

United Way Waterloo Region Communities

This is the Heart of What We Do...

ORGANIZATION SUMMARY

United Way Waterloo Region Communities is dedicated to helping people live better lives in every one of the seven communities we serve. We are fundraisers and local community builders that support a network of agencies whose programs and services are locally focused, informed, connected, and deeply invested in helping people reach their full potential.

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 and local community builders who engage and mobilize the community in an effort to find solutions to prevalent social issues. 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 focus 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 local agencies. Lastly, we evaluate data from our funded partners to determine the impact of our investments.

We Invest In **Vulnerable Children and Youth**

Community Conditions

- **1 in 10** young people between the ages of 15 and 19 report they are “quite a bit or are extremely stressed.”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 programs and services that help young people build and enhance their life skills, thereby increasing their chances of succeeding at school and in the

¹ Statistics Canada. 2017. Table 13-10-0096-04 Perceived life stress, by age group

² Statistics Canada 2017. Table 13-10-0392-01 Deaths and age-specific mortality rates, by selected grouped causes,

³ Canadian Index of Wellbeing 2018

community. Adult and peer mentoring, counselling, and leadership development all play a vital role in building resilient youth.

Impact

- United Way funding made it possible for 7,995 youth to access programs that helped them improve their self-esteem and sense of wellbeing.
- United Way-funded programs gave 7,574 young people the opportunity to engage with positive role models and improve their social skills.

We Invest In Fighting Poverty

Community Conditions

- **More than 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 4 food bank users are children under the age of 11.⁵
- 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
- It is suspected that 44 people died of opioid-related deaths in the first 6 months of 2019.⁷

Targeted Investment

United Way invests in emergency food and shelter programs that help people meet their basic needs; financial awareness and literacy training services, which enhance employment

⁴ Statistics Canada 2015CANSIM Table 111- 0015

⁵ Community Food Assistance Network 2017

⁶ Project Read Literacy Network

⁷ Waterloo Region Integrated Drug Strategy – Waterloo Region Overdose Monitoring Report

prospects; and counselling and addiction services that help address mental health and substance use challenges. These investments make it possible for those living in poverty to more fully participate in places where they work or volunteer and in the broader community.

Impact

- 81,180 individuals were able to put food on the table through access to food hampers and education around healthy eating and cooking on a budget.
- United Way-funded programs helped 1,719 individuals improve their reading, writing, and financial literacy skills, putting them on the path to better opportunities and a chance to truly realize their potential.
- 246 individuals who stayed in emergency shelters were able to move onto more stable housing.
- United Way-funded counselling programs made it possible for 13,646 individuals to experience a decrease in psychological distress.
- United Way funding made it possible for 3,312 individuals struggling with substance use to access harm reduction supplies and support, which in turn contributes to positive health outcomes such as reductions in STI's and overdose related deaths.

We Invest In Neighbourhoods

Community Conditions

- **1 in 3** people lack a sense of belonging in Waterloo Region.⁸
- **More than 1 in 3** Waterloo Region residents do not believe that most or many people can be trusted.⁹

⁸ 2018 Canadian Index of Wellbeing – A Profile of Wellbeing in Waterloo Region

⁹ 2018 Canadian Index of Wellbeing – A Profile of Wellbeing in Waterloo Region

Targeted Investment

- 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 resident outreach, engagement, and planning give people the tools they need to lead and take collective action to make a difference in their own neighbourhood. We know from our partners that these activities build community trust and strengthen the sense of community ownership and belonging.

Impact

- United Way funding helped 8,890 people become more involved in their communities by developing leadership skills or volunteering.
- 4953 individuals – including at-risk youth and newcomers – received services in their community that contributed to reduced isolation and loneliness.

ARE YOU THE ONE TO HELP?

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