



**United Way**  
East Ontario

2024-25:  
**Year in  
Review**

June 2025



# A Message from Our Interim President and CEO

**At United Way East Ontario, I am continually inspired by the dedication and compassion shown by our staff, volunteers, partners, donors, and supporters. Time and again, you rise to the occasion when adversity strikes—proving that the strength of our communities lies in our shared commitment to one another.**

Across our region, many people are facing steep cost-of-living increases, a shortage of shelter spaces, and limited access to food and essential services. These challenges weigh heavily on my mind every day.

Yet, in the face of such hardships, I have continually found joy in the work we do. There is a deep sense of purpose and hope that drives our team forward. I am proud of the optimism our staff and volunteers bring to every effort, as we tackle the most pressing issues in our communities.



I know that we are making a real and measurable difference—and this report is a testament to the impact that your support makes possible. I hope it helps you feel more connected to your community and to the solutions we are building together to create lasting change.

**Through collaboration with agency and community partners, we are listening closely to understand where demand for services is highest and needs are greatest in our region. Together, we are investing in long-term, sustainable solutions. We are also bringing diverse leaders to the table to align efforts, share resources, and amplify what works.**



In 2024, we worked with partners across the province to strengthen the delivery of the 211 Ontario helpline, with a goal to ensure consistent and reliable access to a system that connects people to critical social services, programs, and community supports.

We joined other United Ways in Ontario to urge the provincial government to declare intimate partner violence an epidemic and develop a comprehensive, data-driven strategy to end it.

We had a strong presence at the 2024 Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness National Conference in Ottawa, where we shared our insights and learned from others who are deeply committed to ending homelessness.

And we united local community leaders and organizations in our efforts to address hate and violence—not only acknowledging that reported incidents of antisemitism, anti-black racism, anti-2SLGBTQIA+ hate, and Islamophobia have been climbing at an alarming rate, but also taking meaningful action together, to build better capacity and increase community safety.

Despite the economic uncertainty that has affected so many in recent months, our partners and supporters have stepped up with unwavering resolve—embracing collaborative opportunities that drive positive and tangible outcomes for those who need us.

We are also incredibly grateful for the generosity of our donors in these times. You have responded to our requests for support, participated in our special events, and remembered us when you've felt able to give again. Thank you. Your support gives us the flexibility to pivot quickly and meet emerging issues with purpose and care.

**This is an exciting moment for United Way East Ontario. With a new strategic plan and incredible leadership from our board, staff, and senior volunteers, I am confident in our path forward. While the nonprofit sector is being asked to do more with fewer resources, our commitment to strengthening social systems remains steadfast.**

Together, let us continue to build stronger, more resilient communities—making meaningful, lasting change for those who need it most.

With gratitude,

**Dennise Taylor-Gilhen**  
Interim President and  
Chief Executive Officer  
United Way East Ontario

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## Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the land on which we work, live, and play is the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabeg people. We extend respect to all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, their ancestors, their Elders, and their valuable past and present contributions to this land and our communities.

# In loving memory of Jamie Bramburger

**Early in 2025, our team was deeply saddened by the sudden passing of community champion and United Way East Ontario Board Member, Jamie Bramburger.**

Jamie was a long-time supporter of United Way through his work at Algonquin College, where he served as Interim Dean of the Pembroke Waterfront Campus. He joined United Way East Ontario’s Renfrew County Advisory Council, eventually becoming Chair, and became a member of the Board of Directors in 2020.

Jamie was a strong, positive leader, and a respected voice throughout our region, bringing invaluable insights, vision, and kindness to his work. Jamie truly believed in United Way’s mission of building strong, healthy, safe communities for all and was committed to making a difference in his community, in Renfrew County and East Ontario.

We will be forever grateful for Jamie’s enthusiastic support and thoughtful approach.



# Our Role

Every day, people in communities across Prescott-Russell, Ottawa, Lanark County and Renfrew County depend on United Way to break down barriers, improve lives, and create opportunities. Our organization exists to make a tangible difference in the lives of the people who need us most—to have an impact.



**Our mission** is to bring people and resources together to build strong, safe, healthy communities for all.

**Our vision** is that our communities are measurably better because of the work of United Way East Ontario and others.

**Our promise** is that we will invest resources where they are needed most and where they will have the greatest impact.

# How We Make an Impact

**United Way mobilizes the power of caring communities to address the most serious social issues. But we don't do it alone.**

The challenges we tackle demand collaboration. By bringing donors and people from different organizations together to solve problems—from businesses, non-profits, governments, and more—we can have an even bigger impact and make our communities measurably better.



**United Way East Ontario creates lasting social change through three focus areas:**

**All That Kids Can Be:** By putting more kids on track to succeed, we can help all youth in our communities reach their full potential.

**From Poverty to Possibility:** By helping people achieve financial independence and stability, we can move them from poverty to possibility.

**Healthy People, Strong Communities:** By improving equity, connections, and wellbeing for vulnerable groups, our communities can be great for everyone.

These areas serve as the foundation for every initiative and decision the organization undertakes. Opportunities to take action are strategically assessed against our ability to achieve the outcomes in these focus areas.



**We then look at each opportunity and determine which of our tools we should use to tackle the tough problems:**



**Advocacy:** We develop relationships with key stakeholders and government officials to advocate for change and action on social issues affecting our communities.



**Convening:** We bring together diverse groups of stakeholders to coordinate our efforts to solve social problems.



**Investment:** We engage community experts and volunteers to evaluate and make recommendations to fund programs, services, collaborations, and initiatives that result in measurable, lasting change, aligned to our priorities.



**Research and Evaluation:** We conduct and support a breadth of research and data analysis that helps us understand and address the diverse challenges in our communities.



**Resource Development:** We raise money, recruit volunteers, secure resources, attain expertise, and build powerful partnerships with individual donors, businesses, and other organizations—all to support initiatives that will lead to the betterment of our communities.

# Our Investments Across the Region



In 2023-2024, we invested in:

85

collaborations  
and initiatives

112

programs

81

community  
agencies

As a result of these investments:

92,148

people were  
supported

3,595

people volunteered  
with our agency  
partners

for a total of

274,537

hours

## How much we invested in community work across our region in 2023-2024:

Total\*:

**\$5,209,095**



\*1 These totals do not include the \$4,295,673 invested as part of the Community Services Recovery Fund (CSRF).

**Program reporting period:** July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024 (12-month investments). Program reports due to United Way in August 2024. Outcome data analyzed and reported by United Way in September 2024.

# 14 Outcomes of Our Work

**For a community to be great, it must be great for everyone.**

We work with local agency partners, multiple levels of government, people with lived experience, and thousands of donors to change lives across our region. Through research, consultation, and analysis, we identify where our communities need help the most and where our investments will show the greatest results.

**United Way is uniquely positioned to deliver on the following 14 outcomes through rigorous accountability processes and capacity building for agencies:**

## All That Kids Can Be:

1. Children are ready to learn
2. Children and youth are successful in school
3. Children and youth have access to mental health, addiction, and crisis supports
4. Children and youth experiencing homelessness receive supports
5. Children and youth are actively engaged and resilient

## From Poverty to Possibility:

6. Newcomers are engaged in the labour market
7. People with disabilities are engaged in the labour market
8. Youth are supported in their transition to employment
9. Priority populations are engaged in the labour market
10. People in financial crisis receive supports

## Healthy People, Strong Communities:

11. Adults have access to mental health and addiction supports
12. Seniors have improved wellbeing and are less isolated
13. Neighbourhoods achieve positive change
14. Adults in crisis have access to immediate supports



# All That Kids Can Be

## School's Cool helps kids like Lincoln navigate big life changes

For children experiencing developmental delays like autism, adjusting to school environments, meeting new people, and navigating transitions can be difficult. As kids enter the kindergarten classroom, this can be their first experience away from caregivers, creating an overwhelming transition for families.

United Way East Ontario makes possible and supports the free School's Cool program, focused on developing children's motor, social, and self-help skills. This program provides families with resources and tools they can use at home to feel more confident and to truly enjoy the kindergarten experience.

Through School's Cool, Tracey's grandson, Lincoln, was provided with unique experiences that increased his confidence entering kindergarten. Tracey explains that for autistic children, "it's scary for them to go out in the world with other children who may not understand."

The anxiety of beginning school is where the School's Cool program steps in and provides a safe place of learning. Through the program,

Lincoln, a participant in the School's Cool program.



kids like Lincoln, who have faced challenges with transitions, social interaction, and following directions, develop essential long-term social skills.

"It's never the same program twice because the children who are in the program, the way they interact, and their unique needs are how the staff plan and build the program," says Beth McMillan, Family Outreach and Support Worker with School's Cool at Mothercraft Ottawa.

By supporting children like Lincoln early in their childhood, United Way sets kids up for a bright future—no matter their circumstances. Powered by our donors, school readiness and early years programming like School's Cool improve graduation rates, mental health, and school performance for vulnerable infants and children.

[WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

# The Issue

**For some local kids, growing up isn't easy. Challenges can begin before a child even steps into school for the first time.**

Kids and their families face many, often interconnected, challenges. Many children are behind on their developmental milestones, and an increasing number are struggling with behavioural issues like lack of social skills or emotional regulation because of the continued transition out of pandemic isolation. Many also face heightened stress and feelings of isolation.

