



United Way
Elgin Middlesex

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POSSIBLE

United Way 2026 Community Campaign
Key Messages & Playbook

2026 Campaign Summary

United Way tackles poverty to give everyone a fair shot at a good life.

We prioritize housing stability, essential needs, and mental health supports.

The best way to address these interconnected challenges is by supporting local programs and public policies that focus on the individuals and communities who are most impacted.

Every donation matters, no matter the size. Thanks to thousands of donors, including many who gave just \$10 or \$20, we invested over \$4 Million back into our community last year.

When we are united, better is possible. Even small gifts can add up to transformational change.

Key Facts

- **1 in 4 children** in London-Middlesex are living in poverty, and **1 in 5 children** in St. Thomas and Elgin County
- As of July 2026, there are at least **1,621 individuals experiencing homelessness** in London alone
- There are **7,628 households** on the waitlist for affordable housing
- This year, over **158,000 people found help** here in our community through a United Way-funded program.
- Through our Community Fund, United Way supports **35 programs at 33 agencies** across London, Elgin County and Middlesex County

Uncertainty, Rising Costs, and Growing Needs

The rising cost of living is putting increasing pressure on families and individuals in our community. Across Canada, inflation and higher living costs have reduced people's purchasing power, with food prices rising faster than overall inflation. Inflation has increased by 18%, while food prices rise by 24%.

For many, the pressure extends beyond the grocery store. Housing costs continue to make it harder for people to remain securely housed. One in five renter households in Canada spends more than half of their income on rent, putting them at greater risk of homelessness.

Food insecurity is also growing. Nearly 9 million people in Canada live in food-insecure households, and almost one in four people report eating less than they should because they cannot afford enough food.

These pressures are deeply connected to mental health. Finance and housing challenges and difficulty meeting basic needs can make it harder for people to feel safe, secure and hopeful. One in five Canadians experiences mental illness in any given year, highlighting the importance of accessible mental health supports.

These challenges are all connected to each other - and to poverty. That's why United Way Elgin Middlesex invests in programs that tackle these issues from every angle: housing stability, essential needs, mental health support, inclusion and belonging, and gender-based violence.

We helped over 158,000 people this year

United Way is a unifying force. We bring people together to build a community where everyone matters. We mobilize the community to do good, and to get results because we believe better is possible.

148,129 Clients received essential needs like food, transportation, or clothing

2,199 Clients received mental health supports through subsidized counselling

807 Clients received help through housing stability programs

505 Clients received help to prevent or escape from gender-based violence

3097 Children and youth took part in healthy living & physical activity programs

United Way Elgin Middlesex prioritizes services that help reduce poverty and serve the populations most affected by social challenges in our region. Using a Housing First approach, United Way funds programs that provide one-to-one support to help people experiencing complex challenges get housed and stay housed.

Last year, thanks to everyone who supported our campaign we were able to address immediate needs and long-term solutions to homelessness in Elgin Middlesex:

- **344** clients were able to maintain their housing with support through housing stability programs
- **210** Individuals obtained suitable housing
- **17,016** shelter nights were provided

Together, we're helping make better possible for people across Elgin Middlesex.

Better is Possible

United Way Elgin Middlesex believes everyone deserves a safe and stable place to call home. That's why we prioritize programs that help people experiencing homelessness or housing instability find housing and build the stability they need to move forward.

Because better is possible when people have the support they need to build a stronger foundation.

Housing instability rarely happens on its own. A lost job, a mental health crisis, family violence, or rising costs can quickly make it harder to keep a roof overhead. When challenges overlap, people can find themselves facing barriers that are difficult to overcome alone.

Through a Housing First approach, United Way Elgin Middlesex supports local programs that provide one-to-one assistance to people facing complex challenges. For Alyssa, a young mother who found housing through Street Level Women at Risk, having a stable home meant being able to keep her son. "Without having this place, I would not have been able to keep my son," she says. "You need something stable in order to grow, to blossom."

Investing in housing stability can also reduce pressure on public systems. Recent CMHA Ontario research estimates that every dollar invested in supportive housing returns between \$1.60 and \$3.00 by reducing the need for hospitals, shelters and correctional services.

Prevention is another important part of creating lasting change. Changing Ways' Being the Change program helps men examine their attitudes toward domestic abuse and

learn non-abusive ways to resolve conflict. Sponsoring one participant costs approximately \$600, compared with an average cost of approximately \$2,552 to serve the same client in Ontario's adult correctional system.

But the impact goes beyond the dollars. It means helping people feel safe, regain independence, and build a future. As Amiel Ostrander, Executive Director of Changing Ways, says, "A better community looks like a safe place for people who need help, to get help, where every door is the right door."

Together, we can make better possible.

How you can help

Thanks to you, Better is Possible!

We stand with tens of thousands of United Way supporters, who believe that everyone needs help sometimes, and everyone has the capacity to give help sometimes.

- Learn about how United Way is making a difference through our [Community Investments](#)
- Learn about the [Financial Anxiety Index](#)
- Request to have a United Way speaker visit your workplace
- Participate in our [special events](#), including:
 - Day of Caring (June 18, August 20, and December 10)
 - United Way Plane Pull (September 29 -London International Airport, and October 2, St. Thomas Municipal airport)
 - Ultimate Burger Battle (November 1 – November 30)
- Support your workplace campaign and give through payroll donations or individually
- [Organize a fundraising event](#) in your workplace
- Leave a legacy through a gift of securities or a bequest

The Impact of your Gift

You can help people access the essentials they need to get through difficult times and move toward stability.

