

COMMUNITY MATTERS

United Way Simcoe Muskoka's Newsletter



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Working together to improve lives locally

It's difficult to believe it's July already! With many restrictions lifted and summer activities in full swing, there are times when it almost feels like a return to "normal".

However, we are seeing record-high numbers of community members needing supports, and an increasing complexity of issues including unaffordable housing, precarious employment, and mental health challenges. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we continue to work with our partner agencies across Simcoe Muskoka to address the most pressing issues.

In this edition of Community Matters, we highlight the Furniture Bank and provide a "behind the scenes" look at the important work they're doing. You can read about steps we're taking to challenge the stigma associated with mental illness and addiction, and we introduce you to the new blog series by UWSM's Chief Executive and Philanthropy Officer, Brian Shelley.

Creating hopeful homes

Furniture Bank Redwood Park Communities

Did you know that the average cost to fully furnish a 1-bedroom apartment is between \$3,000 & \$8,000? For those living in poverty, transitioning out of homelessness or fleeing domestic violence, this cost is simply out of reach. That's where the Furniture Bank by Redwood Park Communities comes in.

They divert used furniture away from landfills to be refurbished and affordably provided to low-income individuals referred through local community partners.

But they do so much more than that.

“When people have furniture, they can raise healthy, happy children. When people have furniture, they can pursue a meaningful life and contribute to their community. When people have furniture, they can recover from mental and physical illness, trauma and abuse.”

~ Anna, Managing Director, Redwood Park Communities Furniture Bank

To learn more, watch the video or visit www.uwsimcoemuskoka.ca/furniturebank/



UNITED WAY SIMCOE MUSKOKA

Community Collaborative Project
Barrie and North Simcoe

FURNITURE BANK
powered by Redwood Park Communities



\$500,000

estimated annual waste savings in Simcoe County

\$3,000

the cost of furnishing an apartment with reused furniture

1 in 8

Simcoe Muskoka residents living in low-income

A client story

A client who was a newcomer called to find out about the service. The client was fleeing an abusive situation with children and expressed not knowing where to start. The Managing Director connected the client with Redwood staff that helped the client apply for OW, connect with the Barrie Women and Children's Shelter for holistic support, connect with Housing Retention and obtain mental health support. The individual came for furniture but ended up with wrap around support."



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United Way Centraide
Simcoe Muskoka

Challenging Stigma

Challenging the stigma associated with mental illness, addiction or any other social issue takes **understanding, education and a closer look at our own attitudes**. That's one of the reasons why we've resumed our documentary screening and panel discussions across the region.

In June this series took us to Bradford, where we screened [Connecting the Dots: A Global Conversation About Youth Mental Health](#). We

were joined by Canadian filmmaker Noemí Weis and local mental health advocates for an evening of powerful conversation among parents, educators, advocates, law enforcement, service providers, community partners, local businesses and youth. It was a step towards breaking down the stigma surrounding youth mental health struggles and opening a dialogue around more accessible, relevant, and timely support.

Next, we'll be in Huntsville, opening a dialogue and helping shine a light on the overdose epidemic in Canada. You're invited to join us for a free screening of [Flood: The Overdose Epidemic in Canada](#), followed by a panel discussion made up of local experts and individuals with lived experience.

About the Documentary

Synopsis: There's no sugarcoating it – Canadian lives are being taken at an alarming rate by apparent overdose-related deaths. Lives are being senselessly taken at the hands of devastating overdoses. Between January 2016 and September 2019, there have been more than 14,700 apparent opioid-related deaths. Flood: The Overdose Epidemic in Canada is a documentary that aims to reduce the stigma around substance use disorder (SUD) and inspire others to take action. "From major cities to small towns this issue has taken lives, ruined families and flooded our communities."



Free Documentary Screening & Panel Discussion

Join us in conversation to help end the stigma around addiction, and inspire action.

August 31, 2022 @ 7:00 PM

Algonquin Theatre, 37 Main St. East, Huntsville, ON

More information:

www.uwsimcoemuskoka.ca/flood-documentary

Donor Feature

Tatham Engineering

Tatham Engineering is a company that not only supports UWSM and the people we help, but who partner with us to make a long-lasting difference. They are a long-time supporter of United Way Simcoe Muskoka, **donating over \$200,000 since 1998** to address poverty and social isolation in our region.

Each year they run a campaign with the goal

of surpassing the previous year's donations, and they continue to succeed. Their most recent donation was for \$30,467, half of that raised by employees themselves!

Tatham Engineering is a local employer with a culture that strongly **promotes involvement with charitable events and activities as a means of giving back and paying it forward**. They understand the value of the communities where they work and actively participate to strengthen them. Just recently they demonstrated that commitment by implementing a paid Volunteer Day Policy, encouraging employees to get out and give back to their communities.

Thank you to Tatham Engineering and their employees for continuing to support the most vulnerable residents in our region.



L-R: Suzanne Prosser (UWSM), Jeff Akitt, Director, Manager, Land Development, Deb Fitzsimmons, Administrative Assistant

RBC Foundation Grant

Now, more than ever, the call for culturally safer environments inside mainstream organizations of care is needed for Indigenous Peoples in our community.

Thanks in part to the **RBC Foundation Grant of \$50,000**, the Working Together- Wiijinokiiwag program has been able to provide training to frontline health organizations and mainstream organizational providers that provide supports and services to Indigenous Peoples and Communities.

[Working Together- Wiijinokiiwag](#) is a trauma-informed and wholistic community mobilization initiative focused on creating conversations and community awareness that enhances life promotion and cultural safety education that saves lives and creates new collaborations of the future for all peoples to thrive. Grounded in Indigenous teachings, knowledge and concepts that have been learned through the team's network of Knowledge Carriers, Storytellers and Elders,

We would like to thank RBC Foundation for their generous support of this program. By offering this training and making service providers more inclusive, we are helping to save lives and providing a future for all peoples to thrive.



Foundation
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CEPO Blog

Committed to Keeping You Informed

United Way Simcoe Muskoka's new Chief Executive and Philanthropy Officer (CEPO), Brian Shelley is committed to keeping the community informed. Each month provides an update through the [CEPO blog](#). Have you been following along? Here is a snippet from the latest post, published in full on our website:



I recently was asked to address those in attendance at the County of Simcoe's Warden's Gala. In my speech, I shared the following figures:

- Hospital admissions and **emergency room visits related to mental health had been increasing** year over year since 2011 across the region.
- **Nearly 1 in 10 households in our community are experiencing food insecurity**, meaning they don't know where their next meal is coming from. The numbers are even more jarring when we consider our children and youth – 1 in 6 of those under the age of 18 are experiencing food insecurity.
- **44% of renters in our community are spending more than 30% of their before tax household income on housing** costs meaning, invariably, their family is going without or is going further into debt to make ends meet.

These are just some examples of the inequities we see in our community today. It is important to understand that as communities across Simcoe and Muskoka experience a period of change and growth, without transformational systemic change, we could see these trends worsen.

Continue reading this post about UWSM's approach to creating solutions, and looking ahead to what's next: www.uwsimcoemuskoka.ca/whats-ahead/

You can make a difference for the most vulnerable residents of Simcoe Muskoka
[Visit www.uwsimcoemuskoka.ca/give](http://www.uwsimcoemuskoka.ca/give)

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