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advocate

November | December 2023

Organizations that Support our Community





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Supporting our Growing Community

One of the things that makes our community so great is the way we support so many amazing organizations that in turn give back to the Region of Waterloo in so many ways. I had the pleasure this September of joining the United Way March of 1,000 Umbrellas from Waterloo City Hall to Kitchener City Hall. It was great to see so many businesses, government and not-for-profit organizations out to help kick off the 2023 United Way Campaign with a walk in the sunshine down King Street. The United Way of Waterloo Region is a key funding organization that helps so many other not-for-profits in Waterloo provide great services to the community. We're fortunate to have other charitable foundations that also provide funding for key services offered throughout the region by charities and NPOs, including the Cowan Foundation and Waterloo Region Community Foundation.

This issue of the Advocate highlights these great funding organizations, as well as some of our key community charities and not-for-profits who obtain funding from these types of organizations, from personal and corporate donations, or through various government ministries/funds. Parents for Community Living Kitchener-Waterloo is a key provider of services and supports for children, youth and adults in the Region and are helping to contribute to a solution for affordable housing for the persons with exceptional abilities that they support. Spectrum provides services and supports for 2SLGBTQIA+ people in the Waterloo Region. Food insecurity continues to be a problem

for so many people in our community, and we've seen this issue exacerbated due to the rising costs of food in the last couple of years. The Food Bank of Waterloo Region is a fantastic organization that is working hard to meet the growing needs of individuals and families facing food insecurity.

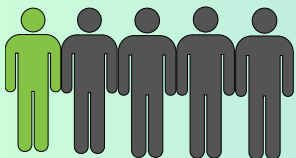
These organizations, with the help of great funders like United Way, the Cowan Foundation, and Waterloo Region Community Foundation, are helping some of the most marginalized people in our community meet their basic needs around housing, food, socialization, learning and skills development. By helping to support all members of our community in any way we can, we make the Waterloo Region stronger and continue to help it to be one of the best places to live and work in Canada.




ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Scott Gilfillan


Scott Gilfillan is a chartered professional accountant and a partner with PwC in assurance, as well as their Waterloo Market Leader. Scott focuses on providing clients with audit and accounting advice while acting as a trusted business advisor.



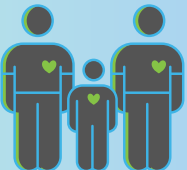
1:5 in our community do not have a family physician




HEALTHCARE & PHYSICIAN RECRUITMENT PROGRAM



Access to healthcare is one of the top factors considered when relocating to a new community. Are you committed to ensuring your workforce has access to primary care in order to recruit and retain the best and brightest talent?



Canada is expected to welcome 460,000 newcomers every year. Having access to adequate healthcare is critical to the success of newcomers integrating into our community.



30%

OF LOCAL PHYSICIANS ARE AT RETIREMENT AGE

Currently 70,000 + residents in our community do not have a family physician with risk of 50,000+ additional residents if recruitment efforts aren't taken to replace the retiring physicians.

"This community initiative relies on the support of the local business community to ensure we can meet the needs of our growing community"

"a growing community with growing needs"

contact Jenna Petker to support this community initiative:
jpetker@greaterkwchamber.com

Supporting Everyone Across a Diverse Community

In our last edition of the Advocate, we focused on developing traditional infrastructure such as transportation networks, transit systems, and housing construction to support population and economic growth across the Region of Waterloo.

It is increasingly apparent that Canadian communities still require even more investments in the days and years ahead to address the critical issues we face. This includes core and social infrastructure. Leaders across local private and public sector organizations are building social infrastructure capacity, which is broadly defined as programs and initiatives that reduce poverty and inequalities, improve health care, and subsequently create economic growth.

The key imperative for all charitable and philanthropic organizations is managing change. Traditional models of decision-making, engagement, and funding are shifting to priorities around inclusion and equality. With the ever increasing pressure on our workforce, we need every person in Canada to fully participate in the Canadian economy. Philanthropic Foundations Canada has described the current environment as a community where we all must be more inclusive, more resilient, and more prosperous in a world of conflicts and growing inequalities.

The Waterloo Region Community Foundation (WRCF) describes their activities as collaboration with partners to create sustainable, equitable and thriving communities. Across a wide spectrum of stakeholders, they are gradually developing forward-thinking and innovative solutions for meeting the future needs of all local residents.

The WRCF recognizes three instruments that provide a measurable impact – granting, investing and convening. Furthermore, philanthropy needs to be relatively easy for individuals and companies to support the organizations and issues they care about.

As governments and the broader public sector programs have been downsized over recent years, non-profit and charitable organizations have had to fill the gaps and assumed increasing responsibilities for convening and bringing people together to highlight the investments needed to sustain communities and vulnerable populations.

The objective of United Way Centraide Canada is to create opportunities for a better life for everyone in our communities. They will work hard to ensure Canada becomes a truly equitable, safe and inclusive place. Measures are being implemented to challenge traditional ways of working and thinking including a collaboration strategy that will impact all areas of internal operations across the United Way network.

