



United Way
Centraide
Simcoe Muskoka

annual REPORT 2023-2024

Diversity Statement

United Way Simcoe Muskoka is committed to equity, diversity, inclusion, and Indigenous, Metis and Inuit collaboration as an organizational priority. We strive to create and foster a supportive learning environment where everyone demonstrates, and is accountable for, diversity, decolonization, anti-racism, equity, and inclusion. We are committed to employing the best people to do the best job possible, in which all individuals realize their maximum potential within the organization.

Our organization's success relies on the quality and skill of our employees, volunteers, and Board members, working together to reduce inequities, stigmas, and racism in our organization. By embracing across-the-board inclusiveness, we foster a stronger environment that is productive, dignified, sustainable, and ultimately beneficial to the organization and all who are involved with it. Only through diversity of participation can we bring the full range of perspectives and viewpoints to our endeavors, allowing us to make a larger difference in the communities we serve.

It is the responsibility of everyone at United Way Simcoe Muskoka to sustain a culture of respect that supports principles of diversity, equity, and inclusivity.

Professional Pledge of Reconciliation



Brian Shelley, our Chief Executive and Philanthropy Officer, signs the Professional Pledge of Reconciliation, surrounded by the entire United Way Simcoe Muskoka team.

United Way Simcoe Muskoka is situated on the sacred territorial land of the Anishinaabek. The Anishinaabek include the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Pottawatomi nations, collectively known as the Three Fires Confederacy. The Huron-Wendat and the Haudenosaunee Nations have also walked on this territory over time. We have a responsibility to acknowledge and understand this history and the current experiences of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. This understanding must inform the work that we do so that we can stop perpetuating the damages of colonization and begin to repair them.

In the spirit of reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in Canada, including Inuit and Métis, we, United Way Simcoe Muskoka, solemnly pledge to:

1. Commit to honouring #92 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action for reconciliation, Business and Reconciliation.

2. Support progressive improvement in our Indigenous, Inuit and Métis relations by encouraging our organization to participate in the Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) program of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business.

3. Commit to an in-house community investment strategy that is developed through joint planning with the Indigenous communities involved, including Inuit and Métis, and aligns with the goals and interest of those communities.

4. Ensure and encourage employment and career development opportunities for Indigenous, Inuit and Métis candidates.

5. Create a working environment that is inclusive and welcoming for Indigenous, Inuit and Métis employees and partners.

6. Identify contracting or procurement opportunities for Indigenous, Inuit and Métis businesses and economic development corporations.

7. Commit to generating positive and lasting change in our professional and personal lives.

8. To acknowledge the distinct and unique needs, including health needs, of Indigenous people including Inuit and Métis.

Mission

To improve lives and build communities by leveraging collective resources and mobilizing collective action to achieve the greatest impact.

Vision

Everyone in every community has the opportunity to reach their full potential.



BOARD CHAIR AND CEPO REPORT

These are challenging times.

Over the past year, more and more individuals and families are slipping through the cracks, and the organizations supporting vulnerable folks are having to do more with less.

In response, your United Way connected individuals and families in low-income households to over \$5.8M in financial supports and provided over \$5.5M in funding to charities and not-for-profits.

As we look to the future, we are committed to growing our community investment in support of vulnerable populations and the organizations supporting them.

None of this happens without the dedication of our donors, staff, board, volunteers, and community partners, whose commitment we truly value.

In the development of our most recent strategic plan, we heard loud and clear that our community is looking to the United Way to take on a more active role in the areas of advocacy and education. In response, over the past year:

- We continued to advocate for Living Wage as a critical poverty reduction strategy
- We co-hosted our second "ReThink Poverty" event in partnership with the Poverty Reduction Task Group
- We supported advocacy efforts that have resulted in positive changes to Ontario's "Low-Income Energy Assistance Program"
- We expanded our offerings of documentary film screenings through the launch of the "Real2Reel Film Festival" which highlights stories of lived and living experience
- We collaborated with other United Ways across the province in the development of "Bringing Affordable Housing Home: An Action Plan for Housing Stability in Ontario"

As we look to the coming year, we are excited to build on our education and advocacy efforts through the launch of the Resilience Rising podcast in collaboration with our partners at CFS Counselling + Wellbeing.

As we said, these are challenging times, but we have hope for a better tomorrow.

Thank you for believing in your United Way.

Your support is proof positive that better is possible when we work together.