While children and youth grapple with mental health challenges and a longing for safe community connections, their families who support them also find themselves in distress. Many are struggling with mental health challenges and being able to afford essentials like food, housing, and technology—all while facing limited childcare options as youth-serving organizations are stretched thin.

**These challenges are following kids from their childhood into their adolescence.**

Youth are at an increased risk of homelessness due to barriers in securing safe, affordable housing. The mounting struggle with serious mental health and substance use challenges is also particularly concerning, given the presence of toxic substances in the drug supply.

## Data shows:

33%

of young children in Lanark County are [vulnerable in at least one developmental domain](#), compared to the provincial average of 31%.  
*December 2024*

2x

Between 2019 and 2023, the number of 5 to 13-year-olds struggling with [pro-social behaviours and soft skills](#) (like concentration, accepting change, controlling behaviour, making friends, experiencing anxiety or depression) nearly **doubled**.  
*September 2024*

Nearly  
2 in 5

Ottawa students [report struggling with their mental health](#).  
*December 2024*

1 in 5

students in Ottawa reported [non-medical opioid use](#) in the past year.  
*December 2024*

”

“We’ve asked youth to be brave and flexible as they navigate a post-pandemic world with immense uncertainty all around them. But the most vulnerable youth need our support to learn and grow. When we set the youngest kids up for success, when we make crisis more manageable for families, when we give young people safe places to connect, when we support the most marginalized youth, and when we help families meet their basic needs, we’re not just changing young people’s lives for the better—we’re setting them up for a lifetime of resilience and wellbeing, which has ripple effects for our whole community.”



— Trisha Islam, Director,  
All That Kids Can Be

# Our Response

**United Way believes that every child has the right to a good life, and a safe place to grow up, learn, and make good friends—no matter where they live or their personal circumstances.**

We partner with local, frontline agencies to deliver vital programs and services that create opportunities for our region's most vulnerable people. These include early-childhood education, support for young parents, after-school programs, mental health and substance use counselling and supports for youth experiencing homelessness.

United Way's role as a convener means we're also able to leverage our network of partners and donors to help our communities create long-term, sustainable solutions. We do this through initiatives that unite key stakeholders on a collective mission.

## Here are some examples:

### Aligning action on youth homelessness

Ottawa became the first city in Canada to declare a housing emergency in 2020, but despite legislation at federal, provincial, and municipal levels, and a shared recognition of this issue, homelessness is getting worse locally and nationally.

[As of 2024, there were at least 2,900 people experiencing homelessness in Ottawa](#), based on the most recent [Point-in-Time Count](#); [13 per cent of this homeless population identified as youth](#). This data does not encompass the full scope of unseen homelessness throughout our region, and we know that the numbers only increase when including people within our many rural communities.

United Way East Ontario partnered with the [Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness \(CAEH\)](#) and the [Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa](#) in the [2024 National Conference on Ending Homelessness \(CAEH24\)](#).

To show our support for our partners and this issue, United Way:

- Participated in the local host committee for CAEH24, contributing to coordination, media relations, promotion, and advocacy efforts leading up to and during the conference
- Spoke and facilitated breakout groups and networking sessions
- Hosted a community lounge on behalf of the Rural Youth Homelessness Network (RYHN)

- Funded a welcome reception for people with lived experiences of homelessness
- Funded on-site peer support workers to assist people with lived experiences of homelessness, to create an inclusive and supportive conference environment
- Trained and coordinated 100 volunteers to make the conference possible

### [READ THE FULL RECAP](#)



### **Annual stakeholder meeting for *project step***

In 2007, United Way East Ontario, together with Ottawa Public Health, the Champlain Local Health Integration Network, the Ottawa Network for Education, all four Ottawa school boards, and community agencies forged a partnership to prevent and respond to substance use issues among youth: *project step*. The community-wide response now delivers addictions counselling, prevention education, and family support in every publicly funded high school in Ottawa and in five community-based schools, along with residential treatment at two centres.

On January 15, 2025, [project step](#) held its annual stakeholder meeting at United Way East Ontario's Ottawa office.

Roughly 50 attendees came together in January to explore the current conditions, trends, and gaps surrounding youth mental health and problematic substance and technology use.

Themes of the conversation included:

- Socio-economic conditions like poverty and homelessness impacting mental health and wellbeing
- Lack of regulation in advertising, social media, artificial intelligence, and technology
- Importance of education and safe spaces for youth to address mental health stigma and misinformation
- Desire for youth-driven responses to mental health and substance use health
- Unique challenges facing rural youth

These cross-sectoral, community conversations are crucial to understanding mental health, substance and technology use challenges so community initiatives like *project step* and others are equipped to address them.



### Developing a youth engagement strategy

In 2024, *project step* created the Ad Hoc Community Engagement Committee. This committee is actively working on a youth engagement plan to meaningfully include youth with lived experiences of mental health challenges, and problematic substance and/or technology use, in the planning for *project step*.

This strategy involves treating youth as equals and experts, including youth in shaping the shared mission, building respectful and authentic youth-adult partnerships, and empowering young people to make a difference in their communities on the issues that affect them.

*Project step* invited young people to participate in its [youth-adult conversation](#) and annual stakeholders meeting as a first step to put this approach into action. *Project step* will continue this journey in youth engagement, with youth-driven insights, solutions, and leadership in 2025-2026 and beyond.

### [LEARN MORE ABOUT PROJECT STEP](#)



# Goals For the Future

In 2025-26, we will use our tools and resources to...

- **Address the academic achievement gap** for vulnerable children and youth in East Ontario by:
  - » **Investing in school readiness, early years, and critical hours programming**, and participating in collaborative networks like the Ottawa Child and Youth Initiative
  - » Developing opportunities for **homework clubs** in vulnerable neighbourhoods, including rural communities
  - » **Addressing learning loss** by taking a 'back-to-basics' approach and focusing on literacy and numeracy skills, as well as one-on-one tutoring
- **Invest in mentoring and peer support** programming for vulnerable children and youth
- **Invest in counselling, education, life, and work skills programs** to support youth at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness
- **Invest in parent, child, and youth mental health, addictions, and substance use health counselling, information, and supports**
- **Convene and provide backbone support for *project step*** and renew three-year goals and milestones, based on community conversations with youth and adult allies, as well as a region-wide environmental scan on youth mental health, addictions, and substance use health
- **Convene, provide backbone support, build capacity through knowledge sharing, and advocate for increased affordable housing**, and comprehensive, integrated supports for children, youth, and families who are at-risk of or currently experiencing homelessness for the Rural Youth Homelessness Network (RYHN)
- **Convene and participate in networks and coalitions** that work to improve outcomes for equity deserving children and youth



# The Impact of Our Investments



## All That Kids Can Be across our region:



## As a result of these investments:



# The Outcomes

The Outcomes	Impact	The Results
Children are ready to learn	95% of caregivers reported having increased awareness of their children’s development needs and how to address them	705 families/caregivers served that were provided with information, resources, tools, trainings, and/or teaching skills
Children and youth are successful in school	59% of children developed soft skills like time management, communication, and critical thinking	1,390 youth served who participated in school and/or community-based out-of-school time programs focused on academic success
Children and youth have access to mental health, addiction, and crisis supports	87% of youth achieved their counselling goals	1,274 youth accessed a mental health, addiction, and/or crisis support program
Children and youth experiencing homelessness receive supports	141 youth moved into affordable housing with no limitations or requirements	262 youth living in emergency shelters or transitional housing received supports to live independently
Children and youth are actively engaged and resilient	90% youth reported improved emotional well-being and better access to positive coping strategies	11,764 youth served who were equipped with tools to improve their emotional well-being, prosocial behaviors, and positive coping strategies

**Program reporting period:** July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024 (12-month investments).  
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Insights into the outcomes are available in the Appendix.

# Supporter Spotlight

**National Bank** is making a real difference in young people's lives in the National Capital Region with Move for Youth.

Originally created as a response to the challenges faced by vulnerable youth during the pandemic, Move for Youth is an activity challenge that has become a symbol of community support and resilience. Since 2020, National Bank, United Way East Ontario, and Centraide Outaouais have partnered to make a difference for local kids.

From May 1 to 15, 2024, 1,049 participants moved a total of 106,008,362 steps. Thanks to the support of our sponsors, partners, and donors, **\$121,223** was raised to help kids reach their full potential through after school programs, early years support, mental health counselling, and more.

**[LEARN MORE AT  
MOVEFORYOUTH.CA](https://moveforyouth.ca)**



“Over the past five years National Bank has convened and engaged the public to support vulnerable youth in our community through Move for Youth.

This activity challenge aims to raise awareness about local issues, collect funds and promote activities through movement. With support from our employees, partners, sponsors and donors, through United Way, we can provide vital services for children and youth, ensuring they have what they need to be successful in life.

We have been working together with United Way for over 40 years. We continue to work hard on these pressing issues and encourage everyone to get involved because we know we can only do this united.”

**Richard Ferland**  
Regional Vice-President / Vice-président régional  
National Bank of Canada

# From Poverty to Possibility

## Social enterprises helping youth like Nikki see brighter futures

Across East Ontario, youth facing homelessness are experiencing instability and uncertainty. A young person's sense of self and ability to envision a successful future is nearly impossible when they are unsure where their next meal will come from, or where they'll sleep for the night.

Through Foodworks, a social enterprise powered by United Way East Ontario at Operation Come Home, youth are taught valuable job skills and professional growth in a supportive work environment. As members of the culinary team at Foodworks, youth take on catering jobs throughout Ottawa, while learning and growing in a stable, safe environment to begin their careers. At the same time, youth have access to Operation Come Home's housing and mental health workers to set them up for success.