In a 2023 Pre-Budget Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs of the Ontario Legislature, Ontario United Ways indicated that government investments can enhance health and social outcomes while supporting equitable and inclusive growth. Access to vital services, affordable homes, livable incomes, good jobs, and safer neighbourhoods are the building blocks of a healthy and prosperous Ontario.

The United Way network across Ontario is ready to work with governments and community partners to ensure that all residents have the means to seize the opportunities for a brighter future for themselves and their families.

Community Foundations of Canada provides national leadership for over two hundred local organizations. Their objective is to drive local solutions for national change on issues that matter to members and build a just and sustainable future.

Programming generally targets pressing social issues including youth engagement, gender equality, support for entrepreneurship, and social innovation. They believe in a future that is bright, sustainable, and not the status quo. Regardless of backgrounds, all persons must perceive a sense of belonging in Canada.

Philanthropy has advanced beyond businesses and individuals simply providing financial assistance for programs and services. Communities must collectively support all interests with an eye to equity, diversity and fairness.

Complex social issues require complex solutions, and through the on-going efforts of many local organizations, Waterloo Region is prepared to meet our challenges. Our global reputation in technology will require and ensure that new applications and innovations emerge to address the social challenges that must have solutions.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ian McLean

Ian is President and CEO of the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce.



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The Escalating Responsibility of Corporations to Address Societal Issues

A complex social environment is significantly challenging all Canadian business across domestic and international markets where the status quo is not an option.

The Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) notes that in recent years, there has been a shift from traditional Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to social purpose. Many organizations have pivoted from a community investment strategy into a more holistic approach where corporate missions are integrated across all their activities.

In general, CSR involves a broad scope of approaches and initiatives ranging from environmentally sustainable practices to community involvement. Customers increasingly expect responsible behaviour from the companies they are engaged with on a regular basis. These initiatives include traditional philanthropy to operational changes and transformation of decision-making structures.

Professional services and consulting firm PWC notes that businesses need to be part of solving some of our biggest challenges. In an increasingly complex world, the private sector can assist economic and financial systems with their operations and ultimately provide equitable benefits to all societal stakeholders. Organizations should move commitments into action and to build trust, businesses need to be trusted.

Cananda Life has noted their purpose is to improve the financial, physical and mental well-being of Canadians and they can achieve this objective by working with colleagues, customers, advisors and the community. Their mission is to create a socially responsible company that assumes a proactive approach for ensuring a positive impact across all company activities.

The shift in Canadian perspectives on social issues is primarily driven by consumers. A 2022 survey conducted by the Smith School of Business at Queen's University concluded that Canadians possess high expectations around the responsibility of corporations to help solve society's most pressing social and ecological challenges – from climate change to racial injustice. The results highlight the increasingly complex balancing act between creating social impact and delivering profits to shareholders.

The survey, administered by Proof Strategies, indicated that 84 per cent of 1,120 respondents agreed that businesses should do more to solve problems and meet the needs of people. Participants ranked charities and businesses as equally responsible for addressing societal problems and, on average, estimated that 21

per cent of a company's profits should be allocated for solutions. With respect to business leadership, 89 per cent of respondents noted that it is important for the CEO of a company to amplify their personal position on significant issues.

Against these results, the Smith School convened a panel of 15 Canadian business leaders to share their perspectives. In discussions, a consistent theme was that high expectations established for Canadian business will remain a long-term priority and new models of governance will be required for employers to meet consumer demands.

Respondents provided divergent opinions around priority social issues, with fair wages, food affordability, gender equality, economic development and zero carbon emissions among the most prominent concerns cited.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce has indicated that our prosperity depends on a strong business community that innovates, attracts talent and capital, and expands into new markets. Ensuring all Canadians – from all sectors, regions and backgrounds – have the opportunity to participate in and rise up is one way to address this issue. A growing collection of research shows the most successful organizations are creating diverse, equitable and inclusive workplaces where individual differences and the contributions of all employees are equally recognized and valued.

National perspectives around the roles and responsibilities of business to support social issues is a highly dynamic and evolving portfolio of concern. All employers, regardless of their sector, should be aware of emerging trends and be prepared to respond to the perspectives of their clients and broader community.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Art Sinclair

Art is Vice President Policy and Advocacy for the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce.

A Pressing Need for Family Physicians

Having access to health care professionals, specifically primary care is critical to the well-being of the residents living in our community. Unfortunately, many families, locally and across the province do not have the benefit of being under the care of a primary care provider. As a result of population growth and retirements, we are in a healthcare crisis, with more residents than ever without a family physician. Though, the current shortage of physicians is an issue nationally, we are facing the impacts of this crisis locally. For a number of reasons, recruiting physicians has become increasingly challenging and we are competing globally to recruit physicians locally.

The objective of the Healthcare & Physician Recruitment Program is to recruit family physicians to Kitchener-Waterloo & Woolwich to meet the primary care needs of residents living and working here. One of our key initiatives is the Annual Family/ Emergency Physician Resident Weekend.

This weekend, held the first weekend in November annually brings first, second and third year family and emergency medicine residents from across Ontario along with their partners, allowing us to showcase Kitchener-Waterloo as a great place to live and work. This weekend is planned, organized and hosted by the dedicated members of the Chamber's Family Physician Liaison Task Force.