David White
Board Chair
United Way Simcoe Muskoka



Brian Shelley
Chief Executive & Philanthropy Officer
United Way Simcoe Muskoka

Advocacy & Education

Your United Way is committed to long-term systemic change through Advocacy and Education.

Bringing Affordable Housing Home

United Way Simcoe Muskoka was one of 20 local United Ways in Ontario that joined forces to advocate to the Ontario government for housing stability. This collaborative effort involved convening 23 housing and homelessness service providers in our region, leading to the development of the Bringing Affordable Housing Home report, which was presented at the provincial housing summit and at key community tables.



Ontario Energy Board

United Way Simcoe Muskoka played a key role in the Ontario Energy Board's review of the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program, benefiting low-income families by addressing emergency utility arrears. This effort led to significant program changes advocated by your United Way, including a 28% increase in eligibility income thresholds, a 30% boost in maximum grant amounts, and ensuring no eligible customer is denied aid due to utility providers' funding shortages. Additionally, the income threshold for monthly utility cost assistance rose by 35%.

Real2Reel Film Festival

Supported by RBC Foundation, the Real2Reel Documentary Film Festival is a purpose-driven event addressing complex societal issues such as poverty, youth mental health, human trafficking, and truth and reconciliation. We engaged 400 community members to learn more about these complex social issues.



Foundation

Advocacy & Education

Rethink Poverty

The Poverty Reduction Task Group for Simcoe County held its second annual “Rethink Poverty” event at The Common Roof in Orillia. Your United Way co-hosted the event in partnership with the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, Simcoe Muskoka Skillforce, the District of Muskoka and the Town of The Blue Mountains. Rethink Poverty gave attendees a better understanding of how poverty impacts individuals across the region and the strategies being taken to address the issue. 68 government, community and social service representatives took part in analyzing trends and systemic barriers and discussed ideas for action.



Poverty Simulation

Your United Way partnered with Rocket Innovation Studio to create and release a digital poverty simulator, aiming to raise awareness about poverty in our communities. The Living in My Shoes Anti-Poverty Simulator leverages three distinctive online personas and a dynamic array of questions and choices. This immersive experience goes beyond an online ‘game’—it’s a serious thought experiment designed to foster a profound understanding of local issues in Simcoe County, the Town of Blue Mountains, and the District of Muskoka.



Strategic Areas of Investment



United Way Simcoe Muskoka connected individuals and families in low-income households to over \$5.8M in financial supports and provided over \$5.5M in funding to charities and not-for-profits.

Your United Way collaborates with a wide range of partners in a shared commitment to support social inclusion and poverty reduction efforts across our region. We strategically invest in these three pillars of social change:

1 MOVING PEOPLE FROM POVERTY TO POSSIBILITY

Meeting basic human needs and moving people out of poverty.

- Housing stability
- Food security
- Employment and financial security

2 BUILDING STRONG AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Supporting personal wellbeing and strengthening neighborhoods.

- Connection to supports
- Neighborhood and community engagement
- Personal wellbeing and safety

3 HELPING KIDS BE ALL THEY CAN BE


Helping children and youth reach their full potential.


- Engagement in learning
- Connectedness and community involvement
- Emotional and physical wellbeing

Community Impact

MOVING PEOPLE FROM POVERTY TO POSSIBILITY



The Issue

 A Living Wage in Simcoe County is \$22.75 and in Muskoka it's \$20.60. Ontario's minimum wage is \$17.20. In Simcoe that's a difference of \$5.55 and in Muskoka \$3.40.

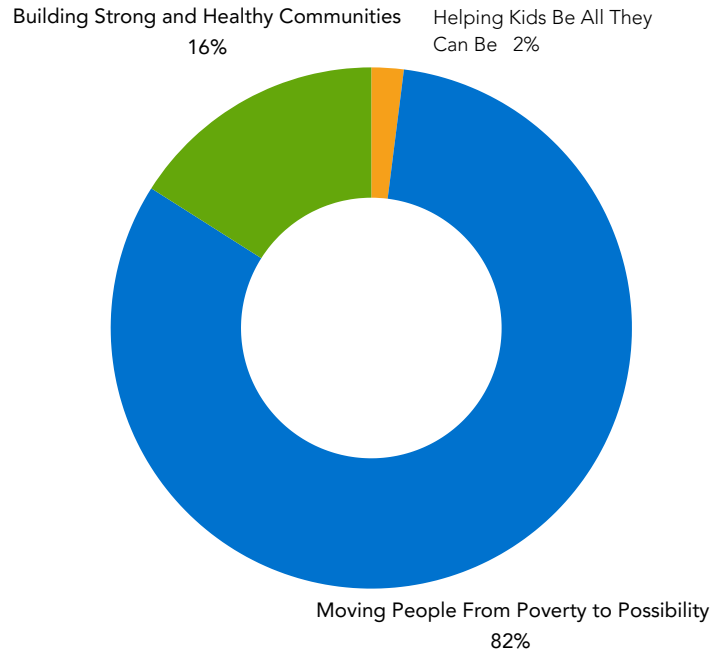
 Locally it is estimated that almost 50% of renters are spending more than 30% of their gross household income on shelter, meaning that they are at risk of losing their home.