While facing homelessness, Nikki was connected to Foodworks and used her time there to develop her professional skills. Now studying Culinary Management at Algonquin College, Nikki's time at Foodworks helped her develop valuable professional connections while housing workers helped her get subsidized housing.

Nikki, Foodworks employee



"They learn that when they come here, regardless of what they've got going on in their personal lives, they can overcome the anxieties and stresses they have. Once they walk through our doors, come into this kitchen, they know they're in a safe space" says Tim Stock, Executive Chef at Foodworks.

United Way East Ontario works in communities across Prescott-Russell, Ottawa, Lanark County, and Renfrew County to make it easier for people to get a job, thrive in their workplace, and become financially independent. While we help people meet their basic needs and get through crises, we also work on long-term solutions to break down barriers and improve lives for the next generation.

[WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

# The Issue

**We know that poverty can happen because of an unexpected life change, but many people also have the cards stacked against them from day one. Poverty isn't a level playing field.**

Many marginalized groups are more likely to live in poverty because of systemic issues like racism or colonialism. As they continue to face stigma, biases, and other forms of oppression, it can be even harder to secure a good job and financial independence.

In rural parts of our region, limited public transportation options make it hard to get to school, work, healthcare appointments, and other essential services. In remote areas where internet connections can be spotty, access to information, education, and certain types of work are just not possible. The lack of opportunities in some neighbourhoods and communities, paired with inflation and the rising cost of living, makes it **harder for people to break out of the cycle of poverty.**

## Data shows:

9.7%

of racialized populations are [unemployed in Ontario](#), compared to 5.6% of non-racialized people. *January 2025*

10%

of children and youth aged 0 to 17 years live in [low-income households](#) in East Ontario. *October 2022*

~62%

of working age [adults with disabilities](#) are employed compared to 78% of those without disabilities. *December 2023*

2 x

In 2020, the poverty rate for [Indigenous people \(11.2%\)](#) in Ottawa and racialized residents (12.6%) was **double** that of non-racialized residents (5.7%). *June 2023 & October 2022*

1 in 4

[Ottawa households faced food insecurity](#) in 2023 – up from 1 in 7 households the prior year. *November 2024*

”

“By boosting job readiness, by creating more equitable economic systems, by building community wealth, and by reducing the impacts of poverty, we help people break out of the cycle of poverty. While we help people meet their basic needs and get through crisis, we also work on long-term solutions to break down barriers and improve lives for the next generation.”

— **Henry Akanko,**  
**Director,**  
**From Poverty**  
**to Possibility**



# Our Response

**United Way believes that everyone deserves a job, a purpose, and a sense of belonging.**

We partner with local, frontline agencies to deliver vital programs and services that create opportunities for our region's most vulnerable people. These include job training and mentorship for job seekers, as well as education for employers.

United Way's role as a convener means we're also able to leverage our network of partners and donors to help our communities create long-term, sustainable solutions. We do this through initiatives that unite key stakeholders on a collective mission.

## Here are some examples:

### Poverty reduction strategy with the City of Ottawa

United Way East Ontario joined a diverse group of stakeholders, community members, and partners to shape the development of the City of Ottawa's poverty reduction strategy: [RISE UP: A Collective Impact Approach to Reduce Poverty 2025–2029](#).

Through collaboration with the City of Ottawa and the advisory group, United Way contributed its expertise in addressing and preventing poverty, ensuring alignment with existing initiatives and centering the voices of those most affected. Notably, one of United Way's recognized strategies for reducing poverty—Community Wealth Building—was adopted as one of the approaches to implement the poverty reduction strategy.



## Partnering with Buy Social Canada on a made-in-Ottawa approach to Community Wealth Building

Community Wealth Building (CWB) uses existing strengths, talents, organizations, and business practices to put local people in control of their own economic wellbeing. Over the past year, United Way East Ontario convened stakeholders to develop a region-specific framework for advancing and scaling CWB with the support of [Buy Social Canada](#).

This framework will guide our efforts by:

- Establishing a shared understanding of CWB, including a common definition, language and calls to action for government
- Aligning pillars, principles, and priorities
- Strengthening the sector’s ability to implement CWB practices
- Fostering collaboration between diverse organizations

Our initial work engaged stakeholders in the Ottawa area. Looking forward, we will expand consultations to Prescott-Russell, Lanark County, and Renfrew County to incorporate diverse perspectives with a focus on the rural experience. Following these consultations, we will publish a report summarizing our findings and next steps.



### Building more culturally inclusive workplaces for Indigenous peoples

The [Indigenous Employment Leadership Advisory Table \(IELAT\)](#), supported by RBC, is co-hosted by United Way East Ontario, the [Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition \(OAC\)](#), and [Kagita Mikam](#). Members of the IELAT represent Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations that work together to prepare workplaces to be more culturally safe and inclusive for Indigenous peoples in East Ontario.

The OAC's annual career fair was held in the fall of 2024. The theme, *Our Roots Run Deep: Building Urban Indigenous Ottawa*, focused on employment and the trades, which supports OAC community initiatives and partnerships. There were 69 employers and service organization booths that included OAC member organizations, IELAT members, trade unions and builders, as well as seven workshop presentations and nine Indigenous marketplace vendors.

United Way East Ontario provided volunteers to run the registration table, support the workshops, as well as having the privilege of representing our organization as an employer with a booth at the event.

This unique Indigenous experience saw more than 400 Indigenous and non-Indigenous attendees. Events like these bring employers and those seeking employment together to find career paths, build new relationships, and begin a journey to financial security.

### Creating affordable housing through community bond investments

[The City of Ottawa loses 31 affordable housing units for every new one built.](#) United Way was thrilled to invest \$100,000 in the Ottawa Community Land Trust's (OCLT) [Housing Forever Bond that launched in 2024.](#)

This social finance tool, which has been vetted in other Canadian cities but is new to Ottawa, aims to help preserve and build new affordable and deeply affordable housing units.

We joined the OCLT, alongside other early investors like the Lowertown Community Resource Centre and the Sandy Hill Housing Co-operative at a launch event for the bond in Centretown on May 21, 2024.

In December, the OCLT reached its \$3 million goal, and has since purchased two multi-unit residential buildings that it will keep as deeply affordable housing.



Ottawa City Councillor Ariel Troster speaks to a crowd at the Ottawa Community Land Trust Housing Forever Bond launch event.

# Goals For the Future

In 2025-26, we will use our tools and resources to...

**Work for an equitable economic recovery and address the widening opportunity gap in East Ontario by:**

- **Investing in employment programs and supports** that improve outcomes for underrepresented youth, people with disabilities, and newcomers
- **Investing in research and convening leadership tables** that address employment barriers and increase labour market participation, with a focus on Indigenous peoples, underrepresented and vulnerable youth, people with disabilities, and newcomers
- **Advocating for employment support programs** across East Ontario
- **Partnering with the Local Immigration Partnership** in Renfrew and Lanark counties to deploy a new mentorship program where seniors mentor newcomers in building skills that will help them in the labour market
- **Working alongside the Indigenous community** on the Indigenous Employment Leadership Advisory Table (IELAT) to bring together employers, stakeholders, and Indigenous youth to better understand the labour market issues and create culturally safer workplaces
- **Growing Community Wealth Building (CWB) capacity and engagement by:**
  - » Advocating for, investing in, and convening the community to **adopt CWB principles** and best practices as a key element of municipal poverty reduction strategies, including investing in social enterprises, and adopting social procurement policies, community benefit agreements, and buy/shop local practices
  - » **Convening and mobilizing rural communities** to further develop United Way's CWB strategy
  - » **Convening CWB leadership tables** and engaging our network
  - » Investing in, planning, and delivering **education seminars, events, or summits** to strengthen understanding of CWB in our communities.
- **Reducing the impact of poverty** by convening, advocating for, and investing in financial literacy programs, food security, transportation (especially in rural communities), basic needs, and utilities relief



# The Impact of Our Investments



**From Poverty to Possibility across our region:**



**As a result of these investments:**



# The Outcomes

The Outcomes	Impact	The Results
Newcomers are engaged in the labour market	42% of newcomer job seekers found employment	1,301 individuals served by employment programs for newcomers <sup>1</sup>
People with disabilities are engaged in the labour market	71% of job seekers with disabilities found employment	1,241 individuals served by employment programs for people with disabilities <sup>2</sup>
Youth are supported in their transition to employment	54% of clients enrolled in time limited education or training	132 youth served by employment programs
Priority populations are engaged in the labour market	67% of participants found outside employment as a result of the program	2,804 individuals served by employment programs for all priority populations, including rural residents, Indigenous job seekers, newcomers, youth, and people with disabilities <sup>3</sup>
People in financial crisis receive supports	93% of people supported felt safer and more secure	1,948 people in financial crisis received financial services and supports

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Insights into the outcomes are available in the Appendix.

<sup>1</sup> Includes Hire Immigrants Ottawa

<sup>2</sup> Includes Employment Accessibility Resource Network

<sup>3</sup> Includes EARN, HIO, and IELAT

# Supporter Spotlight



"In 1983 I enrolled in a program called Morning Break at the West YMCA. I had no money at that time to pay for the program, so I became a participant sponsored by United Way. I was concerned about my alcohol use, and the group leader invited a guest speaker from Amethyst Women's Addiction Centre. This Amethyst speaker was also sponsored by United Way. I signed up to attend the Amethyst program, followed up with further treatment at Donwood in Toronto in 1984, and then achieved sobriety. I have maintained my sobriety now for 40 years and am now 88 years old.