This eventful weekend includes touring the family medicine residents through Grand River Hospital and the Medical Centre at The Boardwalk as well as showcasing a couple well known community organizations. Residents will also be introduced to local family physicians and other health care professionals, learning more about the different range of practice opportunities available here in Kitchener-Waterloo.

Emergency medicine residents will be taken on private tours through Grand River Hospital and St. Mary's Hospital. These residents will participate in the rest of the weekend's activities, in hopes of recruiting and retaining new emergency physicians to our hospitals.

Partners/spouses will have the opportunity to explore employment opportunities in their respective fields. Throughout this weekend, our visitors will discover the region's diverse, strong innovative and entrepreneurial spirit.

This weekend has been well received in previous years by the visiting family medicine residents and their partners and it has been our best recruitment tool over the last 24 years. We know from past Resident Weekends that this event is a key driver to the success we have had in recruiting family physicians to our community. Many of the residents that will be participating in this year's weekend will be ready to begin practice in summer 2024-2025.

Our efforts continue throughout the year to recruit new and established family physicians through personal community visits. These tours allow us to explore what the physician is looking for and find a practice opportunity that meets their needs.

Our successes and efforts would not be possible if it wasn't for our generous corporate, municipal and personal sponsors and volunteers of this program. We extend our sincere thanks to our partners for their generous and continued support as we continue to strive to eliminate the physician shortage in Kitchener-Waterloo.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jenna Petker

Jenna is Physician Recruitment Lead for the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce.



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Thank you to our dedicated sponsors for helping the Chamber continue its goal of eliminating the doctor shortage in Waterloo Region.

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**Saturday, November 18,
@ 10 am**

- Along Weber Street, from Frederick to Erb Street

Santa Photos

Capture the magic with Santa! Starting **Saturday, November 18, @ 1 pm** visit Conestoga Mall. It's the perfect way to create lasting memories with your loved ones.



Pet Party Event

Don't leave your furry friends out of the holiday fun! Join us on

**Sunday, November 26th &
December 10th @ 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm**

for our Pet Party Event, where you can bring your pets to meet Santa and take adorable photos together. It's a pet-friendly winter wonderland you won't want to miss!

Sensory Friendly Santa

We believe in inclusivity and joy for everyone! On

**Sunday, December 3rd
@ 10 am - 11:30 am**

we're hosting a Sensory-Friendly Santa event. Families with sensory sensitivities can enjoy a peaceful and magical visit with Santa in a sensory-friendly environment.

For more information call us at 519-886-5500 or visit us at

www.conestogamall.com



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*Events and dates are subject to change. Please visit our website or contact us for the most up-to-date information. Photography services may require additional fees.

August 1, 2023 to September 30, 2023

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August 1, 2023 to September 30, 2023

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Uniting Need & Compassion in Waterloo Region

My family has been dedicated to helping this community thrive since my great-grandfather arrived from Scotland in the late 1800s. There was a time when creating jobs was all that our community needed to grow and flourish; however, the dynamic nature of modern-day society means poverty has become a complex and constantly changing entity.

Although United Way has been supporting this region since 1941, we are ever evolving, and seek more effective ways to support the most vulnerable in our community. In the early days of 'United Federations', a small member-driven campaign was the engine for fundraising. We now have a quarterly, open funding application process which engages community volunteers in review and decision making. This funding model, which we moved to in response to the changing need during the pandemic, now allows us to constantly adapt, innovate, and improve our process and reach. We have less 'red tape' than any other granting mechanism which allows us to work in this manner.

Community needs are at an all-time high - with our last quarterly application round receiving over \$2.4 million dollars in requests. None of the applications were for 'nice to haves', each of these applications highlight a specific and unique need for critical support. Unfortunately, we were only able to grant funding for 30% of that request.

A tainted perspective on charity is undermining the capacity of critical support for our community. A few years ago, United Way ran a national campaign with the slogan '*Unignorable*'. Over the course of the pandemic, and through the transition from housing shortage and affordability issues to a full-blown housing crisis, issues that were previously 'out of sight' have now become *Unignorable* throughout our region.

United Way wants people to know that although the task is monumental, together we can make a difference, and with innovation and collaboration we can end poverty! We are experts that understand problems and bring people together to implement the most effective, holistic, solutions.

Almost 500 community members participated in the March of 1000 Umbrellas on September 14th, which kicked off this year's campaign. An umbrella represents protection and inclusive support. This past year, United Way has funded nearly 100 critical local non-profit organizations, who have helped us uncover and find solutions for the cracks and crevices in social support in our region.

This year, United Way WRC is calling on the support of all community members to help raise \$8 million dollars. The funding requests and feedback from our local non-profit partners indicate that this is the minimum needed to provide essential services to those in need. We must all rise to the challenge. Help make our home, Waterloo Region, safe, affordable and full of potential for all.



The way people think about charity needs to change! Charity and non-profit work must be made a priority to reverse the trajectory of poverty in our region.

To our supporters, thank you so much! To everyone else, please join us. There is an important role within the charitable sector for everyone - leadership, volunteering, and donating. Together we can end poverty, but we need everyone to make the required impact. **UNITED. WITHOUT YOU, THERE IS NO WAY.**



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joan Fisk

Joan is CEO United Way Waterloo Region Communities. A leader and change maker locally and internationally, Joan Fisk has evolved from driving industry, education, and health, to guiding the amalgamation of one of Waterloo Region's most critical philanthropic hubs, United Way Waterloo Region Communities.

