



United Way Waterloo Region Communities

Backgrounder

WHO WE ARE

United Way Waterloo Region Communities is dedicated to helping people live better lives in every one of the seven communities we serve. We are also the largest funder of social programs in Waterloo Region, second only to government. We are locally focused, informed, connected, and deeply invested in helping people reach their full potential in the seven communities that comprise Waterloo Region: Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo, Wilmot, Woolwich, Wellesley and North Dumfries.

WHAT WE DO

We are fundraisers who engage and mobilize the community around grassroots causes. The funds we raise support a network of agencies whose programs and services deliver community-wide benefits. Our investments include everything from emergency food and shelter services that meet people's basic needs; to counselling and harm reduction programs that help people live healthier lives; to after-school and mentorship activities that give vulnerable young people a chance at a better future.

Impact: The Difference We Make

By targeting your investments, United Way Waterloo Region Communities strives to produce a direct and lasting impact in 3 key areas:

1. Vulnerable children and youth
2. Poverty
3. Neighbourhoods

In each key area, we start by looking at community conditions. We then target our investments to produce the best possible outcomes based on information collected from research, community consultation, and our partner agencies. Lastly, we evaluate data from our partners to determine the impact of our investments.

AREAS OF IMPACT

Vulnerable Children and Youth:

United Way invests in programs and services that allow young people the opportunity to

build or enhance their social and educational skills. Adult and peer mentoring, counselling, and education all play a vital role in strengthening youth.

Poverty:

United Way invests in services such as emergency shelters, food hampers, and skills development, including financial awareness and literacy, so that people can meet basic needs and move on to fully participate in their place of work, volunteering, or the broader community.

Neighbourhoods:

United Way invests in programs and services that increase the skills of community members to build thriving neighbourhoods where people are connected and can engage in things that matter to them. Supported activities such as residence outreach, engagement, and planning give people the tools they need to take action and make a difference in their own neighbourhood.

Vulnerable Children and Youth

Community Conditions

- **1 in 10** young people between the ages of 15 and 19 report experiencing “quite a lot” of life stress.¹ Death by suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth.²
- **1 in 5** youth in Waterloo Region won’t graduate from high school.³ High school graduation rates in Waterloo Region are approximately 4 points lower than the provincial average of 86%.

Targeted Investment

- United Way invests in youth support programs that provide skills for positive development academically and socially.
- Investments are made in programs such as peer mentoring, counselling, and education.

Impact

- United Way funding made it possible for more than 10,500 youth to access programs that helped them improve their coping skills, their self-esteem, and their sense of wellbeing.

¹ Children's Planning Table – 2014 StatsCan, Canadian Community Healthy Survey

² Mental Health Commission of Canada

³ Ontario Ministry of Education – 2016 Graduation Rates Across the Province

- United Way-funded programs gave 5,200 young people the opportunity to engage with positive role models and improve their social skills.

Poverty

Community Conditions

- **1 in 10** people in Waterloo Region live in poverty. That is more than 50,000 people. Nearly 9,000 of them are children under the age of 18.⁴
- **1 in 20** households in Waterloo Region experience hunger. 1 in 3 food bank users are children under the age of 13.⁵
- Nearly **1 in 4** adults in Waterloo Region fall in the lowest levels of literacy and 1 in 3 adults cannot read the dosage instructions of over-the-counter medications.⁶

Targeted Investment

- United Way invests in services that meet people's basic needs and makes it possible for them to fully participate at work, at school, and in their communities.
- Investments are made in services like emergency shelters, food hampers, and skills development, such as basic literacy and financial awareness.

Impact

- United Way-funded programs made it possible for more than 22,000 people to access food.
- United Way-funded programs helped 130 individuals improve their literacy skills, putting them on the path to better opportunities and a chance to truly realize their potential.

Neighbourhoods

Community Conditions

- **1 in 3** people lack a sense of belonging in Waterloo Region.⁷
- **1 in 3** young families don't feel their neighbourhoods are places where people discuss problems, support each other, or keep children safe.⁸

Targeted Investment

⁴ Statistics Canada, 2015

⁵ Community Food Assistance Network

⁶ Project Read Literacy Network

⁷ 2018 Canadian Index of Wellbeing – A Profile of Wellbeing in Waterloo Region

⁸ Children's Planning Table – 2010 Kindergarten Parent Survey CFFC Interim Update

- United Way invests in programs that give people the tools they need to take action and make a difference in their own neighbourhoods.
- Investments are made in services like resident outreach, engagement, and planning.

Impact

- United Way funding helped 12,000 people become more involved in their communities by building a connection to their community centres, developing leadership skills or volunteering.

For more information or for media interviews, please contact:

Hilary McCann
Senior Director, Marketing and Communications
United Way Waterloo Region Communities
P. 519-888-6100 EXT. 227 C: 226-898-1394
E: hmccann@uwaywrc.ca