In 1985, I had the honour of becoming a speaker on behalf of Amethyst at various groups in Ottawa. United Way then asked me to be a speaker on their behalf as well, which I was pleased to do for nearly two years. United Way is an incredible organization. It helps so many people in our community.

I became a monthly donor when I obtained a full-time teaching job at Adult High School, and I have continued to support United Way ever since."

**Judy Dunlop**  
40-year and monthly donor to  
United Way East Ontario



Judy Dunlop pictured on right

# Healthy People, Strong Communities

## Beverley finds balance with Perth seniors' programs and caregiver supports

Across Canada, [96 per cent of individuals receiving long-term home care have an unpaid caregiver](#) like a spouse, family member, or neighbour. These caregivers face challenges of burnout and overwhelming responsibilities, with one in three informal caregivers feeling distressed. In rural areas, connecting with care can be even harder than in urban communities due to the distance from services and lack of public transportation.

A United Way East Ontario partner in Perth provides a place for seniors to spend time with friends, participate in cognitive and physical activities, and receive physiotherapy to support their recovery and wellbeing.

Fueled by United Way, the Perth Enrichment Program (PEP) “boosts people up, improves their quality of life, and helps them to live in their own home for as long as possible,” explains PEP’s Executive Director, Suzanne Rintoul.

PEP has become an essential resource for Beverley, who cares for her husband Bob after his recovery from a stroke and through his battle with Parkinson’s disease. While Bob enjoys the fun



environment at PEP, Beverley gets time to herself to recharge and connect with others.

By boosting up Beverley, PEP enables both Beverley and Bob to strengthen their quality of life and helps them live in their home together longer. As residents of Lanark County, the geographic closeness of PEP is an added benefit for Beverley and Bob.

“It took me a long time to recognize that, as a caregiver, I have to take care of myself if I’m going to do a good job of taking care of my husband, Bob,” says Beverley.

United Way East Ontario works with partners across Prescott-Russell, Ottawa, Lanark County, and Renfrew County to power a network of programs that offer positive social connection for seniors, keeping them healthy and active in their homes and communities for longer.

For friends or family who have been thrust into a new world of responsibility as they care for a loved one, respite programs provide a huge relief—reducing caregiver burnout by giving them an opportunity to recharge and connect with others.

[WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

# The Issue

The strength of a community is determined by the health and wellbeing of those who live there. But many people across our region lack access to the support they need, impacting their quality of life.

Many people face barriers accessing services rooted in systemic biases related to gender, race, age, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, ability, or economic status. Socially disadvantaged communities experience poor health outcomes at higher rates, and we know that institutional oppression, systemic and overt racism, and chronic exposure to discrimination are often the root causes.

Those who help to sustain our health and community services—like informal caregivers supporting the aging population—are experiencing high levels of stress and burnout. Our networks also continue to raise concerns about increased crisis situations like gender-based violence, rising levels of addiction, and a decline in mental health.

## Data shows:

26%

of people in Ontario reported their [mental health as poor or fair](#).  
December 2024

18%

of Ontario residents reporting poor-to-fair mental health [had a core housing need](#). January 2023

120%

increase in the number of Ottawa police calls about [suspected overdoses](#) from 2022 to 2024.  
February 2025

14.7%

of [seniors living alone in Ontario are under the poverty rate](#), compared to 3.9% of seniors who live in a family setting. April 2024

19.5%

increase in [hate-related incidents reported to the Ottawa police](#) in 2023.  
February 2024

”

“For a community to be great, it needs to be great for everyone. Across our region, there are individuals and families who need an extra helping hand to be mentally well, socially connected, and to thrive where they live. When we help people get through crisis, when we support their mental wellbeing over the long term, when we reduce social isolation, when we strengthen neighbourhood connection, and when we get people the help they need, our communities become more vibrant and socially sustainable—for all of us.”



— Cameron Ketchum,  
Director, Healthy People  
Strong Communities



## Ontario United Ways call for action on intimate partner violence.

# Our Response

### Ontario United Ways call for action on intimate partner violence

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a devastating crisis with a disproportionate impact on women, children, and gender-diverse individuals. Following the [86 recommendations stemming from the coroner's inquest into the deaths of three women in Renfrew County in 2015](#), there have been growing calls to government at all levels to declare intimate partner violence (IPV) an epidemic and to take action to address gender-based violence (GBV). In 2023, [the federal government acknowledged the severity of the issue](#), and 95 Ontario municipalities have declared IPV an epidemic, including the City of Ottawa.

Our United Way, alongside United Ways across the province, called on the Ontario government to adopt Bill 173 (Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic Act, 2024) to name IPV an epidemic, and adopt a comprehensive plan to address IPV and support survivors. While this bill was not adopted before the house ended its sitting in 2024, we continue to push this call to action forward.

Read the full letter [here](#).

The crisis illustrated in our letter to the Premier was further heightened when two women were killed in separate incidents of femicide, in Ottawa, in August and October 2024.

In response, United Way worked with agency partners and made an investment to provide community healing sessions that supported survivors and communities impacted by gender-based and IPV in our region. The *Fabric of Change* initiative, spearheaded by the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW) and Lanark County Interval House, was transformative for participants and successful in fostering healing, dialogue, and collective action to address femicide and GBV. The project engaged over **200 participants** and more than 20 organizations through **10 sessions** (four in rural communities) and built connections that have strengthened our response to GBV and provided essential resources and support to underserved communities.

## A community-wide response to hate and discrimination

In response to [rising incidents of hate and discrimination](#) across our region over the past few years (and specifically to a sharp spike in antisemitism and islamophobia as a result of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and Israel), United Way and the [United for All](#) coalition have deployed investments, learning opportunities, facilitated discussions, and calls to action to inspire an aligned and collective response focused on building solidarity and support.

Activities over the past year have included:

- [Investing \\$100,000 to support Jewish, Palestinian, and Muslim-serving organizations](#) to help their respective communities with mental health and trauma supports, as well as an investment of \$30,000 into hate prevention and community resilience programs.
  - Convening community leaders and frontline service providers in our Building Bridges series, which is focused on strengthening capacity to have hard conversations, disagree respectfully while collaborating on solutions, and support community by finding common ground.
- » United for All hosted two Building Bridges events: the first [facilitated by equity coaches from the Ottawa Carleton District School Board](#), and the second highlighting the [experiences and recommendations of Jewish and Palestinian academics Mira Sucharov and Omar Dajani](#).
  - Working with coalition partners to assess community wellbeing, mapping out available resources and programming devoted to addressing hate and identifying opportunities for collaboration.
    - » United for All has also worked with decision makers through its Champions Table, which includes Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe and Ottawa City Councillor Rawlson King, MP Yasir Naqvi, Ottawa Police Services Chief Eric Stubbs, and others.
  - Making public calls to action around the value of a community-wide response to hate and discrimination [including an op-ed that profiles programs and actions](#).



## Launching anti-hate learning events with the Safer and Vital Communities grant

United Way East Ontario, on behalf of United for All, was a successful recipient of the [Solicitor General's Safer and Vital Communities \(SVC\) grant](#), which provides \$168,000 for the United for All coalition to deploy a series of events, workshops, trainings, and learning opportunities focused on empowering community leaders to address anti-Black racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti-2SLGBTQIA+ ideology, and misogyny.

These activities were launched on International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 2025, in partnership with the City of Ottawa and other SVC grant recipients, to reinforce principles of collective action against hate and inspire actionable steps to foster inclusion.

Additional events will be held throughout the Ottawa region until March 2026.

## Updating research on seniors and caregivers

As part of our [Loaned Representative program](#), the Public Health Agency of Canada deployed an expert in gerontology to United Way for one year to conduct a post-pandemic update to our 2017 Reports on Vulnerable Seniors [in Ottawa](#) and [Lanark, Prescott-Russell and Renfrew Counties](#), and our 2020 [Eastern Ontario Caregiver Strategy](#).

This work involved a review of recent data and literature, interviews with leaders and key staff in the community-based senior services sector, and an analysis of post-pandemic capacities, needs, and opportunities. The key findings of this work emphasize the need for our community to prioritize:

- Increasing funding and human resources capacities for the community-based seniors' services sector, to reflect its critical role in supporting a rapidly aging population and in relieving enormous pressure on our health care and long-term care systems

- Understanding the growing housing precarity challenges for seniors and the importance of a dedicated plan for seniors within the current housing and homelessness conversation
- Dedicating better and more specific resources to supporting caregivers, as a critical function of supporting a rapidly aging and more vulnerable population
- Relaunching dedicated programs to address elder abuse in East Ontario
- Creating a dedicated emergency readiness plan that acknowledges how seniors and isolated residents are often the hardest hit in crisis situations

The final 'Post-Pandemic Assessment of Seniors Well-Being in East Ontario' summary of consultations will be available in 2025.

