

COMMUNITY MATTERS

United Way Simcoe Muskoka's Newsletter



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MONTH OF HOPE

Double the impact for the Urgent Needs Fund

COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR

An event in support of YouthCALL Service Link

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Making help accessible for those who need it most

Spring brings with it a sense of renewal and possibility. As the days grow longer, we feel more optimistic and hopeful for the future. But that isn't the case for all; the pandemic and uneven economic recovery have put more people at risk, and the needs of our community are greater than ever.

March is the Month of Hope, an opportunity to bring awareness to the needs of the most vulnerable in our region and highlight the impact of the Urgent Needs Fund. After a successful pilot program in 2019, the fund was relaunched in January 2022 to significantly increased demand.

In this issue of Community Matters, you will see how United Way Simcoe Muskoka is working to make help accessible through Urgent Needs Fund and our community collaborative projects, thanks to your support.

March is the Month of Hope.

When you choose to donate to the Urgent Needs Fund during the month of March, your gift will be matched thanks to a generous donation by our Board of Directors. That means **your donation to the Urgent Needs Fund will go further**, enabling us to help more people. When we work together to empower and uplift those around us, we are all better because of it.

About the Urgent Needs Fund



Every day in Simcoe Muskoka, more than 60,000 people are living under the strain of poverty and isolation and sometimes the immediate, most pressing needs go unaddressed.

The Urgent Needs Fund was created to fill a gap in existing services, providing **timely, modest grants to those who cannot find help elsewhere**. Recipients have a variety of unique needs, however the most common requests are for food, medical tests and devices, transportation, clothing, and cell phones.

Even though the average UNF grant is just \$250, the grants go beyond meeting these immediate needs. **The short-term relief overcomes seemingly small but overwhelming barriers**, providing dignity and hope for a brighter future. More than 95% of recipients say they are better prepared to handle the obstacles that life throws at them.

To learn more visit:

www.uwsimcoemuskoka.ca/hope



903
grants

Totaling over
\$221,000

Assisting more than
1,560
individuals

What recipients are saying...

"I am a single mom with two kids. We were desperate for winter clothing for my kids and myself ... The funds came at a perfect time for us. We are now warm for the winter."

"The funds did help me out so much. It relieved my stress so much. You guys have been so welcoming and don't make us feel like we are getting a handout – so we are not embarrassed to ask for help."

"We would not have eaten if we hadn't received these funds."

Coldest Night of the Year

In February United Way Simcoe Muskoka participated in the first ever Coldest Night of the Year Event in Bradford. We want to extend a huge thank-you to everyone who walked, donated and sponsored the event. Because of the incredible support of the Bradford West Gwillimbury community, 29 teams, 199 walkers and 28 volunteers, **over \$45,000 has been raised** in support of the South Simcoe UWSM collaborative project, YouthCALL Service Link.

About YouthCALL Service Link

Transitional-aged youth (TAY) are one of the most under-served but highest-risk populations in our communities. As adolescent youth transition to adulthood, they fall into a gap between youth and adult services. For those in need of help, there are few if any services to turn to. Data shows us, though, that **transitional-aged youth experience higher rates of mental health challenges and addiction, and LGBTQ+ youth are at increased risk of poverty** due to family rejection, social isolation, homelessness, and a lack of education and employment opportunities.

YouthCALL Service Link is a **free live-answer helpline assisting young people in South Simcoe** who need help planning their path forward. Through a Community Service Navigator, YouthCALL offers accessible, TAY-focused services that will strip away many of the barriers faced by this population and help create a seamless transition to adult services. These services will ensure that TAY residents in South Simcoe will be given the help they need to enter adulthood successfully and leave poverty behind.

To learn more visit:

www.uwsimcoemuskoka.ca/youthcall/



YouthCALL Impact (November 2020 – June 2021)



Donor Feature

Enbridge Gas



Luke Skaarup, Regional Director, Enbridge

Every day our local communities are facing complex and evolving challenges. Enbridge Gas recognizes that, which is why they work with charities within their service areas to determine where support is needed most. When Kristen Oliver from Enbridge Gas connected with United Way Simcoe Muskoka, she shared **Enbridge's commitment to fostering safe, vibrant, and sustainable communities, and to supporting the diverse and unique needs of each area.**

This is why the UWSM collaborative community projects were such a great fit; each project is designed to drive long-lasting, systemic change and make a real difference to local residents for years to come.

Circles Muskoka is a community-based initiative in the Muskoka region that creates relationships across economic boundaries to help move people out of poverty and into one of opportunity. The program addresses issues like domestic violence, homelessness, job training, housing, and social isolation.

Working Together – Wijiinokiiwag in Orillia and area is providing training to frontline service and mainstream organizations that offer supports and services to Indigenous Peoples and Communities. The program helps to address issues like racism, access to healthcare, wellness, mental health, and suicide.

Enbridge donated \$15,000 to each of these two projects, which will help to make real change in these communities. This donation is an extension of the longstanding workplace donor relationship, with many generous Enbridge employees contributing to United Way Simcoe Muskoka each year.

Thank you to Enbridge Gas and their employees for continuing to support the most vulnerable residents in the areas we both serve.



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