

# community matters

FALL 2016



**DALE  
BIDDELL**  
UWSM  
CEO

*The thing that lies at the foundation of positive change, the way I see it, is service to a fellow human being.*

~Lech Walesa

Here at United Way, we are partway through some major changes, some of which are daunting. But, as I reflect on the quote above, I am reminded we are making these changes in order to be of service to others – United Way is first and foremost a human-services organization. The audience we serve is broad and includes our donors, our communities, our sector collaborators and partners, and the agencies and projects we support.

The changes that reflect positively on our efforts include the recent addition of District of Muskoka to

## POSITIVE SOCIAL CHANGE IS CHANGE WORTH MAKING

our geography and the introduction of our new name. We also celebrate the approval of our first collaborative initiative with Independent Living Services. Additionally, two programs funded for the first time through our Women's Leadership Council are focusing on youth mental health; and we have increased the number of households we serve that are experiencing unmanageable utility costs: more than 13,000 since January.

**We are making these changes in order to be of service to others – United Way is first and foremost a human-services organization.**

October's release of our second VitalSigns report, co-published with Huronia Community Foundation, offers a look at a number of social conditions that impact our communities. More than 30 community partners weighed in with data and commentary to create a valuable tool to guide partnerships

and decision-making across the region. We learned that affordable housing continues to be a challenge, although recent measures have provided new inventories and supplements since our first report in 2014. Accessible transportation has received a boost across the region as new systems roll out within and across municipal borders. And mental health services – there are still not enough, but new initiatives are on the horizon. The full report is available on our website.

Our donors tell us they want to understand the changes their gifts are making, so we are striving to improve the way we communicate with them. Look for our #UWSmileStory profiles coming out this fall across multiple platforms. There are also more opportunities for donors to talk to us through public forums: our Muskoka and VitalSigns launches, and upcoming breakfasts with workplace partners and the labour community.

These changes position our organization to deepen its commitment and investment to improve human services. That's change worth making.



## NOW AVAILABLE: SIMCOE MUSKOCA'S VITALSIGNS 2016



United Way Simcoe Muskoka partnered once again with Huronia Community Foundation to co-produce Simcoe Muskoka's VitalSigns 2016, with the help of 33 local organizations that contributed governance, expertise and data. Intended as a snapshot of community vitality across six key areas critical to quality of life, the report launched Oct. 6 at Midland's Brooklea Golf & Country Club. More than 70 individuals and organizational representatives participated in discussion groups to facilitate further cross-sector engagement.

The full report is now available for viewing and download at [www.SimcoeMuskokaVitalSigns.ca](http://www.SimcoeMuskokaVitalSigns.ca).

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

### UWSM awards its first Collaboration Fund grant to Independent Living Services

UWSM's collaboration funding, supported by revenue from our social enterprise, is a new type of community investment for us, and one that unites the public, private and non-profit sectors together – leveraging collective resources and expertise.

Independent Living Services of Simcoe County & Area (ILS) became the first Collaboration Fund grant recipient this fall with a \$40,000 UWSM investment (split over two years) to establish a new funding pool component to its Accessibility Resource Centre (ARC), which supports those in need of assistive devices or accessibility improvements to remain active and

independent. The UWSM grant joins funds from local service clubs and government-sponsored grants (e.g., March of Dimes) to ensure all Simcoe Muskoka residents who need such supports will be able to afford them.

"Through our operation of the Accessibility Resource Centre over the past seven years, we are aware that over 50 per cent of those individuals seeking assistance in accessing assistive devices or accessibility improvements in their homes, also required financial assistance to acquire these," according to ILS Executive Director Dan McGale.



For more information about UWSM's new Collaboration Fund, visit [UWSimcoeMuskoka.ca](http://UWSimcoeMuskoka.ca) or contact UWSM CEO Dale Biddell at 705-726-2301, x2033; [DBiddell@UWSimcoeMuskoka.ca](mailto:DBiddell@UWSimcoeMuskoka.ca).



**JOHN KLINCK**  
DISTRICT CHAIR  
District of Muskoka

It was a pleasure to host an event welcoming United Way Simcoe Muskoka (UWSM) to the District of Muskoka on Oct. 17. UWSM has unofficially supported Muskoka residents for more than five years, and the reception celebrated its formal entrance into Muskoka. UWSM was established nearly 60 years ago and currently invests more than \$1 million each year into social initiatives. Its formal expansion into Muskoka

## THE DISTRICT OF MUSKOCA WELCOMES UNITED WAY

(with a new name to match) will help us to partner together to better support communities across Muskoka. Five years ago, United Way funded one program benefitting Muskoka residents. Today, it funds 14 – and it's just getting started.

Like the District, United Way helps to build support systems through community-based programs and services that improve the lives of Muskoka residents. Working with the District and other community partners, UWSM will invest in programs and development opportunities that will help vulnerable residents move out of poverty, build more accessible and inclusive communities, and support children and youth. United Way's resources and expertise will increase the capacity of all local social service organizations to better fulfil their missions and mandates.

October also marked the District's first joint project with UWSM – the launch of Simcoe Muskoka's VitalSigns. This

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valuable research report provides a snapshot of the priority issues influencing quality of life for Muskokans and explores the status, trends and resources influencing our communities. This data-rich tool provides UWSM, the District and all local organizations with a common foundation of knowledge upon which to act.

I encourage all Muskokans to get involved with UWSM. United Way is currently engaged in conversations with stakeholders and agencies across Muskoka to build new relationships with volunteers and donors who share their vision for stronger communities.



## "When I felt lost...United Way had my back."

In July 2014, Fatu arrived in Simcoe Muskoka as a refugee from war-torn Ivory Coast with her six-year-old daughter, who has special needs, and 14-year-old niece. Thanks to community supports, she has a safe, new home.

**Find Fatu's smile story and others at [UWSimcoeMuskoka.ca](#).**  
**Local giving. Local results.**  
**#UWSmileStory #ReasonToGive**

## → Women's Leadership Council-funded programs get underway this fall

According to our new VitalSigns report, essential mental health supports for young people are ramping up across our region. UWSM Women's Leadership Council (WLC) members are among those leading that progression.

Two new programs are being delivered this fall and winter within Simcoe Muskoka as a result of WLC's inaugural grants (totaling \$18,000) allocated to CMHA York and South Simcoe and YWCA Muskoka earlier this year.

With its grant, CMHA is delivering its Living Life to the Full program to high school students across South Simcoe to teach "new ways of dealing with what life throws at you." Georgian College Social Service Worker

students are supporting the interactive, eight-session program in Alliston, Bradford, Innisfil and Tottenham.

Meanwhile, grade 9/10 boys at Gravenhurst High School are participating in a 10-week QUEST to explore individual strengths and uniqueness, learn about character, build life skills, develop positive peer relations, and learn how to navigate challenges.

UWSM Women's Leadership Council is a group of like-minded women investing in projects positively affecting regional youth. With annual contributions of \$2,000 or more, members act as both donors and key decision-makers through an annual grant-selection process.

For more information about WLC, visit [UWSimcoeMuskoka.ca](#) or contact UWSM CEO Dale Biddell at 705-726-2301, x2033; [DBiddell@UWSimcoeMuskoka.ca](mailto:DBiddell@UWSimcoeMuskoka.ca).

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