# Goals For the Future

**In 2025-26, we will use our tools and resources to...**

**Support vulnerable seniors and caregivers in East Ontario by:**

- **Convening the community and/or participating in networks**, such as Successful Aging Councils across the region
- **Advocating for improved policies and increased support** for caregivers, in alignment with recommendations of the Eastern Ontario Caregiver Strategy
- **Investing in programming and activities** for seniors and caregivers

**Support access to comprehensive, integrated, community-based, culturally relevant counselling and supports** for people experiencing crisis, mental health challenges, and substance use disorder issues by:

- **Investing in diverse and accessible counselling and supports**, with an aim to ensure culturally competent resources for underserved populations, such as Indigenous peoples, Black and racialized communities, 2SLGBTQIA+, and rural residents
- **Investing in and supporting coalitions and partnerships** that increase access to community-based mental health, substance use disorder, and crisis counselling, including gender-based and intimate partner violence supports



- **Investing in counselling and supports** for people in crisis and survivors of sexualized violence
- **Ensuring a gender-based violence lens is woven into our impact work, with the understanding that prevention and lasting solutions are rooted in addressing chronic issues like housing affordability, employment, socioeconomic security, and mental health**

**Improve equity, connectedness, and wellbeing** by investing in community development programs, including Women United Community Action Grants.

**Lead, participate in, and support networks and coalitions** that work to improve conditions and wellbeing in vulnerable East Ontario neighbourhoods and communities.

**Increase community leaders' capacity to address incidents of hate**, facilitate peaceful dialogue, and better support affected communities by:

- **Deploying investments in anti-hate activities and capacity building**
- **Building awareness and understanding** of United Way East Ontario's work on United for All, including events and community engagement
- **Convening United for All's Coalition members, Champions Table, and Steering Committee** to support the United for All mission
- **Including a regional perspective to the work** of United for All and having increased ability to address hate and violence in rural communities
- **Reviewing opportunities to align United for All work** with the City of Ottawa's Community Safety and Well-Being Plan

**Support sustainability and build capacity** for networks, coalitions, and agencies by:

- **Investing in and supporting volunteerism and volunteer programs** that build and grow community sector capacity
- **Investing in activities, projects, and programs** that improve outcomes for the community sector and agencies working together to improve outcomes for vulnerable people
- **Advocating for people** experiencing mental health and/ or addictions challenges
- **Advocating for support for 211 Ontario** and emergency support services.
- **Contribute to provincial discussions for 211** and systems navigation planning, to evolve the system and service model



# The Impact of Our Investments



**Healthy People, Strong Communities across our region:**



**As a result of these investments:**



# The Outcomes

The Outcomes	Impact	The Results
Adults have access to mental health and addiction supports	91% of clients had improved mental health outcomes	11,332 individuals received mental health and addiction supports
Seniors and caregivers have improved wellbeing and are less isolated	94% of clients reported improved feelings of well-being	3,146 seniors and caregivers accessed programs to improve their wellbeing and sense of community
Neighbourhoods achieve positive change	91% of participants had increased meaningful connections as a result of their engagement	8,743 residents engaged with their community on issues of shared importance
Adults in crisis have access to immediate supports	56% of clients experienced a reduction to their distress	39,146 individuals received crisis supports

**Program reporting period:** July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024 (12-month investments). Program reports due to United Way in August 2024. Outcome data analyzed and reported by United Way in September 2024.

Insights into the outcomes are available in the Appendix.

# Supporter Spotlight



“Our association with United Way goes back a very long way, starting when we were growing up in Alberta and Saskatchewan. We both gave yearly to the Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign while we were working. After I retired, I became a volunteer with United Way Ottawa-Carleton. I chaired the Community Services Cabinet, and as Chair, sat on the Board.

United Way has been a part of our charitable giving for many, many years. We know how important its monetary support of a number of grassroots organizations is, which truly makes a difference in the lives of the people they serve. And, as important, is the advocacy and convening role United Way East Ontario plays in order to bring to light and develop partnerships to tackle community-wide issues.

We want to be part of a caring community which supports the wellbeing of its citizens, both on an individual and collective basis. We would encourage others to support United Way East Ontario as well. No amount is too small, and every cent is spent locally.”

Catherine and J. Richard Lane,  
40-year donors to United Way East Ontario

# Supporting Sector Stability

## The Community Services Recovery Fund

In its 2021 budget, the **Government of Canada** announced a **one-time investment of \$400 million to support charities and non-profits** as they focus on how to adapt their organizations for pandemic recovery. The Community Services Recovery Fund (CSRF) was invested by the Canadian Red Cross, Community Foundations, and United Ways across the country.

United Way East Ontario is grateful to the Government of Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) to have been a partner in administering the Investing in Program and Service Innovation and Redesign stream of the CSRF in our region.

The team at the **Rideau-Rockcliffe Community Resource Centre**, who used CSRF funding to integrate and modernize its food security programs to reach more people in need.



CSRF funding equipped charitable organizations with the tools, infrastructure, and insights needed to effectively manage and recover from disruptions caused by the pandemic, enhancing their overall resilience and service capacity.

CSRF projects took place between May 2023 and June 2024, and all organizations completed their work on June 30, 2024.

We received  
**99**  
applications

We invested  
**\$4,295,672**

...into  
**61**  
programs

# 10 Years of Women United

With more than 70,000+ members across six countries and 165 communities, Women United members are making a difference, advocating for change, and creating a brighter future for women and girls.

Locally, United Way East Ontario's [Women United](#) is a network of **602 donors, including 103 members** who are dedicated to leveraging their time, talents, and funds to empower women in our communities to build strong, independent lives.

In 2024, we celebrated 10 remarkable years of elevating and empowering women in East Ontario. Over the past decade, local Women United members and donors have raised and invested more than \$1 million to:



## WOMEN UNITED™



address gender-based violence



empower women in leadership



support young mothers and their children



build an equitable economy

## Making a Difference

As a collective, Women United invests in two distinct ways:

- **Community Action Grants** supporting small, grassroots initiatives in our region's most vulnerable areas. These grants support women to become leaders, identifying and executing on small initiatives for the betterment of their communities.
- **United Way's Community Fund** which is invested where it's needed most and will have the greatest impact to improve the lives of women and girls across our region.



**In 2024, Women United invested \$142,851 into:**

**Community Action Grants**



**United Way Community Fund**



## Activities Included:

- Parenting workshops for young mothers
- Job skills training
- Mental health and substance use counselling
- Leadership training and support in community development

**Program reporting period:** *These results also appeared in United Way East Ontario's 2023-2024 annual report. This repetition reflects the shift in timing for Women United investments to align with United Way's other investment cycles.*

## Women United in action

### Community Action Grant brings LeBreton together in the Sunshine Hub

When Somerset West Community Health Centre heard the LeBreton Flats neighbourhood was in desperate need of a community space, they knew they could count on United Way East Ontario to help make it happen.

A Women United Community Action Grant helps make programming possible at LeBreton Together in the Sunshine Hub—everything, from yoga, to breakfast clubs, movie nights, and Zumba classes.

Community members are now more connected with one another, more invested in their community, they have better access to resources, and overall mental health has improved.



## Meet the Women United Champions

At Women United, we believe that when women lead, communities thrive.

Our Women United Champions are a dedicated group of leaders who are committed to making a lasting impact for women and girls across our region. Through their advocacy, philanthropy, and leadership, they are helping to create a more equitable future. We are proud to introduce these six inspiring women using their voices and influence to help drive meaningful change:



### Kristine Dawson

Executive leader, strategic planning specialist, community advocate, and champion for women's empowerment



"I'm inspired to contribute to the mission of transforming the lives of women, those who identify as women, and their families."



### Jennifer Francis

High tech mentor, advisor, investor, and founding member of Women United



"I am passionate about helping women in all walks of life build leadership skills and confidence to advance in their chosen careers and change the culture."



### Rebekah Kletke

Chief Operations Officer at the House of Commons Administration



"Representation matters. When women have a voice in setting direction, policy and action we can move toward more equitable workplaces and communities."



### Robyn Lockwood

Senior Branch Manager at BMO Financial Group



"I believe that when you invest in women, you're supporting passionate, dedicated change makers. Women bring incredible value and strength to every space we enter."



### Shannon Lundquist

Vice Chair and Federal Practice Leader at Deloitte Canada



"The biggest issue facing women today continues to be inequity. Until we attain equity in all aspects (employment, healthcare, etc.) all other issues impacting women will continue to be secondary."



### Krista Pearson

Vice President of Student Services at Algonquin College



"I believe all who identify as women have an important role in facilitating community connections and creating networks that make our communities more inclusive, safe, and supportive."

[LEARN MORE](#) about Women United.

# The Tomorrow Fund™

United Way's **Tomorrow Fund™** is fueled by our planned giving program, as these generous gifts enable us to plan for a brighter future. When donors choose to include a gift to United Way in their will, they leave a lasting impact, uplifting the most vulnerable in their communities as part of their legacy.



## The Tomorrow Fund™ in action

Thanks to donors who choose to leave a gift in their will, our team can make strategic investments to address issues facing our communities. These investments include research, crisis response, and supporting new, creative ways of making an impact. Here are some recent examples:

### **Organizational development for the Rural Ottawa Youth Mental Health Collective**

The Rural Ottawa Youth Mental Health Collective (ROYMHC) is a team of 13 partner organizations invested in the mental wellbeing of rural Ottawa youth. The goal of the ROYMHC is to provide rural Ottawa youth with mental health supports, and make sure they know where to go for help if they need it.

