



# **“Community Matters Story”**

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**Collaborating for Success**



# “Community Matters”

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- How our story began
- Invitation sent to all United Ways in Ontario raising less than a million dollars
- All United Ways served a rural environment
- None of the United Ways invited had ever conducted a community consultation process



# “Community Matters”

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The Community Matters Collaborative involved 17 United Way partners:

Lanark; Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry; Upper Ottawa Valley; City of Kawartha Lakes; Northumberland; Milton; South Niagara; Niagara Falls & Greater Fort Erie; South Georgian Bay; Huron; Bruce Grey; Perth County; Oxford; Elgin - St. Thomas; Porcupine; Sault Ste. Marie; and United Way of Leeds & Grenville as the lead.



# “Community Matters”

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## Collaboration:

The effort made by two or more agencies or service providers to achieve results that they cannot achieve working by themselves



# Collaboration was critical to Success

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- A single United Way could not compete for the dollars required to do the work
- Impact of covering many regions in Ontario was an attractive model to United Way of Canada and, and the Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Effort was important to strengthen the smaller United Ways in Ontario
- Collaborative members achieved more working together than they would have working in isolation



# Phase I – First Chapter

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- Engaging Community Tables
- Exercise was important to learn from each other and improve how we support our communities



# “Community Matters”

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Community Tables offered many opportunities

- networking
- connecting
- understanding
- learning
- accepting
- listening

**“It’s all about Community Building”**



# What did we discover?

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- People told us about their dreams for their community and about their problems
- People told us United Way should be a leader in facilitating change
- All UWs were encouraged to keep moving forward – there is a greater risk in doing nothing than in changing
- UWs started to explore the need to work in new ways with new partners





# “Community Matters”

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What impact did our conversations have?

- What began as conversations has led to relationships that will be long lasting
- This participatory process has helped us identify outcomes and a process to begin looking at root causes of issues that affect our communities



# Phase I Community Consultations

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- United Ways conducted over 260 community consultations all across the Province and interviewed over 6000 people
- Used an “open spaced concept” approach



## Phase II- Community Surveys

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- Survey, reaching out to the people – newspapers, internet, intranet, community & medical centres
- 435,000 surveys were released in communities across the province seeking input into issues
- We achieved a 21% response rate province-wide



## Phase II- Community Surveys (Cont'd)

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- Surveys helped flesh out what problems affected families and what problems affected communities
- Wider distribution reached out to new contacts
- Results helped UWs better understand core issues that had been identified in Phase I
- New level of community input to help United Way formulate strategic directions



# Phase III- Town Halls

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- Town Hall Meetings
- 312 Town Halls held
- 6415 participants
- Results helped to re-affirm results and offered an opportunity to re-connect with the communities we had visited earlier



# What did we learn?

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- People hungry to have an opportunity to discuss their dreams and fears
- Real isolation in rural communities
- “Big city issues” that affect people especially youth are affecting rural communities
- People willing to “roll up their sleeves” and work together to make change happen



# Top Issues Identified in Leeds and Grenville

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- 1) Children & youth
- 2) Transportation
- 3) Poverty
- 4) Economic development & employment
- 5) Access to affordable healthcare



# Provincial Findings

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- Across the province our findings have been enlightening
- 13 out of 17 identified Children & Youth as number one issue, made top 5 in others
- 14 out of 17 identified transportation as either the # 2 or # 3 issue
- Poverty related issues, particularly access to affordable housing, hit 11 of 17 UWs





# “Community Matters”

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- Throughout the province, communities are struggling with economic development and employment issues. Communities feel there is no vision, no plan and many have lost hope that things will get better.
- Some northern communities have identified issues that are specific to that region: issues surrounding native communities, emotional isolation, poverty, and serious problems with addictions.