Fall Networking



Oktoberfest greeters welcome attendees at the Libro Business After 5 event at Westmount Signs & Printing.



Margaret Johnston, from the City of Kitchener congratulates Tim Bezner, president of Westmount Printing, on the opening of their new facility.



BA5 Committee members Kevin Fancy and Conrad Lovell are about to start the opening remarks.



Attendees during the proceedings of the 2023 Annual General Meeting.

Photo Credits: Tomasz Adamski

For the health of our community.

www.the-boardwalk.ca



Attendees enjoy bites of food together prepared by the multiple caterers at the Libro Business After 5 event.



Paul McIntyre Royston, CEO of Grand River Hospital Foundation says a few words as the featured charity at the most recent BA5 event.



Tim Bezner and Simon Dowrick of Westmount Signs & Printing do the official keg tapping!



Attendees and exhibitors connecting at the Libro Business After 5 event.



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Ian McLean moderates a fireside chat on the State of the Economy with Jean-Francois Perrault, Chief Economist at Scotiabank.

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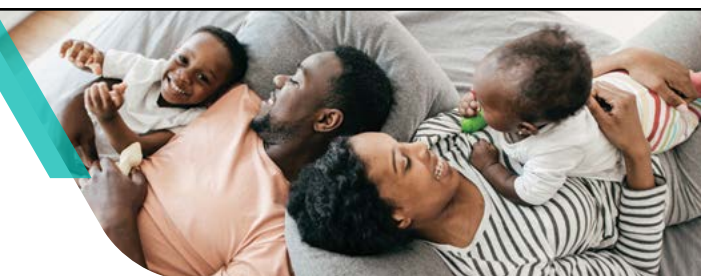


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Mark Your Calendar

Tuesday, November 14

Chamber Young Professionals: Holiday Social

5:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Location: LaLa Social House

Live Ticket - Member: \$35

Live Ticket - Future Member: \$60

Dress in your best holiday attire for a night unlike any other, at LaLa Social House. This private, members-only venue is opening up the doors to all our Young Professionals for this exclusive event. Along with indulgent food and drink, and an inspiring atmosphere sure to encourage new connections, be ready for a few other surprises and holiday festivities! LaLa is a place to entertain and be entertained.

Title Sponsor:



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Thursday, November 23

Building the Future of Care Together

11:30 am – 1:30 pm

DoubleTree by Hilton, Kitchener

Live Ticket - Member: \$55

Live Ticket - Future Member: \$95

With many new updates, join us for a panel discussion about building the future of care together with our hospital Presidents Mark Fam, Ron Gagnon, and Patrick Gaskin as they speak to the local business community on the future of health care delivery in Waterloo Region, and their role in it.

Title Sponsor: RBC



Community Partners:



Tuesday, November 28

Libro Business After 5: Holiday Edition

5:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Location: AMJ Campbell

Member: complimentary (but recommended \$10 donation to the Feature Charity)

Future Member: \$40 minimum donation to the Feature Charity

Close out your year with some great networking opportunities in a festive atmosphere. Connect with local businesses at their booths, enjoy themed drinks and treats, and celebrate the start of the holiday season with other professionals. Holiday attire is encouraged!

Title Sponsor:



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Host Venue:



Feature Charity:



Monday, December 4th

Fireside Chat with Mark Crowell, Chief of Police

11:00 am – 1:00 pm

Location: Ken Seiling Waterloo Region Museum

In-Person (Member): \$55

In-Person (Future Member): \$95

Hear from our Chief of Police, Mark Crowell as he discusses the first year in his role with the WRPS and his plans for the future. We'll cover a variety of areas, including some discussion around: advocacy and allyship efforts, reconciliation, talent recruitment, cyber security, community building, and more.

Community Partners:



Cyber Security Workshop

Date and Time: TBC

Location: Communitech Hub

In-Person (Member)- \$35

In-Person (Future Member) -\$70

Start building your cybersecurity toolkit! Small business attendees will be split into groups of no more than 6 individuals, and will participate in 10-minute speed rounds, where you'll get all your cybersecurity questions answered by mentors in an intimate setting. With experts on hardware and software, firewalls and internet security, training your team and more, you'll get all your questions answered from local experts.

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Exciting Annual Events to Look Forward to in 2024!

International Women's Day Breakfast

March 8, 2024

Karen Redman and the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce invite you to join us to recognize & celebrate the outstanding achievements of women in our community and around the world. This annual event sells out each year and is broadcast live on Rogers with multiple airings throughout the month!

Business Excellence Awards Gala

March 21, 2024

The Greater KW Chamber of Commerce hosts the largest gala in the Kitchener Waterloo area. Our in-person events draw 800 respected and recognized business leaders from every industry and size. The evening is designed to provide an opportunity for our members to receive recognition as well as an opportunity for Chamber Members to celebrate excellence in our community.