The ROYMHC understands the unique challenges rural youth face in accessing mental health services. In response, ROYMHC supports youth and their families overcome challenges like a lack of transportation to services, geographic distance from resources, not knowing what help exists, and the lack of privacy that comes with seeking mental health support in a small community where residents all know each other. Through a Tomorrow Fund™ investment from United Way East Ontario in November 2023, the ROYMHC engaged a program manager to spearhead a wide spectrum of activities, working collaboratively with its member organizations. These activities included consultations with youth, bolstering governance and partnership structures of the collective, and more.

## Developing a collective impact framework for Community Wealth Building

Community Wealth Building (CWB) is a people-first concept that aims to promote local economic prosperity and enhance social equity through inclusive economic practices. When we buy local, when we build inclusive workplaces, when we hire from underrepresented groups in the labour market, when we cooperatively own assets, and most importantly, when we work together, we can reduce inequities for marginalized groups, repair relationships, and rebuild systems that create prosperity and ultimately **reduce poverty**.

Through the Tomorrow Fund, [Buy Social Canada](#) was engaged as a third-party facilitator to lead consultations with key organizations working on CWB in East Ontario.

Their role included conducting interviews, surveys, and in-person discussions with a wide range of stakeholders to collect their input; understand opportunities for alignment on CWB strategies and goals; and identify barriers and opportunities to advance CWB strategies within municipal, provincial, and federal governments.

This consultation contributes to the building blocks of a made-in-Ottawa CWB framework, and supports this ongoing work, especially at a time of economic uncertainty throughout our region.



# GenNext East Ontario

## Year in Review

Over the past year GenNext East Ontario strengthened its role as a key connector for young professionals, engaging them in philanthropy, advocacy, and community building. Through events, digital content, partnerships and outreach, we gave young changemakers new, fun ways to connect, learn about pressing local issues, and opportunities to take action in their communities.

In May, **Mix & Mingle: Own Your Career**, presented in partnership with [Mindtrust Leadership](#), welcomed over 100 attendees to [Impact Hub Ottawa](#)—90% of whom were new to GenNext. This sold-out event gave participants the opportunity to build networking skills, gain professional development, and connect with local mentors and peers. Proceeds supported equitable employment initiatives for marginalized youth.

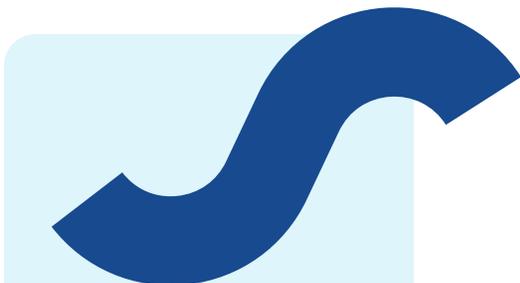
During **Capital Pride Week in August**, we hosted a digital content series called [The Pride Palette](#) focused on inclusivity and the queer arts community. Through video conversations with local 2SLGBTQIA+ artists and advocates, we reached more people than ever through social media. This content series became our most successful to date, reinforcing our



commitment to uplifting diverse voices and driving important conversations around inclusion.

We rolled out the red carpet in October as the Red Carpet Sponsor for [Youth Ottawa's 21 Under 21 Awards](#), where we celebrated and elevated young leaders making meaningful change in Ottawa. Our involvement in this event highlighted our shared commitment to supporting youth leadership and advocacy.

In February, we hosted the second annual [BATL for Mental Health](#), our signature fundraiser, with 16 teams coming together to support accessible mental health initiatives and have an 'axe-traordinary' time. We were thrilled to see workplaces and corporate partners, frontline organizations working in the mental health space, young professionals, long-time supporters, and many new faces—all there to take a swing at stigma. **Together, we raised \$15,137 for community-based mental health programs.**



## About GenNext East Ontario

GenNext East Ontario is a social impact movement for **the next generation of local changemakers**—young leaders and aspiring philanthropists. We know that the challenges facing our region are complex and interconnected. That's why GenNext focuses on four causes currently affecting the most vulnerable: **mental health, youth homelessness, diversity and inclusion, and equitable employment**. As part of United Way East Ontario, we connect people who want to learn about our causes and support those most in need through our events, newsletters, volunteer opportunities, and more.

[LEARN MORE AT GENNEXTEO.CA](https://www.gennexteo.ca)



# What's New

**Year after year, United Way is empowered to forge ahead in our mission of creating meaningful change thanks to the unwavering support of our donors.**

Their trust and generosity have enabled us to tackle pressing issues and implement innovative solutions that make a tangible difference in the lives of those we serve.

As we reflect on the accomplishments of the past year and look to the future, we're excited to highlight some of the new developments that have been made possible by the continued support of our dedicated donors.

## Novemberburger: The tastiest event of the year

United Way East Ontario's inaugural Novemberburger, in 2024, brought together 16 restaurants from Prescott-Russell, Ottawa, Lanark County, and Renfrew County to create unique burgers and donate a percentage of their sales to a good cause. The month-long initiative not only showcased the culinary talents of local establishments but also raised over \$15,000 for United Way, with 3,516 Novemberburgers sold.

The campaign's impact extended beyond the restaurants, as the community rallied around the cause in creative ways. Ambassadors spread the word online, a charity spin class was held, and a Grey Cup Party featured a Novemberburger pop-up! This collaborative effort demonstrated the power of local businesses and community members coming together to address pressing social issues such as poverty, homelessness, mental health, and social isolation through United Way.

”

“Novemberburger was a delicious way for us to make a difference. As local restaurateurs, we've always been passionate about giving back, and United Way made it both easy and enjoyable. The campaign's social media buzz was incredible, helping us reach new customers and connect with the community in a meaningful way. It was a fantastic experience all around. Many people enjoyed the burger two to three times in the same month, and they are still coming back and asking for it!”

**Amin Kazemi**  
Managing Partner at Edinburger

Novemberburger restaurants celebrate community impact at the Burger Bash



Novemburger's success was celebrated with awards that recognized the top-performing restaurants. Bamm's Snack Shack claimed the title of Top Novemburger of the Year, while Law & Orders was the Top Selling Novemburger of the Year. The People's Choice Award saw Blackburn Arms Pub, Bamm's Snack Shack, and Edinburger taking the top three spots. Novemburger's positive reception and community-wide impact have set the stage for it to become an annual event, promising to grow bigger and better in the years to come.



## Our Community Builder of the Year is shaping the future of youth mental health

We were honoured to present our 2024 Community Builder of the Year Award to YouthNet/RéseauAdo: a youth-led mental health promotion and intervention organization making a real difference in the lives of local youth. At a time when the mental health and addictions crisis is at the forefront of our communities, empowering young people as catalysts for better mental wellbeing will mean a healthier future for all of us.

YouthNet / RéseauAdo (YNRA) is a bilingual, for youth by youth, mental-health program at CHEO. YouthNet provides mental health workshops and programs for urban and rural youth. Supported by clinical social workers, youth facilitators aged 20 to 30 encourage open dialogue about mental health and empower young people to take care of themselves, support their friends and loved ones, and seek help when needed.

On October 16, 2024, our team collaborated with YouthNet's Youth Advisory Committee and muralist Kseniya Tsoy to create a mural that embodies hope, wellbeing, and life. On October 23, we unveiled the mural and presented the Community Builder of the Year Award to YouthNet alongside a room full of advocates committed to youth wellbeing.

This artwork now lives in YouthNet's social work office, serving as a reminder that despite the challenges facing young people, their strength and perseverance shines through, and they have the power to make a difference in the lives of others.

### [WATCH THE VIDEO](#)



## United Way (Ontario and Nunavut) School Food Infrastructure Fund

On January 31, 2025, Agriculture Agri-Food Canada announced the launch of the [School Food Infrastructure Fund \(SFIF\)](#) which supports not-for-profit organizations to improve infrastructure and equipment for school food programming across Canada. United Way East Ontario was selected as one of several organizations (known as initial recipients) from across Canada to further distribute the SFIF. Our United Way is working with five partner United Ways to make sure much needed school food infrastructure projects are in place to support our communities.

The SFIF will support the purchase and installation of infrastructure and equipment that increases the capacity of community organizations to produce, process, store, and distribute food for school food programs.



## Leading Forward: United Way Canada National Conference in Ottawa

United Way Centraide Canada hosted more than 400 attendees, representing 60+ United Way Centraides, for its national conference in June 2024. Taking place in Ottawa, United Way East Ontario welcomed our network for the first opportunity since before the pandemic to come together, strategize, and tackle current needs that we face in all our communities throughout the country.

Our team led two workshops, sharing our regional context with a national scope. In the first workshop, participants engaged with the topic of issues leadership to consider how to tackle shared issues on a national scope in the coming years. Through United for All, this second workshop highlighted United Way East Ontario's work to address increased polarization and have difficult conversations around hate and violence.

## King Charles III Coronation Medals awarded to local community leaders

In May 2023, to mark the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III, then-prime minister Justin Trudeau announced the Government of Canada’s intention to [award 30,000 Coronation Medals to those “who have made significant contributions to the country, a province, territory, region or community, or an achievement abroad that brings benefit or honour to Canada.”](#)

United Way East Ontario is proud to have been chosen by the federal government to bestow this accolade on individuals who have worked tirelessly to make our region great for everyone.

This year, we awarded Coronation Medals to the following people who have worked tirelessly, in their communities to make lasting change:

- **Grandmother Irene Compton**, co-founder of Minwaashin Lodge, for her dedication to empowering Indigenous



Executive Director of Minwaashin Lodge Mary Daoust, Grandmother Irene Compton, and UWEO Vice President of Community Impact Kelly Merti

women affected by violence and her work to foster healing and cultural connection. Her efforts enrich a mutual understanding in both Indigenous identities and non-Indigenous communities.

