particularly those who are racialized, newcomers, indigenous, LGBTQ+ or from low-income families.

United Way invests millions of dollars every year in a broad range of programs and services close to home. This includes almost half a million dollars in Neighbourhood Resource Centres, community hubs located in priority neighbourhoods that provide a safety net of basic needs for families and a springboard to community services. When kids and families succeed, our whole community prospers.

United Way takes on local poverty by helping people and families in four important ways:

- Ensuring access to a broad range of programs and services close to home
- Bridging the opportunity gap to improve social and economic futures
- Empowering people to join us in tackling local poverty and powering positive change
- Connecting organizations to work together on solutions to local issues
United Way helps meet urgent basic needs and works to ensure that fewer individuals, families and neighbourhoods are vulnerable in the first place. This includes making sure that essential building blocks such as food, transportation, housing and recreation are there when people need them.

United Way invests in programs that target at-risk youth in our community, so that every young person gets the opportunity to succeed. This includes vital supports for kids and their families and youth engagement programs that set young people up for lifelong success and economic security.

County issues are everyone’s issues. Poverty may look a little different in the county than it does in a big city, but that doesn’t mean it isn’t here.

Children living in poverty have lower literacy scores and less access to after-school programs.
The Issues: Mental Health
Well-being, social isolation, safety, connection

Statistics

1 in 5 Canadians live with a mental illness and only 1 in 5 children and youth in need of mental health support actually receive it

More than 28% of people aged 20-29 experience a mental illness in a given year

Suicide accounts for 24% of all deaths among 15-24 year olds and 16% among 25-44 year olds

4,000 Canadians die prematurely each year by suicide

Almost one half (49%) of those who feel they have suffered from depression or anxiety have never gone to see a doctor about this problem

Once depression is recognized, help can make a difference for 80% of people who are affected

CMHA saw a 43% increase in calls to The Support Line at the beginning of the pandemic, many from seniors who don’t have supports in the community and called every day just to talk to someone.

$1 invested in mentoring programs returns $18 to society. Kids matched with an adult mentor build self-esteem, confidence and social skills.

Research indicates that only 10-20% of persons with the most serious mental illnesses are currently employed in a workplace

Nearly 7,000 Middlesex County residents benefited from a United Way supported program or service last year. That’s 10% or 1 in 10 county residents getting the help they needed, where and when they needed it.
Vacancy rates are at an all-time low across our region and thousands of families are on the wait list for social housing. If you’re living in poverty, affordable housing is near impossible to find. If you’re dealing with mental health issues or addictions too, it can be equally hard to keep.

Community disasters and pandemics aggravate stressors and vulnerabilities, including intimate partner violence, social isolation, job loss, and related housing insecurity, poverty and food insecurity—most of which have robust links to increased mental illness.

Community disasters and pandemics can trigger mental distress, suicide, and drug use and compound pre-existing mental illnesses. The impacts on mental health may only show up months after a disaster has passed.

People with serious mental health conditions are disproportionately affected by homelessness.

Without a stable home, it’s difficult to deal with mental health issues and addictions, keep a job or go to school, raise a family or feel like you belong in your community.

We invest in drop-in centres that provide free, safe, and inclusive spaces for youth to receive life and career counselling, make social connections and learn alternatives to high-risk behaviours and activities. Youth develop a sense of purpose, learn new skills and set academic and employment goals.

We invest in outreach, intervention and counselling to rural youth facing challenges with substance abuse, school, anger management, employment and housing. Direct support decreases the likelihood that youth will get involved with the criminal justice system and increases their capacity to be contributing members in school, home and community.

County issues are everyone’s issues. Mental Health may look a little different in the county than it does in a big city, but that doesn’t mean it isn’t impacting people, here.
The Issues: Intimate Partner Violence

Safety, connection, ending the cycle of violence

Statistics

1 in 4 women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime

Approximately every six days, a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner

Reported cases of sexual assault against Indigenous women are three times more common than non-Indigenous women

79% of domestic violence victims reporting to police were women and girls

Over 6,000 women and children in Canada sleep in shelters on any given night because it isn’t safe at home

Canadians collectively spend $7.4 billion to deal with the aftermath of spousal violence every year

Children who witness violence in the home have twice the rate of psychiatric disorders as children from non-violent homes. During the pandemic, 82% of social services staff and volunteers surveyed said that violence in the home had increased and become more frequent throughout the pandemic.

Women are four times more likely to be victims of domestic homicide than men.
United Way’s New Beginnings Loan Fund gives small loans to support women with basic needs so that they can safely leave violence in the home. Approximately $25,000 is available annually for women looking to start a new life free, and safe from violence.

The New Beginnings Loan Fund provides women with interest-free loans of up to $500 per household to meet emergency or rebuilding needs. Loans cover costs for such things as moving or storage, home repairs, rent or utility costs, home security, transportation, legal costs, and providing basic needs for children. Loan repayments are returned to the Fund for the benefit of other women who need the help in the future.

United Way invests in counselling and support services for sexual assault survivors and victims of intimate partner abuse. Women are connected with counsellors in a timely manner and in a safe and welcoming space. Through ongoing support sessions victims of sexual assault are given tools and resources to help them overcome their trauma.

We invest in programs that support children who have experienced violence in the home. Children that experience family violence face an increased risk of mental health and social struggles. Children and youth are given tools and education to help them overcome their experiences.

United Way invests in proven solutions that help end generational cycles of abuse in a family. Fathers who are at risk of abusing, or have abused their children, or who have physically or emotionally abused their children’s mother are given counselling and resources to end their violence. Men learn to create healthy strategies and ways to manage their emotions and how to appropriately interact with their children and the mother of their children.

County issues are everyone’s issues. Intimate partner violence may look a little different in the county than it does in a big city, but that doesn’t mean it’s not happening, here.

Sources available on request.