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CEO

A CHANGING WORLD REQUIRES A NEW APPROACH TO HELPING YOUTH

There is nothing more exciting to me than watching the next generation of youth come of age.

In this first column of our new year at United Way, I would like to focus on youth – a special population segment that you and I influence, as donors and supporters, through a host of needs via our program funding. Beyond these vital existing services, we need to be concerned about unaddressed service gaps and emerging cracks. Over the next few newsletters, I will bring your attention to those most pressing.

There is nothing more exciting to me than watching the next generation of youth come of age – in the workplace, the community, and in their own lives. Their impact will define social attitudes, evolve our culture and transform the environment. As the mom of two daughters in their mid-20s, I've had the joy of seeing their values and interests and opinions develop, and the chagrin of watching my own challenged by the impunity of their youth. As a baby boomer, I have long been accustomed to my generation defining just about everything, so this is a real break with tradition!

Mine has been a generation wherein opportunity, growth, optimism and ownership prevailed. My daughters' world is smaller, impacted and influenced by a global economy and consciousness. It presents different challenges and opportunities, and encourages broader thinking and doing. To be a fully participating member of their generation as adults, they will need post-secondary education that is more flexible and portable; and the skills to navigate new models of economic development and personal success. Their social, cultural and cross-cultural awareness will develop as a result of their increased exposure to diverse perspectives through multiple platforms across new media.

In preparing for this changed future, our local youth are particularly challenged by income and housing insecurity, by unemployment, and by mental illness. Our 2014 VitalSigns research report allows us – and our community partners – to better understand the complexity of these interrelated issues. As we dig deeper in preparation for an updated VitalSigns, coming this October, we are already acting upon the research. This newsletter showcases the bridges we are beginning to build to span the gaps that threaten the future of our young people.

Most United Way donors are baby boomers or their parents – the so-called silent generation. To what extent do the interests of these donors extend toward helping youth? In the coming years, we will find out.

➔ PRESENTING: THE WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP COUNCIL!



Launched on March 1, 2016, the Women's Leadership Council (WLC) is a group of like-minded women focused on making a meaningful local impact by investing in projects positively impacting the youth of Simcoe Muskoka. Members are empowered to be active philanthropists who influence intentional change in our community.

With a contribution of \$2,000 or more annually, members act as both donors and key decision-makers through a grant-selection process.

To learn more about the WLC and how to connect with interesting, dynamic women who are making a difference, please contact Mary Thomas (MThomas@UnitedWayGSC.ca / 705-726-2301, x2026)

COMMUNITY IMPACT



United Way YouthUnited

YOUTH UNITED INVESTS \$7,500 IN YOUTH-LED PROGRAMS ACROSS SIMCOE MUSKOKA

Young leaders (aged 14-22) are creating the change they want to see in their local communities this year with the help of Youth United grants. This is the second time United Way Greater Simcoe County (UWGSC) has specifically designated funds for programs for youth by youth.

A volunteer youth council assessed applications last fall and made funding recommendations to UWGSC's Board of Directors.

As a result, these six programs received funding in 2016 and are currently underway:

Anxiety-reducing Workshops - with Gravenhurst Alternate Education & Training Centre (Trillium Lakelands District School Board)

Children's Mental Health Day – with Collingwood Collegiate Institute (Simcoe County District School Board)

Home Alone Safety Workshop for Youth with Hearing Loss – with Deaf Access Simcoe Muskoka

Special Olympics Wants YOU! – with Special Olympics, Barrie chapter

Sports Drop-in – with Youth Haven and Mapleview Community Church

Zumba Lunch – with Community Living Huronia

Watch **UnitedWayGSC.ca** and our social media channels for interim updates and photos throughout this spring and summer.



Big Brothers Big Sisters

WE BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF MENTORING!

Big Brothers Big Sisters organizations in Simcoe County and Muskoka formed a collaborative group this past year in order to combine efforts to serve more children and youth. Thanks to United Way Greater Simcoe County, our goal to raise awareness and grow partnerships across each of our respective communities has been realized.

Together, Big Brothers Big Sisters organizations of Barrie & District, Orillia, Muskoka, North Simcoe and The Georgian Triangle received multi-year funding from UWGSC to increase the ability of our organizations to provide caring and carefully screened adult mentors to children through our In-School Mentoring program. This program is offered free of charge in partnering elementary schools.

Big Brothers Big Sisters organizations recruit and match volunteer mentors with children for one hour per week during the school year on school property. Together, they choose the activities they like to do, such as playing board games, doing crafts or sports, or simply talking and getting to know one another. The impact of their time together has a transformative effect. Many participating students, for example, show an increase in school attendance and grades, and are less likely to bully or be bullied. Mentored children also develop higher levels of self-esteem; and feel better about themselves, school and life in general. Helping children reach their full potential

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Our collaborative group continues to measure the benefits to the children matched in the In-School Mentoring program in approximately 70 schools across Simcoe County and Muskoka this year. We are seeing a rise in the number of children served and making a **BIG** difference in our communities.

Marianne Arbour, Executive Director, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Barrie & District

ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL...



Gateway for Learning Executive Director Jennifer Ellis (far right) joined NEBS United Way committee members (from left) Dawn McConnell, Janine Dorion and Christoph Lorenz as the Midland company launched their employee campaign.



Thanks to the staff at Collingwood's Mountain View Elementary School who raised \$1,089 during their United Way employee campaign! Pictured here are Mountain View's Michelle Fabian and UWGSC's Lori-Ann Seward.



Union Gas staffers from Orillia and Bracebridge got together to kick off their annual United Way campaign with a barbeque. Pictured are (from left) Glen Huard, Kevin Thompson, UW's Rosslyn Junke, Anna Lati and Steven Jelich.

#VolunteerWeek / APRIL 10 -16



s VOLUNTEERS!

THANKS to more than 700 United Way volunteers who contributed 10,000+ hours over the last year.

For all you do – this week's for you!



Browse corporate volunteer opportunities at CommunityReach.ca



SIMCOE COUNTY'S CANADA LEARNING BOND INITIATIVE

With our community partners, United Way helped 29 local kids sign up for Canada Learning Bonds at no cost to their families. That has the potential to put \$78,000 into their RESPs. Research shows teens are three times more likely to graduate from high school and four times more likely to graduate from a post-secondary program than kids without any savings. Eligible families can sign up online at www.StartMyRESP.ca/Possibility.

For details, call 2-1-1 toll free.

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