- **Karen Williams**, past Board Chair and Board Member for United Way East Ontario, was instrumental in United Way’s efforts to transition from a federated fundraiser to an impact-focused organization. Karen passed away in 2023 after a hard battle with pancreatic cancer. She was a driving force in ensuring the best for United Way and the community. Her legacy lives on.



Former UWEO Board Member & Chair Danya Vered, Interim President & CEO of UWEO Dennise Taylor-Gilhen, Karen’s Son Douglas, Karen’s Husband Brian, UWEO Board Member & Former Chair George Brown, and MP & Former UWEO Board Member Yasir Naqvi.

# A Message From Our Board Chair

**In my second year as Board Chair, I have witnessed extraordinary leadership from within United Way East Ontario and utmost dedication from our Board of Directors. Together, we have strengthened our connections across local sectors and communities.**

During these times of economic uncertainty, our ability to sustain investment in critical programs across our region is a testament to the commitment of Interim President and CEO Dennise Taylor-Gilhen and her team. United Way has been established as not only a champion for the community sector, but as a trusted and unifying voice within it.

We are living in a polarized society with increased rates of hate and violence. In this climate, United Way's role as a connector has never been more important. No matter race, religion, age, or political stripe, our staff and volunteers show no hesitation in taking on tough conversations and bringing people together to solve complex, community-wide issues.



Over the past year, it has been exciting to see our affinity brands—such as Women United and GenNext—reach new audiences and rally communities to get engaged in our work. In fact, Women United recently celebrated its 10-year anniversary and more than \$1 million raised to date.

Our Community Wealth Building strategy is also showing its merit, as the housing crisis worsens, and tariffs have folks looking to support local people and businesses in new ways.

**The challenges facing our world can feel overwhelming, but meaningful progress is happening, and United Way is deeply embedded in that work.**



With your support, we can build a better future. Financial and volunteer contributions from our community members allow us to influence policy decisions in our region and drive lasting, positive changes for those who need us most.

Our Board members have done a truly remarkable job this year. They have been extremely vocal, engaged, and have put in extra time and effort. This report demonstrates how their influence translates into meaningful, local action. I'm grateful for the expertise each member brings to the table, and I'm proud of what we have accomplished together.

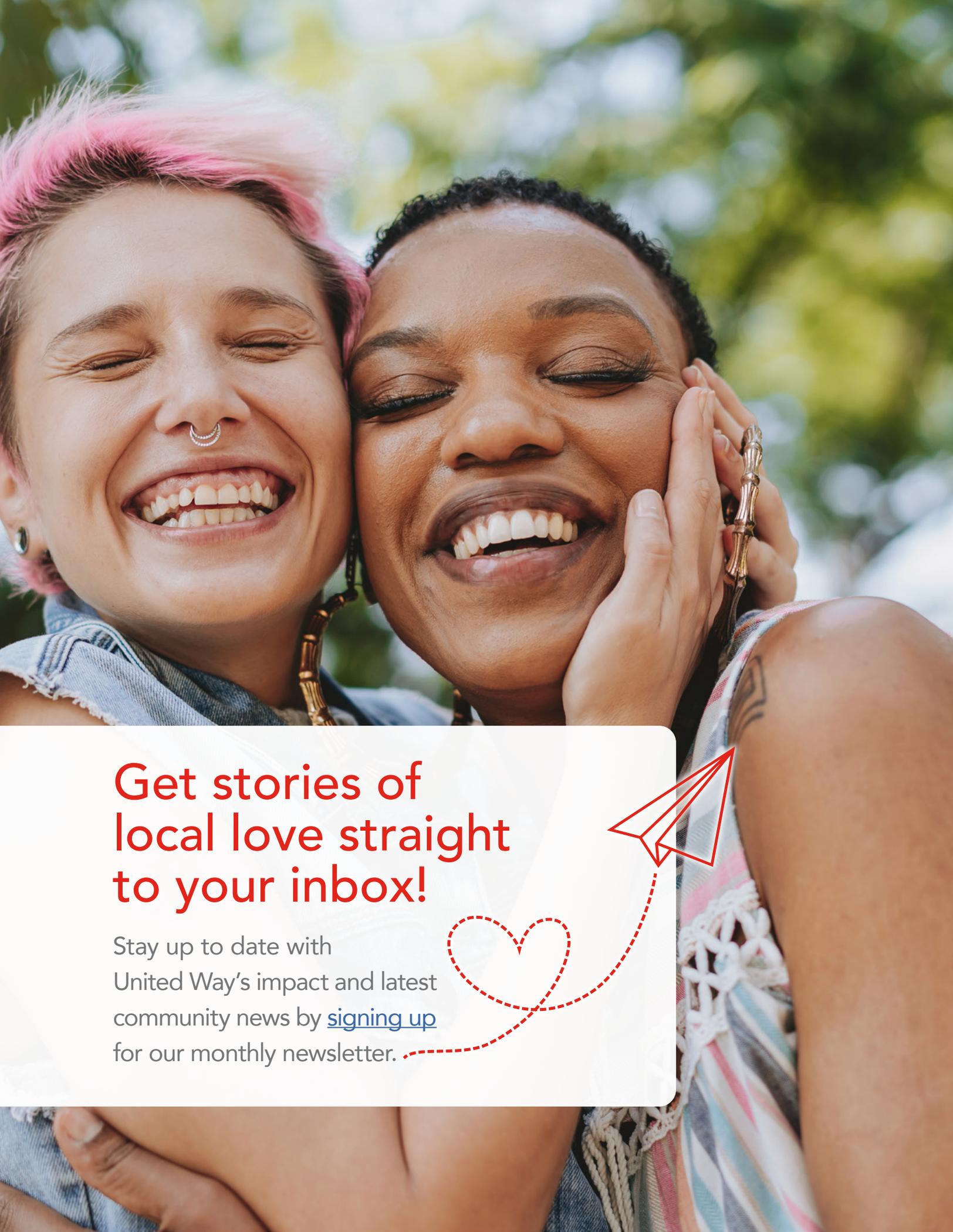
In the year to come, I look forward to our community connections growing even stronger across the region. There will be new obstacles, of course, but

with the guidance of our Board and the determination of United Way's talented team, I am confident that we can handle whatever comes our way. I am honoured to stand alongside all of you, and I am hopeful that those who share our vision will join us in making a real difference.

Sincerely,

**Thom Donnelly**

Board Chair,  
United Way East Ontario



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# Appendix

## Investment Breakdowns

### Terminology

**Focus Area:** Through research, consultation and analysis we're able to identify where our community needs help the most and where our investments will show the greatest results. The three focus areas (All That Kids Can Be, From Poverty to Possibility, and Healthy People, Strong Communities) each concentrate on specific needs, and connect with programs and services to make the greatest impact possible.

**Strategic Priorities:** United Way's strategic priorities for investment focus on specific issues that cut across disadvantaged populations to achieve community impact. These priorities are designed to: Address root causes or systemic issues, offer rich opportunities to align the work with multiple community partners, enable evidence-based approaches, and capitalize on community energy. All investments made through the Call for Proposals are in projects or programs that will advance our strategic priorities. Strategic priority partners identify indicators with targets that align to our priorities and report against those targets in an annual program report for each year of their funding.

**Community Wide Initiatives:** Based on research, Community Wide Initiatives operate to enhance existing community impact and investment strategies in one or more priority goals. Community Wide Initiatives mobilize multiple stakeholders in order to address community-wide challenges and create a collective response to affect systemic change.

**Donor Designed Investment(s) and Affinity Programs:** An investment in a focus area, priority goal, program or project, achieved through highly customized cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship of a donor and in consultation with priority goal partners through the Donor Designed Investment program.

**The Tomorrow Fund™:** Internally restricted funds are established through United Way's Board policy for any testamentary gift received without express direction from a donor/testator and for which the intent cannot be reasonably determined to be of an endowed nature. The first \$100,000 received in a year will be internally restricted for Community Impact for allocation as one-time funding for programs and community initiatives. The remainder is internally restricted for operations. The funds are to be used for activities that advance one or more of United Way's focus areas and strategic priorities.