- \$50 provides an individual with food support, including fresh produce, protein, and pantry staples to help stabilize household food insecurity.
- \$208 provides one month of frozen meals for someone in crisis.
- \$1,223 provides a year of breakfast bags for seniors.

You can support people experiencing gender-based violence by investing in safety, prevention, crisis support, and pathways toward healing and independence.

- \$52 allows a mother to “top up” non-perishables from the food bank and allow her family to eat more healthily for 4 days.
- \$150 gives a family in transitional housing groceries for one week.
- \$300 provides a child and their caregiver access to therapeutic activities and group sessions.

You can help ensure people have access to safe, stable housing and the supports they need to prevent homelessness and build a more secure future.

- \$89 provides 1 individual with a safe shelter bed, including basic needs and meals.
- \$390 provides a month of supportive housing to an individual at risk of homelessness.
- \$1,200 provides 46 individuals with wraparound support to help them find safe housing.

You can help create communities where everyone feels included and valued by addressing barriers that prevent people from participating in and accessing services.

- \$130 trains a community interpreter to help newcomers navigate important appointments and services.
- \$177 provides 7 hours of mentorship and support at a local youth centre.
- \$585 provides access to mentoring and group programming for a child with learning disabilities for a full school year.

You can help connect people with mental health services and supports that help them navigate challenges, build resilience, and feel a stronger sense of belonging.

- \$130 provides a counselling session to someone in crisis.
- \$365 provides 1 individual with 12 counselling sessions.
- \$1,200 provides 5 individuals with counselling support.

About United Way

United Way works so that every person in every community across our region has a fair shot at a good life.

As one of the region's largest non-government funders of social services, we tackle issues linked to poverty and social exclusion through strategic collaboration, advocacy and by investing in programs proven to get results.

In addition to our **Community Fund** that supports a network of 35 essential programs, we also fund the **211 Helpline** and the **New Beginnings Loan Fund** for women leaving dangerous or abusive situations. Last year, over 158,000 people in our community used a United Way program or service.

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 acts as **a unifying force** to help mobilize community partners to do the most good for the most people. We use our voice as **a non-partisan advocate** with all levels of government.

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, Strathroy and other communities across Elgin County and Middlesex County. Almost 70% of the money we raise comes from individuals in our community, just like you.

We work to advance equity because the challenges connected to poverty affect some groups more than others. We view reconciliation as an opportunity to honour and elevate our commitment to Indigenous Peoples living in our region. We work to reduce barriers to services and ensure that Elgin Middlesex becomes a truly equitable, safe and inclusive place, particularly for newcomers, Indigenous and racialized people.

With the support of **Labour partners and partnerships**, United Way works to bring grassroots issues like paid sick days, living wage, safe working conditions and affordable housing to the forefront.

Resource links

These resources will help you with your United Way Campaign. Each tool is designed to elevate and support your internal Campaign.

- [Campaign PPT \(Microsoft PPT file\)](#)
- Campaign Posters
 - [Essential Needs](#), [Gender-Based Violence](#), [Housing Stability](#), [Inclusion & Belonging](#) and [Mental Health](#)
- Campaign Postcards
 - [Essential Needs](#), [Gender-Based Violence](#), [Housing Stability](#), [Inclusion & Belonging](#) and [Mental Health](#)
- Campaign video – [Better is Possible](#)
- [Better is Possible Campaign page](#)
- [Paper pledge form](#)

Our brand

Vertical



Horizontal



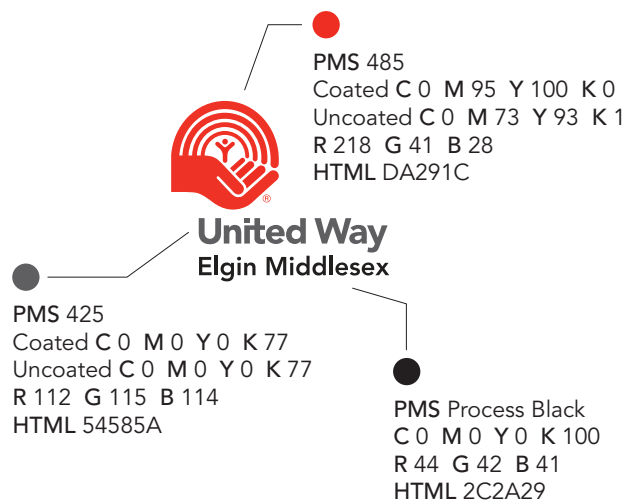
Full black and all white versions of both logos are available.

Our brandmark

United Way's name and logo have been ingrained in North American society since the 1970s and are universally associated with improved lives and stronger communities. United Way's logo is referred to as the 'helping hand' symbol. It's three simple icons tell our story of hope (rainbow), of service (the hand) and of help to all people (human figure).

Our legal name is United Way Elgin Middlesex. "The" is not part of our name. Using both 'United Way Elgin Middlesex' or 'United Way' is acceptable.

English Brandmark



Misuse of brandmark



Do not move any elements in the logo in any way.



Do not use any other colour in the brandmark than permitted.



Do not place brandmark on a busy background.