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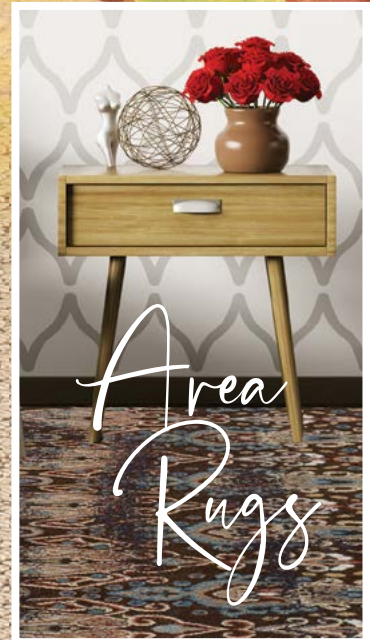
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How to Support The Food Bank of Waterloo Region

No gesture or action is too small, writes Kim Wilhelm

It was a year unlike any other. Like other Ontario cities, food insecurity rose rapidly in Waterloo region and food bank use hit an all-time high. At The Food Bank of Waterloo Region, we saw the highest need for food assistance in our almost 40-year history. In one year, we jumped from 40,500 adults, children, and seniors accessing food assistance to 58,600. That's a 45 per cent increase.

It's safe to say that without our community's support, we wouldn't have been able to keep up with the rise in demand for food assistance. Food donations from community members and local businesses stocked our shelves and helped us provide consistent food support to the Community Food Assistance Network—a system of more than 120 community programs and agency partners working together to provide food, services, and support for people in need. Financial donations from the community helped us fill inventory gaps, buy food to meet diverse cultural and dietary needs, and keep our delivery trucks on the road. And more than 3,800 volunteers gave their time, talent, and energy to help ensure no one in Waterloo region went hungry. In a year as challenging as this one was, we couldn't be more grateful for the support of our community.

Part of what made this year so challenging for so many was the overall cost of living. It rose significantly this year, affecting



Non-perishable food donations donated by Waterloo region residents.



John Vogan collects cash donations during The Food Bank of Waterloo Region's Full Bellies. Happy Hearts. campaign.

everyone but especially our most vulnerable community members. More people than ever before were forced to choose between paying their rent or mortgage, getting to work, and buying groceries. To say it was a difficult year is an understatement.

With the holiday season upon us and a new year on the horizon, I wish I could say that things were going to get better but sadly, we expect the number of people accessing food assistance to continue to grow as the overall cost of living continues to increase. For many people, it's a challenge putting food on the table each day, let alone finding extra funds for holiday meals and gifts.

The reality is that more and more people are turning to food banks and food assistance programs for support. The cost of necessities like food and rent are outside of many people's budgets and for those working one or more jobs that pay minimum wage, their income simply isn't enough to make ends

meet. We're no longer a source of emergency assistance in times of crisis—food banks are becoming the norm.

That's why hunger doesn't just affect strangers or people experiencing homelessness. It can happen to anyone at any time. As many as 1 in 10 households in Waterloo region struggle to afford to put food on the table. Just two years ago, that number was 1 in 20 households. You may know some of these families. Maybe you work with one of these individuals. Maybe your children go to school with their kids. Some of these families may even live on your street or in your building. With food insecurity continuing to affect more of our neighbours, there's never been a more important time to support The Food Bank.

For those who can afford to give, non-perishable food and financial donations are greatly appreciated. After all, we couldn't do our valuable work and help keep our neighbours nourished without the generous support of our donors. There are several ways you can make a donation. You can drop off a non-perishable food item to any grocery store in Kitchener-Waterloo or our distribution centre located at 50 Alpine Ct., in Kitchener. You can also donate online at thefoodbank.ca. Every dollar donated can help provide two meals for someone facing hunger. And on our website, you can join EAT 365, our monthly giving program. It's a



Libro Credit Union employees volunteer their time repackaging tomato basil rice in The Food Bank of Waterloo Region's Fresh Approaches Food Centre.

simple way to provide support and relieve hunger every day of the year.

If you have time to give, we're always looking for volunteers to join us in our distribution centre or at fundraising events. Volunteers are essential to our work and have a crucial role in all aspects of our operations. From accepting and sorting donations and packing perishable hampers to delivering food to Community Food Assistance Network agencies and partners, we couldn't do our important work without volunteers. You can visit our website to learn more about the volunteer opportunities available.

No gesture or action is too small. Food and monetary donations of any size have an impact. If your budget allows for it, please consider donating non-perishable food or funds. And if you have some spare time—whether it's one hour or 10 hours—please consider volunteering. With our community's help and support, we can ensure that no one in Waterloo region goes hungry.

We also want to remind everyone that there's no shame in reaching out to The Food Bank for help. There's no typical food bank recipient and there are many reasons a person may need food assistance. Anyone needing food assistance or looking for more information can call our Centralized Food Assistance Outreach line at 519-743-5576 extension 340, chat online at thefoodbank.ca (chat icon is located on the bottom right-hand corner of the homepage) or visit thefoodbank.ca/network/map for an up-to-date listing of programs, supports, and services available throughout Waterloo region.



Volunteers pack perishable food hampers at The Food Bank of Waterloo Region



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kim Wilhelm

Kim Wilhelm is the interim CEO of The Food Bank of Waterloo Region.