HELPING KIDS BE ALL THEY CAN BE

The Issue


-  70% of mental health problems appear during adolescence.
-  Canada's youth suicide rate is the 3rd highest in the industrialized world.

Funding Distribution by Impact Area



BUILDING STRONG AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

The Issue

-  36% of Simcoe Muskoka's residents 12 years and older feel a somewhat weak or very weak sense of community belonging.



Working together to address complex community issues

Community
Collaborative
Projects are 100%
funded through
local donations



DID YOU KNOW?

Community collaborative projects are multi-year funded projects that address the gaps in service across Simcoe Muskoka.

2023 marked the end of the first round of our three year collaborative projects, marking a total investment of \$1.8 million. In 2024 United Way Simcoe Muskoka has committed an additional \$2.1 million to a new round of projects that are driving systemic change in food security, mental health, housing, and income stability over the next three years with 30+ partners from the public, private, faith, and non-profit sectors. Including:

- Groundwork
- The Art Engagement Project
- Creating Supportive Housing and Income Stability
- Getting Ahead Across Muskoka
- The Mobile Youth Wellness Hub
- Finding Home
- Arts Immersion for Mental Health

\$1.8 million

invested in Collaborative
Projects over the last 3 years

Circles Muskoka

Circles Muskoka brought together the community to support individuals and families living in poverty with relationships and resources to thrive.

Furniture Bank

The Furniture Bank diverted used furniture away from landfills to be refurbished and distributed to low-income individuals referred by community agencies.

Poverty Interventions = Health Interventions

Created a cloud-based poverty screening tool and case management system, this project addresses poverty as a vital component of the community's health.

Wiijinokiiwag

Designed a program to bring awareness, action and empowerment for mainstream organizations to create safer environments for the Indigenous Peoples in their care.

YouthCALL Service Link

YouthCALL Service Link expanded a free live-answer telephone service for vulnerable youth.

Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion

Bringing partners together



Circles Muskoka

“

I feel like I am part of a community and am gradually growing since the death of my husband that left me heart broken and financially insecure. The Circles community has made me welcome and I feel part of something, which has helped me with my grieving and move on and do things I need to do. I have never committed to a group of any kind and Circles has helped me commit weekly and to thrive with my goals.

”
Circles Muskoka participant

“

You are amazing, thank you so so so much guys ... for all your help, it is much appreciated. We promise to love and take care of everything and pay it forward when we can next.

”
Furniture Bank recipient



YouthCall

“

My YouthCall Worker has helped me with many things and has always gone above and beyond. They helped me find housing by helping me message or call people for a room. I also sent them 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 YouthCall for help whenever I need to. They have even had meetings with me just to help with homework if I was behind or not understanding something. Overall, they have helped me with anything I have needed help with or even just to talk. I'm really glad they were there to help when I started living alone as it made the process a lot easier.

