



News Release

United Way Waterloo Region

For Immediate Release – September 18, 2025

United Way's March of 1,000 Umbrellas Brings Record-Breaking Crowd to Downtown Waterloo Region

WATERLOO REGION, ON – United Way Waterloo Region proudly hosted its **7th Annual March of 1,000 Umbrellas** today, with over 600 participants filling the streets between Waterloo City Hall and Kitchener City Hall in the largest turnout yet for United Way's annual fundraising campaign launch.

Umbrellas, symbols of both protection and unity, were raised high as community members, local leaders, workplaces, and non-profit partners came together to shine a light on urgent local needs and celebrate the power of collective action.

"We are living in a time of great need, where our friends and local families are suffering increasing burdens, ranging from food insecurity and homelessness to mental health and addictions issues. This is not the time for a community or business to step away – this is the time to donate, to volunteer, to help others, and to make a real impact." said Joan Fisk, CEO of United Way Waterloo Region. "A little bit of help, from a lot of people, changes thousands of lives. We need that help today more than ever. Today, over 600 people showed that *United is the Way* we create change."

The March of 1,000 Umbrellas is a powerful symbol of United Way's role as a connector, bringing together people and organizations across Waterloo Region to tackle issues such as affordable housing, food security, mental health, and youth support. In 2024 alone, United Way invested over \$2.5 million into 79 local programs, including \$420,000 dedicated specifically to housing and homelessness supports and nearly \$350,000 towards mental health.



Speakers included Mayor Dorothy McCabe, Mayor Barry Vrbanovic, and Regional Chair Karen Redman, who marched alongside participants. Chair Redman emphasized the importance of community partnerships in driving lasting impact during her remarks, “Events like today’s march remind us of the strength of Waterloo Region when we come together,” Redman said.

Following the march, participants gathered at Carl Zehr Square in front of Kitchener City Hall for a community celebration featuring live music from the Cambridge Symphony Orchestra and lunch provided by Borealis Grille & Bar.

As the 2025 United Way campaign officially launches, the organization is calling on the community to carry the spirit of the march forward. Donations made through United Way Waterloo Region fund frontline programs that ensure vulnerable neighbours have access to shelter, food, mental health supports, and opportunities to thrive.

“Today we walked side by side with purpose,” Fisk added. “Now, let’s continue to walk together through giving, volunteering, and advocating for change. United is the Way we help our region thrive.”

About United Way Waterloo Region

United Way Waterloo Region is dedicated to helping people live better lives in every one of the seven communities we serve, and we focus on understanding issues and solutions unique to our community. Thanks to generous donors and partners, we are privileged to collaborate with people, non-profits, and businesses to empower multiple innovative, impactful, and measurable solutions. 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. To ensure critical agencies, programs and services get the funding they need, and to ensure donors have a clear line of site to the work we do, we have focused on cause-based giving which allows for donations to be directed in a way that aligns with selected priorities and goals. To learn more, connect with us at www.uwaywrc.ca.

Digital Assets:



United Way
Waterloo Region
Communities

Please visit www.uwaywrc.ca/about-us/communications/ to download our digital assets and further information, including photos, CEO bio and photo, and other United Way materials.

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