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The WHY of Spectrum is Belonging

Founded in 2012, Spectrum Waterloo Region's Rainbow Community Space was created because of the need for a safe and welcoming space for 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Waterloo Region. We now offer more than 30 different groups and activities each month. The WHY of Spectrum is belonging. Everything we do is done with the goal of helping members of the rainbow community find a sense of belonging. Sometimes that includes meeting other folks and building a chosen family, sometimes it means being connected to helpful health and wellness resources that are 2SLGBTQIA+-affirming. It always means that Spectrum provides a space where 2SLGBTQIA+ people can bring their complete and authentic selves without fearing judgement or discrimination.

We are best known for providing peer support groups for various segments of our community, including transgender folks, newcomers, older adults, Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer people, young adults, and asexual and/or aromantic people. These groups are designed to help participants increase their social networks and sense of belonging in the community, leading to improved well-being. One participant from our trans groups shared, "This program has saved my life and continues to make life seem worthwhile."

In addition, we provide a variety of social/recreational programs, including a monthly book club, weekly board games nights, multi-sport drop-ins, and more. The 2SLGBTQIA+ Multi-Sport Drop-In is the gym class we wish we had in high school. It's an opportunity for members of the rainbow community to be physically active in a space where they will be safe from discrimination based on level of skill or the appearance of their body.

Spectrum also has a lending library of books and movies, an online directory of trans-friendly service providers, a directory of 2SLGBTQIA+-friendly businesses, a map of gender-neutral washrooms across the community, and a variety of toolkits, videos, and fact sheets available on our website. We offer education and training in 2SLGBTQIA+ cultural competency through our Rainbow Diversity Training program. This can be purchased for your business or organization to help you along the path to becoming a safer and more welcoming place for 2SLGBTQIA+ employees, clients, and other stakeholders. One training participant recently shared, "This was an incredible session. One of the best I've ever taken."

Spectrum does not receive any annualized government funding. We are supported by donations from individuals and businesses, grants that we apply for, and revenue from our Rainbow Diversity

Training program. The community's support is essential to helping us work towards our vision of an inclusive community where all 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals are welcomed, celebrated, and supported as their authentic selves.

When people make donations to Spectrum, they can choose to designate their funds to our general fund or our Chrysalis Fund for Mental Health. Donations to the mental health fund allow us to subsidize the cost of counselling services for 2SLGBTQIA+ adults at the OK2BME program at Camino Wellbeing + Mental Health.

In addition, we have established the Rainbow Community Fund at Waterloo Region Community Foundation. Donations to this endowment fund will help Spectrum be stable and successful in the long-term.

The Statistics Canada hate crimes report notes that in 2021 there was a 64% rise in crimes against 2SLGBTQIA+ people. In the face of the rise in hate and violence we have seen over the past few years, we must remain vigilant to protect 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Waterloo Region. Your support of Spectrum is an act of allyship that will make a positive impact on the lives of 2SLGBTQIA+ people in our community.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Scott Williams

Scott Williams (he/him) is the Executive Director of Spectrum Waterloo Region's Rainbow Community Space. He holds a BA in English Language & Literature from Wilfrid Laurier University, and a diploma in Film Production from Vancouver Film School. He has completed certificates in Diversity & Inclusion Fundamentals and Anti-Racism

with the Canadian Centre for Diversity & Inclusion. He is a graduate of the Engage!KW program from the KW Community Foundation, and the Leadership Waterloo Region class of 2023. Scott started with Spectrum in 2013 as a volunteer librarian, then sat on the Board of Directors in 2014-2015 before returning as an employee in 2021. Scott served for several years as the Communications & Development Coordinator at KW Counselling Services (now Camino Wellbeing + Mental Health) where he was part of the OK2BME Team. He volunteers with the Community Investments Team at United Way Waterloo Region Communities.



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Social Innovation That Builds Community

Social innovation involves the development and implementation of new ideas, services or models that address societal challenges. In the context of people with developmental disabilities, social innovation aims to break down barriers and create opportunities for people to thrive.

Developmental disabilities affect millions of individuals worldwide, impacting their ability to participate fully in society. These disabilities, which encompass a range of conditions like autism, Down syndrome, and cerebral palsy, often result in unique challenges that require innovative solutions. Social innovation plays a pivotal role in improving the lives of people with developmental disabilities, promoting inclusion, and creating a more equitable society. This article explores the significance of social innovation in Waterloo Region and highlights an inspiring initiative that has made a difference in our community.

Parents for Community Living (PCL) is a not-for-profit charitable organization founded in 1986 by a group of visionary parents and community members. PCL provides group living, supported independent living, employment and day supports for over 100 children, youth and adults with developmental disabilities in Waterloo Region. PCL employs over 225 staff in twelve locations.