”
YouthCall participant



Furniture Bank

Housing Supports in Rural & Remote Communities

funds that we administer directly to partner organizations

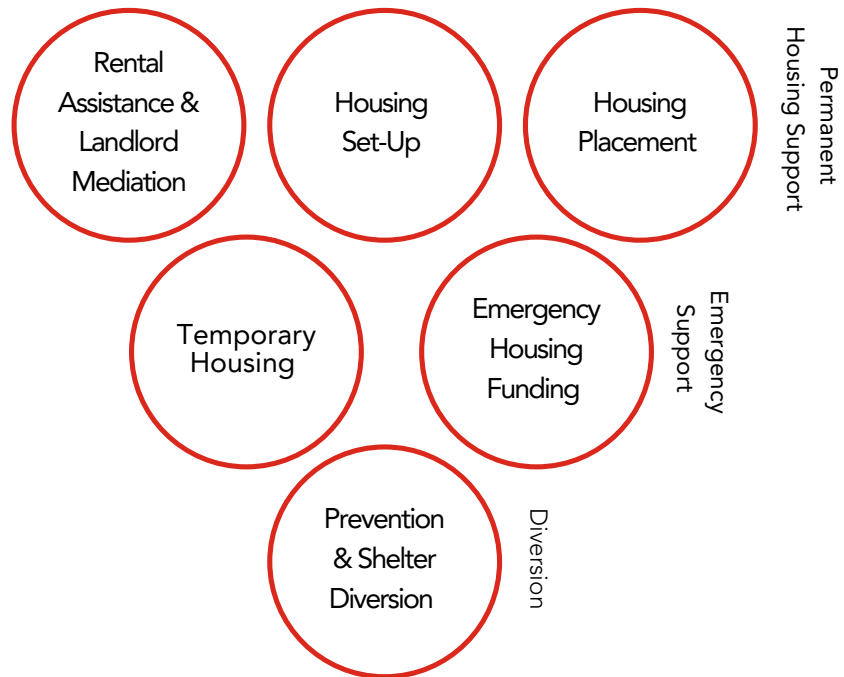


Your United Way administers Reaching Home funds in rural and remote communities across Ontario on behalf of the Federal Government

DID YOU KNOW?



Reaching Home Housing Stability Funding Priorities



Gwekwaadziwin Miikan tiny home project

We are supporting housing in rural and remote communities through Infrastructure Canada's Reaching Home funding.

"Reaching Home supports the goals of the National Housing Strategy, in particular, to support the most vulnerable Canadians in maintaining safe, stable and affordable housing and to reduce chronic homelessness nationally by 50% by fiscal year 2027 to 2028."

Your United Way supported 30 housing related projects with a total investment of

\$3,231,547

Building the Next Generation of COMMUNITY LEADERS

funds that we administer directly
to partner organizations

FUNDED IN PART BY

**CANADA
SERVICE
CORPS**

Canada

Your United Way is supporting local youth by investing \$105,000 in 21 youth-led projects



DID YOU KNOW?

Youth United is funded in part by Canada Service Corps, a national movement that empowers youth aged 15–30 to gain experience and build important skills while giving back to their community.

When youth engage with their community they build confidence, valuable skills, connections, and relationships that foster resilient young adults and communities.

42 youth engaged in community leadership



Making Change and Nantyr Shores Black Student Association at the "Brawta—Lunch & Learn" series, a funded project by United Way Simcoe Muskoka's Youth United program.

*funds that we administer directly
to support organizations*

Strengthening the Charitable SECTOR

Funded by the
Government of Canada's
Community Services Recovery Fund



United Ways along with the Canadian Red Cross and Community Foundations Canada administered the Community Services Recovery Fund (CSRF) across Canada on behalf of the Federal Government



DID YOU KNOW?

CSRF was a one-time, \$400 million investment to help community service organizations, including charities, non-profits and Indigenous governing bodies, adapt and modernize, and build internal organizational capacity. This investment will strengthen the sector as it supports recovery in communities across Canada.

**Community Services
Recovery Fund**



Canadian
Red Cross



COMMUNITY
FOUNDATIONS
OF CANADA



United Way
Centraide
Canada



We are the Villagers is such an amazing organization. They made it possible to put my two young ones in baseball after what we can all agree was a tough year. Then they went above and beyond and brought both my children laptops. The minute I opened them my eyes filled with tears. I could never express enough how thankful our family is to this incredible organization. Thanks so much We Are the Villagers.



**Your United Way
was the regional
lead to facilitate
\$1.7 million dollars
in emergency
pandemic relief
funding from the
federal government
to 23 projects**

**\$1.7 M to
23 projects**

Connecting Low-Income Households to the Resources they Need

United Way
Simcoe Muskoka's
Urgent Needs
Fund is 100%
funded by local
donations



DID YOU KNOW?