# Rural Seniors

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- Many seniors living in rural environment live in profound poverty, substandard dwellings
- Many declared the feelings of being trapped, isolated, lonely, and forgotten
- Seniors living in rural communities do not see doctors or nurse practitioners as often as urban partners; transportation is the cause, results in poorer health in elderly



# “Conversations With Youth”

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- Children as young as 12 shared concerns about drugs and alcohol use and abuse
- Youth were consumed by poverty issues
- Quest for jobs in children as young as 12
- No affordable nutritious food choices at school
- Rural youth expressed feelings of hopelessness, loneliness & isolation – rural experiences more suicides per capita
- Youth want to drive earlier, get jobs earlier and they want to leave their community after school – rural communities suffer from a “brain drain” unlike their urban neighbours



# Rural Findings

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- People living in rural communities live in deeper poverty than their urban neighbours
- Cost of competitive housing traps rural dwellers in poverty and keeps them there
- Some families live in homes with no running water – children bathe at school
- Lack of accessible transportation contributes to high level of poverty
- Communities where rural poor live – have no jobs and no available day care



# Rural Findings con't

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- What we found missing in rural policy is a concerted effort to engage individuals and communities in poverty in their own economic & social enhancement
- The rural poor face a a large number of socio economic restraints including lack of assets such as affordable or satisfactory housing, lack of access to service, non existent or sporadically available technologies and markets and lack of skills and organization

# Final Chapters – What's Next



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- Long Range Planning – 3 to 5 years
- Development of Priority Funding Plan – issue-based funding being developed
- Work with agencies will continue
- Work with other funders will be necessary
- UWs-Cs forming new community-based partnerships to address key issues

# Immediate Action

## Immediate Response

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- Partnering with local transportation authorities to solve the transportation issue to increase access to needed services
- Facilitating opportunities for groups to come together to determine targeted action strategies
- Providing education and knowledge-sharing opportunities to enhance the capacity of the sector
- Building standing Resource Teams to serve the rural areas



# Leeds & Grenville's Action & Response

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- Immediate investment of dollars into existing transportation provider
- Immediate investment in Connect Youth which is a youth-based suicide prevention organization
- Immediate investment in children's program for after-school & summer programming in an area that was profoundly under-serviced





# Call To Action Across Province

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- Youth Town Halls are now considered a priority across Province
- Several UWs have been asked to help launch Social Planning Councils
- One UW has helped open up a homeless shelter
- Youth Symposiums/Summits being held
- Some UWs have been able to leverage resources to help with issues



# United Way's Role Will Vary By Issue and Strategy

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## May be:

- Convener
- Leader/partner/collaborator
- Data provider & analyst
- Planning specialist
- Resource developer
- Policy advocate
- Issue educator
- Implementation manager
- Behind-the-scenes facilitator



# Why was funding important?

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- Allowed United Ways to build relationships
- We will be the catalyst for change because of the O.T.F.'s confidence in our collaborative
- We've returned to communities who never had organizations return before – we are committed to supporting them
- We've developed resource team approaches to problem solving – works best in rural



# United Way's Role in the Impact Agenda

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## Offering:

- ✓ community-wide perspective and connections
- ✓ assessing social needs
- ✓ addressing gaps and redundancies in services
- ✓ focusing on issues for impact
- ✓ coordinating community action
- ✓ supporting partnerships and collaborations
- ✓ generating new initiatives and innovative solutions



# What Strategies Do We Pursue?

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- Not just providing direct services
- Creating sustained positive changes in community conditions
- Continue to foster a sense of willingness to face the root causes of poverty



# “Community Matters”

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- Community Matters is giving the voice back to the people who live in our communities
- They’ve told us through our consultative process that impact is important
- Community input is very important and empowering – it’s .....
- Their Voice
- Their Dollars
- Their Decisions



# “Future Funding”

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- We believe we can change the face of rural Ontario
- Each United Way has much more work to do
- United Ways have started to form partnerships within their communities to examine the root causes of issues
- UWs feel that there are opportunities to have a profound impact on rural communities identified as vulnerable
- UWs would like to have the opportunity to work locally, and as a collaborative, to address youth challenges, strengthen community capacity to build resilience, and undertake an *Action For Community Change* Initiative in these communities



# Thank You

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- “We don't accomplish anything in this world alone ... and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one's life and all the weavings of individual threads from one to another that creates something.”

Sandra Day O'Connor

- Thank you for helping United Way with its journey