The Bridgeport at Lancaster project is a wonderful example of partnership, collaboration, social and community impact. Completed in 2021, this innovative, affordable housing/ community hub/sanctuary space was built in partnership with Beyond Housing, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, and Parents for Community Living. This partnership allowed our organizations to meet the needs of each of our agencies in the same building. Bridgeport at Lancaster has forty-eight affordable housing units, ten of which are for adults with developmental disabilities who live in their own apartments and lead self-directed lives. The community hub and teaching kitchen provides an excellent place for skill development and a space to support adults with various activities including sports, arts and crafts, music, and cultural outings. The moveable wall between the St. Paul's church sanctuary and PCL's community hub, allows for larger community events for both organizations to use. Various community groups and organizations also make use of this space for their activities and events.

Partnerships with local organizations like Beyond Housing and St. Paul's have been essential in PCL's growth, allowing us to serve additional people with intellectual disabilities. Parents for Community Living cannot do this work without the broader community. Funders, donors and local business are essential partners to help us achieve our vision where every person lives with dignity as a valued member of our community. Business can play a crucial role in social innovation and community development. Socially responsible businesses may incorporate sustainable practices, support local community agencies, or even create social impact as part of their core mission. Local businesses can hire people with special needs to work in their companies, provide accessible products and services, or donate a portion of their profits to not for profit organizations helping to create sustainability.

Bridgeport at Lancaster recently celebrated its two-year anniversary. We are very proud to see the adults we support in the building achieve greater independence and become active members of their community. Kyle, a young man with a developmental disability, has had many firsts in this new space. He has learned to cook for himself, can take the bus independently, has made new friends and taken financial literacy classes. A whole new world has opened up for him and all the others in the building. We are sincerely grateful for the support of many businesses, individuals and organizations in our community that have partnered with us to make this dream of Kyles a reality.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Katherine Loveys

Katherine Loveys has been the CEO of Parents for Community Living for 25 years and is a graduate from the University of Waterloo and Renison University.



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Let's Build Community As We Build Housing

Our region is changing. Fast. In the process, we're welcoming new residents from other parts of Canada and around the world. We're building new housing and workplaces and infrastructure at a remarkable pace. We're developing the next generation of technology companies determined to transform our world. We're also witnessing the ramifications of rapid growth, with its scarcity of affordable housing, increases in social isolation, and declines in personal connection to this place we call home.

For the past four years, Waterloo Region Community Foundation (WRCF) has been focusing on understanding the complexity of affordable housing and on exploring potential solutions. We published Waterloo Region Vital Signs® to bring data to conversations, loaned millions of dollars to local affordable housing initiatives, and supported Kindred's launch of a first-of-its-kind Affordable Housing GIC.

Despite Waterloo Region continuing to be among the ten fastest-growing larger metropolitan areas on the continent with its dizzying rate of new local construction, Waterloo Region Vital Signs® confirmed our housing supply is still not keeping up. There is a dramatic mismatch between the type of housing needed and the type of housing being built – both by unit size and by pricing. We know the region's housing crisis continues to hit our most vulnerable hardest – the young, non-homeowner older adults, newcomers and refugees, those who identify as Indigenous, Black or as a person of colour, those with disabilities, and individuals exiting the child welfare system. This uneven impact deepens social disparities, threatening the cohesion and diversity that makes our community strong.

Our housing crisis is about more than housing, however. People living in unaffordable housing are less likely to thrive. In Waterloo Region, residents spending over 30% of their income on housing were twice as likely to report low life satisfaction and were 1.5 times more likely to report fair or poor mental health, illustrating the significant correlation between housing affordability and overall wellbeing. Local residents also have a lower sense of belonging and lower rates of neighbourhood satisfaction compared with the rest of the country.

But we can do something about this. As we build more housing, we have an opportunity and an obligation to build more community.

We're the Waterloo Region COMMUNITY Foundation. Community is at the core of our name and at the core of our mission. We are fixated on expanding our role in the positive transformation of our community. Previously, "community" almost exclusively meant one's neighborhood. But the term now is used to describe groups of people connected by a wide variety of shared interests. While neighborhoods are still communities, we see how non-geographic communities – of identity, of faith, of school alumni, of culture, of business – can also bring people together. Moreover, we're intrigued with how we can create more places and spaces to bring multiple communities together to cultivate more trust, and foster more engagement, equity, sustainability, and joy.

Whether you are a real estate developer or agent, a curious investor, a business owner, a newcomer, an elected official, a passionate advocate, a tech-savvy entrepreneur, an employee, or simply an interested resident, there are ways you can help. Attend community events. Read the most recent Vital Signs report. Join conversations. Consider setting up a fund to reinvest in this place we all love. Advocate for more spaces and places to build more community.

While only one year into my tenure at WRCF, I know we're up to the challenge. Our residents have the collective ambition, creativity, diversity, and compassion to redefine what a thriving community can achieve. If you have ideas, give me a call. Let's get a coffee and think of more ways WRCF can be your partner in building more community.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Eric Avner

Eric Avner is the President & CEO of Waterloo Region Community Foundation (WRCF), an organization focused on creating and supporting "Sustainable, Equitable, Thriving Communities." You can contact Eric at 519-725-1806 x 201 or at eric@wrcf.ca www.wrcf.ca



EXCITING TRAVEL DESTINATIONS!

A scenic view of a tropical beach in Thailand. In the foreground, a traditional wooden longtail boat with a blue canopy is beached on the sand. The water is a vibrant turquoise color. In the background, there are large, steep limestone cliffs rising from the sea under a clear blue sky.