Funds administered directly to individuals

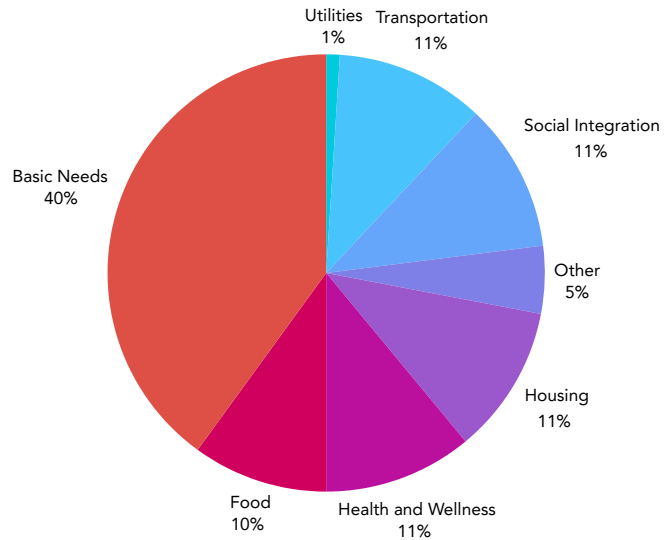
\$239,493

Microgrants distributed

1109



Needs That Were Met Through the Urgent Needs Fund



By issuing microgrants to households, the Urgent Needs Fund helps when no existing services meet the demand. The Urgent Needs Fund has been there for our most vulnerable when they have needed it most. These grants do not just meet immediate needs, they provide hope and dignity to the recipients

“

A 63-year-old homeless man was hospitalized and they lost his dentures. He was placed in a motel in our area and was not able to eat properly for quite some time. UNF and other agencies worked together to replace his dentures. When he was told, he cried and then became excited about deciding the first solid food he would eat once he had his new teeth.

”

Supporting Individuals Experiencing ENERGY POVERTY

*funds that we administer directly
to support individuals*

United Way Simcoe Muskoka administers the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (L.E.A.P.) on behalf of the Ontario Energy Board. The fees that your United Way collects from our utility partners for this service supports our overhead costs



DID YOU KNOW?

Utilities we partner with

- Alectra
- Elexicon Energy Inc.
- Enbridge Gas
- EPCOR Electricity
- EPCOR Gas
- GrandBridge
- Hydro One Network
- InnPower
- Utilities Kingston

Number of calls received
in our call centre

52,514

Funds administered by
our call centre

\$5,579,074.93

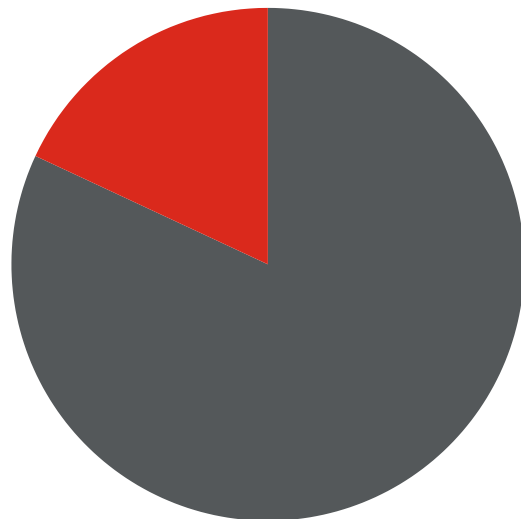


BUILDING CAPACITY TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

Community Investment vs. Internal Expenses

\$2.51 Million Internal Expenses (Staffing, Direct Program Costs, Admin, Rent, etc.)

