

# COMMUNITY MATTERS

United Way Simcoe Muskoka's Newsletter



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## Let's make a Simcoe Muskoka for all

As we all start to breathe a collective sigh of relief and begin to put the worst of the coronavirus pandemic behind us, it is important to remember that the needs of the most vulnerable in our community remain.

The effects of the last year and half will linger for much longer than they were around, and the additional hurdles raised by poverty and isolation before COVID-19 continue. There is no vaccine or cure for poverty, and it will take all of us working together to make substantive change in our communities.

In this edition of Community Matters, we're updating you on three of our Community Collaboratives that are driving that change here in Simcoe Muskoka: Furniture Bank RPC, Circles Muskoka and YouthCALL Service Link. You will also read about a great community initiative driven by one of UWSM's partners and our upcoming Day of Caring!

## Furniture Bank RPC

Did you know that the average cost to furnish an apartment with used furniture is upwards of \$3,500?

For a lot of Simcoe Muskoka residents, furniture poverty is invisible. It is a problem that only exists behind closed doors, away from the eyes of the public. Despite this, it is an issue that is all-too real for many people in our communities.

Whether someone is transitioning out of homelessness, finding a first home after living in affordable housing or fleeing an abusive household, making a house into a home is often too expensive for those facing the barrier put in place by poverty.

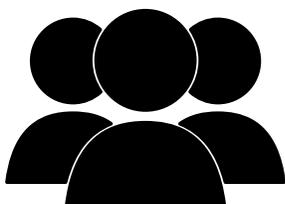


The Furniture Bank by Redwood Park Communities is helping those experiencing poverty create a home filled with dignity and basic comforts like a couch, dining room table and chairs, beds and more. For those referred to the Furniture Bank, an entire apartment can be furnished for the price of curation and delivery—usually around \$150. That is up to 96% less than the average cost to furnish an apartment. For those individuals who cannot afford the fee, the Furniture Bank connects with partners like Ontario Works to help mitigate or eliminate the costs.

Beyond those who receive the furniture, the Furniture Bank also employs vulnerable individuals to refurbish the furniture they receive, providing skills upgrading and a Living Wage for employees. This, in turn, opens doors for future employment and success for Furniture Bank employees.

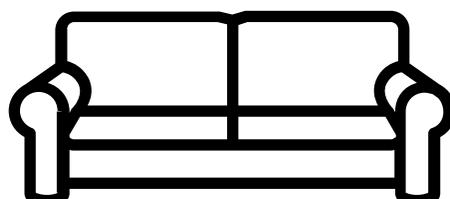
Here is what the Furniture Bank managed to do in the first three months:

# 75



**unique vulnerable individuals served**

# 265.5



**cubic metres of furniture diverted from Barrie landfill**

# 25



**volunteers welcomed from the community**



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Centraide**  
Simcoe Muskoka

## Circles Muskoka

UWSM has been thrilled to partner with Circles Muskoka to help expand the program to even more Muskoka residents. Circles brings people together to foster one-on-one friendships across economic boundaries and creating a community that supports one another.

In Circles, those living in low-income (Leaders) and volunteers (Allies) bring their own unique life experiences to one another, creating a long-term mentoring relationship that helps both Leader and Ally grow their perspectives, understanding and shared goals.

Circles Muskoka helps moves Muskoka residents out of poverty and into a life of sustainability and opportunity. While Allies support Leaders with goal setting, skill-building and support, Allies often gain a new perspective and understanding about what it means to be part of a community.

**“Circles has helped me to develop a voice that I have been able to use to defend myself and others on an ongoing basis ... I have grown so much and I have Circles to thank for a lot of the growth I have done. I want you to know that I now have a voice and I actually feel heard, I am able to speak up for the issues that are important. Circles has changed my life for the greater good.”**

## YouthCALL Service Link

Helping youth in Alliston and Bradford, YouthCALL Service Link is a live-answer telephone hotline that connects local transitional-age youth (age 14-28) with services they need to not just get by but live their life to its fullest potential.

Through YouthCALL, these youth are connected with Kim, the YouthCALL Community Navigator. With Kim, individuals are not only referred to services but are provided guidance with goal planning, finances and more.

In the first three months, YouthCALL Service Link has assisted 34 local youth with issues such as housing, addiction, mental health and employment. Here is what one youth had to say:

**“Kim has helped me with many things and has always gone above and beyond. When I first met Kim, she helped me find housing by helping me message or call people for a room. I also sent her a lease to read over with me, as well as getting back into school by planning with me and telling one of the teachers about me. I know I can call Kim for help whenever I need to.**

**“Kim has even had meetings with me just to help with homework if I was behind or not understanding something. Overall, Kim has helped me with anything I have needed help with or even just to talk. I’m really glad Kim was there to help when I started living alone as it for sure made the process a lot easier.”**

# Donor Spotlight

## Bourgeois Auto Group

It takes a special kind of company to not only partner with us to support the most vulnerable in our communities, but to help us come up with a new initiative to create that support. That's exactly what the Bourgeois Auto Group did when they joined UWSM for Driving Change in Our Community.

With their three dealerships in Midland—Bourgeois Motors Ford, Bourgeois Midland Nissan and Bourgeois Midland Hyundai—and

Bourgeois Ford North in Parry Sound, the Bourgeois Auto Group knew they could make a difference, with a proceed from each oil change donated to UWSM and our poverty-reduction projects.

Bourgeois Motors Limited was founded more than 75 years ago and has been proudly serving Midland and North Simcoe ever since. As the first company to partner with us for Driving Change in Our Community, their commitment to their community could not be more apparent.

From April to June, the Bourgeois Auto Group raised \$1,850. That isn't the end of their impact, though. Because of their leadership and compassion, Driving Change in Our Community is already expanding to other communities across Simcoe Muskoka.

From all of us at UWSM, thank you to the Bourgeois Auto Group for Driving Change in Our Community and supporting our most vulnerable residents.



# Virtual Day of Caring 2021

Want to make a difference for the most vulnerable in your community?

Last year, due to COVID-19 and public health restrictions, we took our Day of Caring virtual and it was a resounding success. This year on Wednesday, August 25, we are inviting workplaces, friends and family to get together and help out those who need it most.

Whether you help with a yard cleanup, call an elderly family member or put together one of the backpack or hygiene kits in our guide, share your photos with #VirtualDayofCaring.



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