



**DALE  
BIDDELL**  
UWGSC  
INTERIM  
CEO

## UNITED WAY FOCUSES ON CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Most charities encourage giving at this time of year, and we are no exception. However, I just returned from a conference with my United Way counterparts across the country and instead of focusing our attention on fundraising, we spoke primarily of our efforts in meeting our communities' needs. That's a much tougher conversation.

We all face greater requests for funding than we are able to consider; and the needs of all Canadian communities show striking similarities. While we currently group social issues by common priority areas (poverty reduction,

children and youth, and strong communities), they are reflected most often in terms of income, education and wellness.

How much is enough? It varies, but a living wage, access to education and training, and the availability of programs addressing affordable housing, mental health, life skills, and other urgent social issues is a standard we agree is worth achieving.

We are equally concerned about healthcare, job security, safe communities, economic development and public policy, and are in conversation and partnership with the organizations focused on these matters. Our voices and actions are working together instead of independently. We are reducing duplication, improving understanding and streamlining processes. In collaboration, we are developing sustainable strategies for creating better lives for all Canadians.

Within the network of 100+ Canadian United Ways, what we know best is how complex social challenges impact the quality of life for an increasing number of our citizens. While collectively Canadian United Way leaders share ideas, best practices and expertise to address complex social challenges – our reach at UWGSC is local. Funds raised here are re-invested into vital community-based programs and services across Simcoe Muskoka.

While I hope you consider donating to UWGSC if making a charitable gift this season, what really matters is your contribution to a better future. Together, we are possibility.



## PUTTING THE FUN IN FUNDRAISING

More than 200 Simcoe-Muskoka workplaces give their employees the chance to support their community through payroll deduction, special events and corporate gifts. Seen here at a recent Halloween pie-throwing auction (which raised nearly \$15,000 in 2.5 hours), are Innovative Automation co-owners Mike Lalonde (left, as Marty McFly) and Steve (Waldo) Loftus flanking UWGSC Interim CEO Dale Biddell, who channelled Betty Crocker for the day. To see how your team can get involved, please visit us at [www.UnitedWayGSC.ca](http://www.UnitedWayGSC.ca)

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

### SOCIAL ENTERPRISES PROVIDE CHARITIES WITH SUSTAINABLE REVENUE SOURCES

**F**orward-thinking registered charities maximize the community impact of their valuable donor dollars.

The challenge in re-investing 100% of these funds is the very real cost of doing business. Canadian charities aren't required to incorporate, but most do to increase credibility and accountability, and to facilitate ongoing operations.

Like any healthy business, well-established charities have rent, utilities, staff and other expenses that can't be avoided when delivering a quality product (i.e., measurable, positive social change).

#### Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS):

Since 1998, UWGSC has partnered with Service Canada to manage a federal initiative to fund homelessness-reduction programs – first within Simcoe County as part of the HPS Designated Communities fund; and then, in 2009, as the community entity for all of Ontario for HPS's Rural & Remote fund as well.

HPS implements a Housing First approach, which provides quality housing and associated supports for vulnerable individuals. UWGSC's Programs Associate manages the distribution of the funds and reports on the ongoing impact of approved programs.

#### Low-income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP):

In partnership with HydroOne, PowerStream, Enbridge Gas, Union Gas, Innisfil Hydro and Veridian Connections, UWGSC runs an in-bound call centre to help those struggling with utility account arrears.

Our Customer Advocates speak directly to people seeking this support, assess eligibility, assist with the application process and liaise with the utility companies to ensure payment is made. They also provide referrals to complementary programs located in an individual's home community that can assist in meeting other needs related to low income and other social issues.

"United is strength...when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved."

— Mattie J.T. Stepanek (A best-selling poet and peace activist, who died on June 22, 2014, at the age of 13.)



**JEFF LEHMAN,**  
MAYOR  
City of Barrie

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING:  
A COMMUNITY CRISIS**

Housing is one of the most fundamental of human needs and access to safe, affordable and adequate housing affects almost every aspect of a community and its residents.

With the county's waitlist at 2,725 households in 2012, and 1,501 (roughly one-third) of those households attributed to the City of Barrie, it is not an overstatement to say that we have an affordable housing crisis in our community.

In 2012, the rental vacancy rate in Barrie was 2.7%. It was 0% for three bedroom units, which are important for families. This stat is especially problematic when you consider that 40% of Barrie's residents are between the ages of 20-44, the years many people are raising families. Average rents in Barrie are just over \$1,000, the 7th highest in Canada, and the average wait for rent-geared-to-income housing ranged from 2.3 to 4.2 years.

A pretty scary picture—so what is the community doing about it? The good news is that both Simcoe County and the City of Barrie are taking steps to start to address the housing crisis.

Simcoe County has a 10-year Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy. It's a plan to build 2,600 more units over the next ten years around the county, about three times the number of units built in the last ten years.

The City of Barrie has identified affordable housing as a key priority, and in 2014 we developed an Affordable Housing Strategy that recommends a variety of actions to

increase the supply of affordable housing, including planning changes to make it easier to build more rental housing, using city lands for affordable housing, and policies to expand affordable-housing construction as part of the development of new neighbourhoods. It's a start, but much more needs to be done and we can't do it alone.

All levels of government will need to commit to this issue if homelessness and affordable housing are to be meaningfully addressed, and in the past both the federal government (through CMHC) and the provincial government (through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing) have played a much larger role in ensuring a reasonable supply of affordable housing than they do today. Barrie, Simcoe County, and indeed cities across Canada need them to commit to a shared effort to address our housing problem.

Visit [www.UnitedWayGSC.ca](http://www.UnitedWayGSC.ca) to see how UWGSC supports regional residents needing affordable housing.

**MUST-READ REPORTS**

Read full reports on news page at [www.UnitedWayGSC.ca](http://www.UnitedWayGSC.ca)

- 13.8% of Simcoe County children live in poverty. We're not alone. A recently released **Poverty Fact Sheet** reports epidemic child poverty in Toronto.
- Homelessness emerged as a national crisis in the 1990s. Check out The Homeless Hub's report **The State of Homelessness in Canada 2014**.
- The 24/7 telephone hotline 211 (or online at [www.211Ontario.ca](http://www.211Ontario.ca)) has connected hundreds of thousands Ontarians to community-based programs and services at no cost to the caller. The service has now released its **2013/2014 Annual Report**.

Please visit [UnitedWayGSC.ca](http://www.UnitedWayGSC.ca) to access links to recent reports and relevant articles on our **News** page. You can also visit our homepage to subscribe to the electronic version of this newsletter with the links built in!



SIMCOE COUNTY'S  
**VitalSigns®**  
TAKING THE PULSE OF OUR REGION

**DID YOU KNOW?**

United Way Greater Simcoe County, in partnership with Huronia Community Foundation, launched the first-ever Simcoe County's VitalSigns® report at a well-attended community round table in Midland on October 9, 2014.

- Simcoe County's high-school graduation rate is rising (to 79% in 2011 from 71% in 2005), but not yet at Ontario goal rate of 85%.

- Orillia, Midland and Collingwood all rank higher than the provincial and national child poverty rates. Simcoe County's highest single-parent poverty rates are in Midland and Collingwood, and also exceed the provincial and national rates.

Please visit our website [www.UnitedWayGSC.ca](http://www.UnitedWayGSC.ca) to view the full report.

**UnitedWayGSC.ca**

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**Deadline: Dec. 31, 2014**

To be eligible for a 2014 charitable tax receipt, please submit your donation by the deadline. Thanks!

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