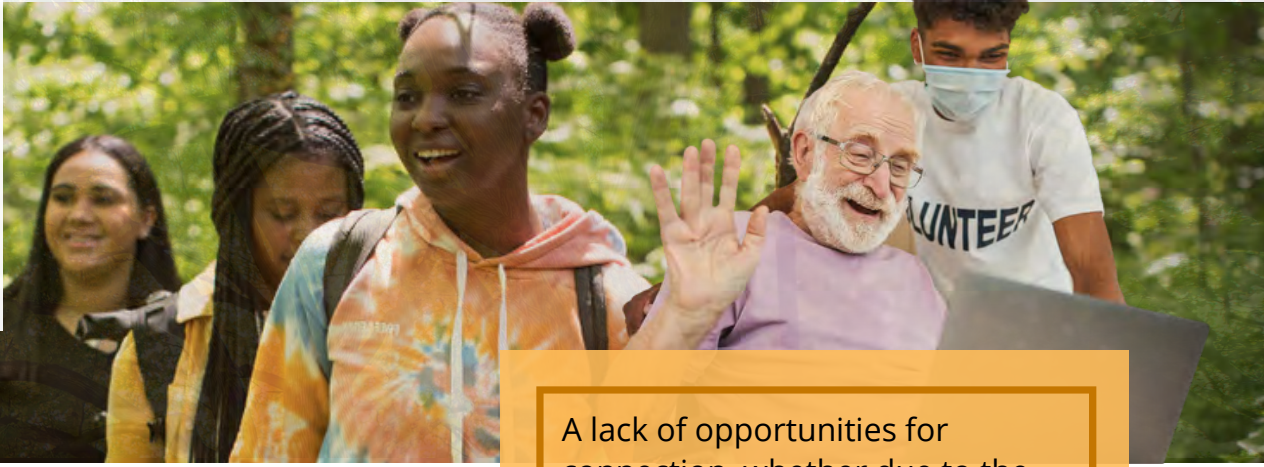




UNITED WAY WRC
CAUSE AREA



A lack of opportunities for connection, whether due to the pandemic, or pre-existing barriers, affects our ability to maintain a strong support system. Relationships are vital to our mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Building Social Connections

Belonging is a fundamental human need & lack of connection diminishes our quality of life.

A 2019 report on well-being in Waterloo Region found that **24% of residents felt that they lacked companionship**

& 20% felt isolated from others in the community.¹



Loneliness and feelings of exclusion

can lead to weakened immune system responses, increased inflammation and a **14% higher risk** of premature death.²



Meet Diane

Diane is a 34-year-old woman that applied to the Be-friends program at Bridges to Belonging with the hope that they would find her someone to connect with. Diane can be very shy, making it difficult for her to engage with people on her own. Covid restrictions made it difficult for Diane to pursue potential new social opportunities. Over these past 3 years, Diane has spent most of her time in her home and became increasingly more isolated, lonely and sad. Diane was matched with Sherry who applied to be a volunteer community friend. After being matched, Diane and Sherry hit it off and Sherry was very excited to introduce Diane to her daughters and bring Diane to meet her wider circle of friends. Diane wanted to return the favour and invited Sherry to join her on BE-connected to meet the friends she has been connecting with virtually. The reciprocity of a genuine friendship is already beginning between Diane and Sherry with both women sharing their gifts, strengths and social connections to bond with one another, and to bring their respective worlds together.



Local Solutions

Thanks to your support, here are a few of the frontline organizations that United Way WRC funded in 2021-2022 to build social connections locally.

Programs Changing Lives



- Provision of social opportunities
- Providing space for people to connect
- Grassroots neighbourhood development
- Opportunities for children and youth to connect and play



¹ <https://www.ymcaworkwell.com/special-report-2021>

² <https://www.allianceon.org/sites/default/files/documents/Social-Isolation-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

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there is no way.

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