## All That Kids Can Be – 12-month funding period

### Focus Area Partner Funding

Investment Area	Programs	Types of Programs	Total Investment
All That Kids Can Be (Renfrew County and Prescott-Russell)	8	After-school programs for youth, mentorship, and family supports	\$111,444

### Strategic Priority Partner Funding

Investment Area	Programs	Types of Programs	Total Investment
Critical Hours	15	Homework clubs, leadership programs, mentorship	\$791,783
School Readiness	3	Parenting support, parent-child activities, skill development	\$174,000
Youth Homelessness	5	Wrap-around housing supports, transitional housing services	\$224,524
Mental Health and Addictions (Children and Youth)	3	Navigation hotlines, rural youth mental health program	\$117,700
Crisis Supports (Children and Youth)	1	Crisis support services	\$28,000

### Community Wide Initiative(s)

Investment Area	Programs	Types of Programs	Total Investment
Critical Hours/ School Readiness	1	Ottawa Child and Youth Initiative (OCYI) - Community collaboration	\$75,000
Mental Health/ Addictions	6	<i>project step</i> (non-mainstream school and out of school support programs, counseling, parent programs, research, school counseling programs), Rapid Opioid Response, school counseling	\$320,000

### Donor Designed Investment(s) and Affinity Program(s)

Investment Area	Programs	Types of Programs	Total Investment
Critical Hours	4	Enhanced Homework Clubs + Summer Achievement Gap, Art programming	\$251,054

### Tomorrow Fund Initiative(s)

Investment Area	Programs	Types of Programs	Total Investment
Youth Mental Health	1	Rural Ottawa Youth Mental Health Collective	\$10,750

### From Poverty to Possibility – 12-month funding period

#### Strategic Priority Partner Funding

Investment Area	Programs	Types of Programs	Total Investment
Employment for Newcomers	4	Supportive employment programs/Employment readiness programs	\$184,000
Employment for People with Disabilities	3	Social enterprises/ Supportive employment programs/Employment readiness program	\$123,000
Financial Crisis	2	Financial Literacy/Crisis	\$63,000
Youth Employment	1	Employment supports	\$24,000
Beginnings & Transitions	1	Skills Development & Literacy (Lanark)	\$10,825

### Community Wide Initiative(s)

Investment Area	Programs	Types of Programs	Total Investment
Employment for Immigrants and New Canadians	1	HIO IRCC Grant Hire Immigrants Ottawa (HIO)	\$25,176 \$76,297
Employment for People with Disabilities	1	Employment Accessibility Resource Network (EARN)	\$249,391
Community Wealth Building	1		\$1,256

### Grants-Based Initiative(s)

Investment Area	Programs	Types of Programs	Total Investment
Energy Poverty	3	Low-income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP), Hydro-Relief	\$60,255

### Tomorrow Fund Initiative(s)

Investment Area	Programs	Types of Programs	Total Investment
Indigenous Employment Leadership Table	1	Shared staff with the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition	\$40,000
Community Wealth Building	1	Developing a Collective Impact Framework	\$19,749

## Healthy People, Strong Communities – 12-month funding period

### Focus Area Partner Funding

Investment Area	Programs	Types of Programs	Total Investment
Healthy People, Strong Communities (Renfrew County and Prescott-Russell)	9	Mental health counselling, seniors' care, basic needs support	\$142,999

### Strategic Priority Partner Funding

Investment Area	Programs	Types of Programs	Total Investment
Agency Capacity Building	2	Collective impact initiatives, capacity building agency supports	\$130,000
Mental Health/ Addictions	9	Counselling and peer supports	\$563,000
Crisis Supports	4	Distress lines, crisis counselling and intervention	\$258,000
Successful Aging	8	Programs that help seniors remain in their home, recreational programs, day programs	\$291,500
Strong Neighbourhoods	6	Resident engagement, supporting community initiatives, asset mapping	\$290,000

### Strategic Investment(s)

Investment Area	Programs	Types of Programs	Total Investment
Crisis Supports	4	211 (Referral service)	\$143,360
Strong Neighbourhoods	1	Ottawa Neighbourhood Study	\$115,000
Mental Health	1	Labour Community Services	\$112,695

### Donor Designed Investment(s) & Affinity Program(s)

Investment Area	Programs	Types of Programs	Total Investment
Strong Neighbourhoods	10	Community Action Grants; Hard Hat Heroes	\$59,200
Crisis Supports	1	KITS	\$4,138

United for All Initiative(s)

Investment Area	Programs	Types of Programs	Total Investment
Mental Health	1	UFA	\$90,000

Tomorrow Fund Initiative(s)

Investment Area	Programs	Types of Programs	Total Investment
Agency Capacity Building	1	Volunteer sector recognition	\$2,000
Mental Health	1	Mental health and counselling services streamlining	\$20,000
Crisis Support	1	Resource hub for post-crisis response	\$5,000
Gender Based Violence	1	Community engagement event related to CKW inquest	\$1,000



## Outputs

Outputs measure the quantity and quality of services provided by partner agencies (e.g. clients served, hours of service, activities that took place, sessions held, pamphlets produced, etc.).

In other words, outputs measure how much we made possible and how well it was executed.

### Outputs by Focus Area Comparison – Across our Region

Focus Area	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2019-20	2018-19
<b>All That Kids Can Be</b>	13,439	19,857	20,471	31,194	33,250
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People supported</li> <li>• Programs</li> </ul>	46	45	50	47	62
<b>From Poverty to Possibility</b>	4,752	4,912	8,044	6,151	10,339
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People supported</li> <li>• Programs</li> </ul>	17	14	24	17	17
<b>Healthy People, Strong Communities</b>	73,957	77,583	93,764	53,710	64,058
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People supported</li> <li>• Programs</li> </ul>	49	56	56	36	69

*Note: The number of programs we invest in changes year to year based on updated priorities and activities, and by prioritizing collective impact initiatives where many partners work toward a common goal. Our outputs are also influenced by moving from a three-year funding cycle to a one-year funding cycle and fluctuations in the dollars we have available to invest.*

## Outcomes

Outcomes measure the broader results achieved through the delivery of services, in this case at the program or project level. Outcomes quantify the actual effect the agency's efforts have on its objectives. For agencies who deal with clients, outcomes could be changes in (or maintenance of) skills, knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, or circumstance. For agencies who work at a system level, outcomes could be changes in (or the maintenance of) system-level stats, conditions, policies, etc.

In other words, outcomes measure if people are better off, or in the case of system level programs, whether or not the desired goal has been achieved. **United Way East Ontario sees outcomes as the best measure of impact when reporting on our investments.**

### Insights Into the Outcomes: All That Kids Can Be

- Many programs are seeing increased numbers of youth attending and being consistent participants over the course of the year
- Mental health and food security remain among some of the key concerns in the community
- Rising program costs and increased demand for services is causing financial strain for many agencies
- For very young children, the effects of the pandemic are still showing up in delayed development and lagging social skills

### Insights Into the Outcomes: From Poverty to Possibility

- Employers are becoming more interested in working with job seekers from underrepresented groups and with social enterprises
- The City of Ottawa is working on a poverty reduction strategy which offers many potential opportunities across the sector.
- The full effects of the Ontario Employment Transformation project are unfolding, but the current challenge is that specialized providers, for instance those focused on job seekers with disabilities, are receiving less funding and are asked to focus on intake volume over employment outcomes



## Insights Into the Outcomes: Healthy People, Strong Communities

- The new Canada-wide 988 suicide crisis line allows more people to get the support they need in our region and alleviates some of the burden on local crisis lines
- Demands for mental health services remains high, and the growing concerns of food security, inflation, and housing instability are putting additional burdens on individuals in our community
- Agencies have seen a drop in the number of volunteers and volunteer hours, making programming a challenge in some cases
- Political and world events, including continued anti-trans rhetoric and policies, and the impact of the ongoing violence in Gaza and Israel, continue to resonate locally and impact many members of our communities

## Measurement and Collection Methods

### Indicator Assessment Definitions for Agency Partners

**This is how we ask our partners to report back on the front-line work United Way donors have helped make possible.**

**Type:** Output or Outcome

**Indicator description:** Provide the actual indicator. The description should be succinct and without ambiguity. An outcome indicator normally implies directional change using words such as increase, decrease, strengthening, reduce, improved etc. An output indicator typically reports on short-term results or actions that are needed to achieve an outcome and uses action words such as trained, completed, identified, held, disseminated, evaluated, launched etc.

**Target:** Targets should be specific, realistic and ambitious. With few exceptions, targets should be numeric. They cannot be a range (e.g. 45-55 is not acceptable, 50 is acceptable). There is no need to qualify a target (e.g. 50 children) because who or what the agency is measuring should be very clear in the indicator description (e.g. increase in children attending homework clubs).

**Unit of measure:** The most common units of measure will be number or percentage. For activities such as getting a policy approved or holding a major event, a unit of measure such as complete/incomplete may be more appropriate.

**Definition:** Agencies have the opportunity to outline what the different terms/words used in the indicator mean to them, since often, terms used are open to interpretation. For instance, in the indicator “decrease in the number of people using drugs”, it would be helpful to further define that ‘people’ are program clients and to be counted as someone no longer using drugs, they must have been off drugs for at least six weeks by the end of the one year program.

**Frequency and timing of data collection:** How often and when data is collected. Daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, each January and July, annually, etc. Is there a specific time period when data is collected (e.g. only during the school year, during tax season)?

**Method to data collection or calculation:** A description of the approach or plan to collect the data, including where data will be kept and how results will be calculated.

**Data source:** Where the data needed to calculate or track the indicator will be coming from. It should be clear whether the source is internal to the organization or external. If an agency is asked to provide evidence of the figures it calculated or provided for an indicator, they are expected to provide documentation or a source.

**Person(s) responsible for data collection:** When designing an indicator, it is important to think about who will be responsible for collecting and maintaining the data, to ensure that it will be feasible to collect. Is this a staff member? A consultant? A volunteer? The title of the person responsible should be identified.



# About United Way East Ontario

Working with communities in Prescott-Russell, Ottawa, Lanark County, and Renfrew County, United Way East Ontario invests resources where they are needed most and will have the greatest impact. Through research, evaluation, and partnerships with community experts, we identify the root causes of the biggest social challenges facing our communities and help find solutions that change tens of thousands of lives for the better. 100% of donations to United Way are put to work in the communities where they are raised to help those most in need.

[UNITEDWAYEO.CA](https://www.unitedwayeo.ca)



**United Way**  
East Ontario