18.1%



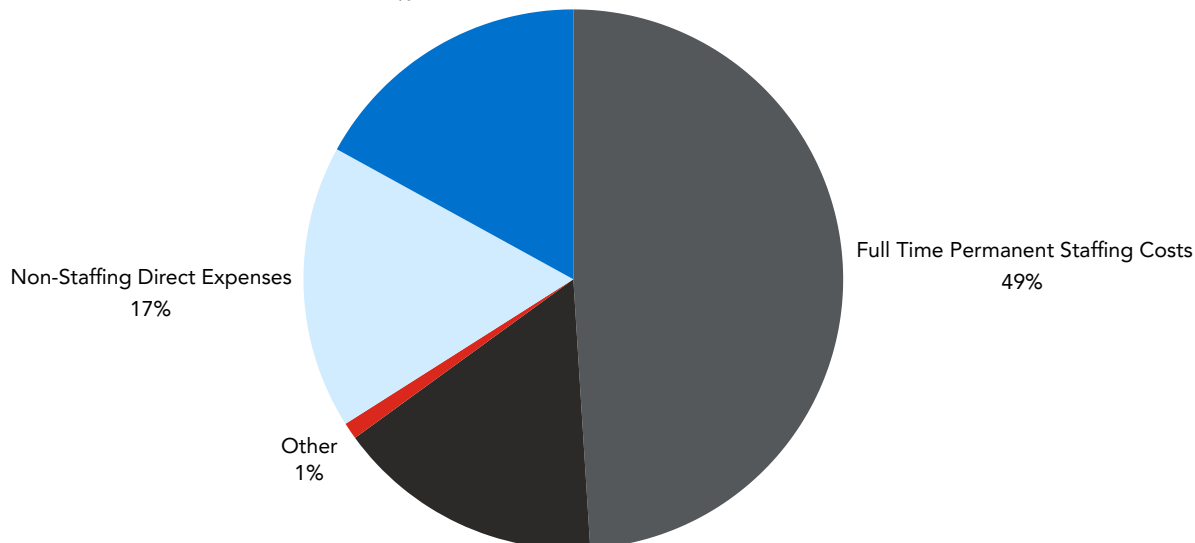
\$11.39 Million Investment in Programs that Support Low-Income Households and Community Organizations

81.9%

Breakdown of \$2.51 Million Internal Expenses (Not Inclusive of Community Investment)

General & Admin Expenses

17%



Hourly Staffing Connecting Individuals to Low-Income Energy Assistance Program Grants

16%

United Way Simcoe Muskoka's audited financial statements were presented to its members by Grant Thornton at our Annual General Meeting on June 27, 2024. For a full copy of our Audited Financial Statements go to uwsimcoemuskoka.ca/annual-reports

Leadership & Volunteers

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT AND ENGAGEMENT STANDING COMMITTEE

Priynka Patil, Committee Chair
Doriano Calvano
Sonia Draper
Shawn Fendley
Glenn Fernandes
Pam Hillier
John Pugsley
Lisa Rhodenizer
Christine Rice
Sue Smythe
Lorraine Sutton

COMMUNITY IMPACT COUNCIL

Glenn Fernandes, Council Chair
Shah Azlan
Abhishek Bhattacharya
Errin Dickins
Don Eastwood
Kelly McClure
Darren McCrank
Tracy Mitchell-Ashley
Irena Pozgaj-Jones
Sandra Sydor
Jacqui Woods-Powell

YOUTH COUNCIL

Jerin Mathew Varghese, Council Co-Chair
Joshua Han, Council Co-Chair
Andrew Canete
Kaylin Kelly
Teagan Price
Emily Sackett

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

David White Board Chair	Shannon Scott Board Vice-Chair
Rob Armstrong Treasurer	Valerie March Board Director
David Mayers Board Director	Deborah Burrows Board Director
Sonia Draper Board Director	Amy Gaukel Board Director
Brandon Weiss Board Director	Priynka Patil Board Director
Nilusha Premasinghe Board Member	Christine Rice Board Director
Sue Smythe Board Director	Brian Shelley Board Secretary

REACHING HOME REGIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

Debra Swan, Advisory Board Chair
Tracey Lasook, Vice Chair
Judi Baril
Michelle Bergin
Doriano Calvano
Jennifer Cormier
Holly Howard
Irena Pozgaj-Jones
John Pugsley

Corporate Partners

We are grateful for the generous support of our corporate partners. Their contributions through donations, workplace campaigns, gifts-in-kind, and event sponsorship are instrumental in helping us achieve our mission to improve lives and strengthen communities.



Attitude Print
Barrie Community Health Unit
Beaver Creek Institution
Bell Canada
Canplas
CIBC
City of Barrie
Elexicon Energy Inc.
Enterprise Holdings
Glueckler Metal Inc.
IG Wealth - North Central Ontario Office

Kumi Canada Corporation
Pilkington Glass of Canada
Quota Club
Scotiabank
Stewart Esten LLP
TD Bank Group
Town of Gravenhurst
Town of Midland
VOA Canada
Wawanesa Mutual Insurance

United Way Simcoe Muskoka

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<https://uwsimcoemuskoka.ca/>

Charitable registration # 11879 9485 RR0001



United Way Simcoe Muskoka is a proud Living Wage Employer and a local advocate for paying employees a liveable wage. Presently there are 36 certified living wage employers in our region.



United Way Simcoe Muskoka is a proud founding funder of the 211 helpline.



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