THAILAND

A large, historic stone castle with multiple towers and battlements, surrounded by lush green trees and a well-manicured lawn.

IRELAND

A section of the Great Wall of China, featuring stone battlements and watchtowers, winding along a ridge with green vegetation.

CHINA

A view of a historic city with red-tiled roofs and a bridge over a river.

PRAGUE

A busy street scene in a European city, showing historic buildings and a crowd of people.

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Passion, Purpose and the Match

Joe Forwell owned Forwell Variety at the corner of University and King in Waterloo. When I first arrived in town, the store had already been around a long time. It was a successful business and always seemed open and busy. In a small corner of the front window was a note to students attending the nearby universities, "If you are hungry come in for a loaf of bread."

I may not have the exact words, but that was the sign's general idea. Long before "Pay it forward" became a popular term, Joe was a man who lived that philosophy and shared it with his staff. That small gesture forty years or more ago from a small local business impacted the lives of many thousands, possibly hundreds of thousands of students.

Ten years later, while I was attending university in Toronto and actively volunteering at a detox centre at Sherbourne and Adelaide and running events on the waterfront for groups such as Childfind, my mentor, who was one of my closest confidantes, took me aside. In my naïve enthusiasm I had been telling him to work less and come join me volunteering. I thought he would get so much more than he gave, as I did. I had not recognized that he was a successful professional, and alongside his moral support was the other half of what made it all work. He explained, what I did not understand at the time, that helping people and making a difference required more than just time and enthusiasm. He provided the financial resources to support the causes important to me, and I provided the time and stewardship. It was a symbiotic relationship. I could volunteer all I wanted, but without that financial support so many things would not happen. I also realized that funding alone, without good stewardship and passionate volunteers, does not have the best outcomes.

These two men provided defining moments in my life. I had volunteered since I was a teenager, but these men impacted and influenced how I operated as a corporate leader and as a board member at universities, hospitals, charities, and foundations. After decades of fundraising and working with others in this community, I have no doubt of the need for and importance of the symbiosis between funding and stewardship. People who share their funds so generously should never feel it is an expectation that they give, they need to feel the match, just like those who give their time to volunteer. With so many needs in our community, it is sad to see organizations struggle, downsize, or close completely.

Government, volunteers, and social staff cannot do it all but nor can the generous individuals, businesses and foundations. Together, however, these groups can and have transformed communities.

The original settlers of Waterloo Region took their community needs seriously. Their focus on faith and community cohesion enabled them to care for each other and "raise all the boats in the harbour." This has proved an excellent foundation that has been built on through the economic prosperity that industrialization and the financial, insurance, and high-tech growth have brought to the Region. The academic, arts, and health institutions of our community have benefited enormously from this growth and from this philosophy of caring for others.

Among his many contributions, Joe Forwell's legacy reinforced that there is something greater than the individual. Together, we can achieve so much more than on our own. In doing so, we can further develop the interconnectedness bequeathed to us by our ancestors and the generations of altruistic and community-focused businesses who continue to make Waterloo Region a great place to live.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mary D'Alton

Mary D'Alton is a former chair of the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce and a recipient of the Michael R. Follett Award. She has a strong grasp of the non-profit and charitable community.

Mary has sat on many boards in the community, has assisted several charities to stabilize and has served as a director on Community and Private Foundations as well as work for them. Mary considers herself fortunate to have moved to be a part of Waterloo Region and to enjoy the great quality of life we have here even with all the challenges ahead.

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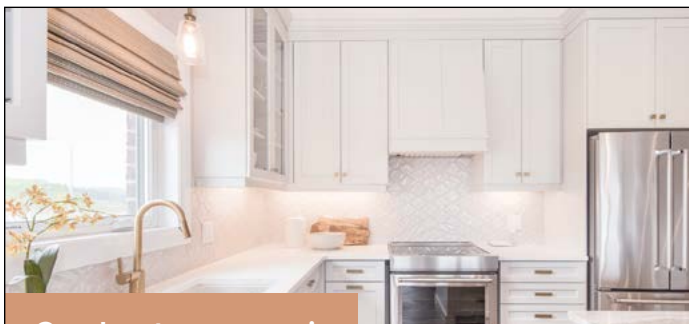
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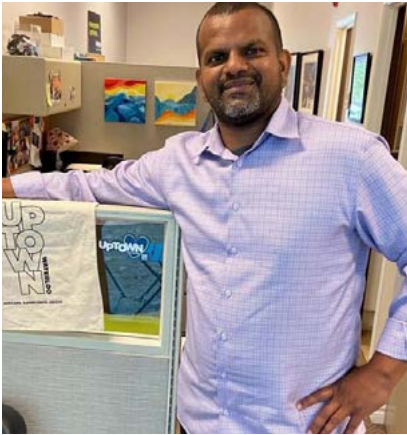
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Member Notables



Uptown Waterloo Business Improvement Area (BIA) Appoints New Executive Director

On August 8, 2023, the Uptown Waterloo Business Improvement Area (BIA) formally announced the appointment of Jeyas Balaskanthan as their new Executive Director following the departure of Tracy Van Kalsbeek.

Mr. Balaskanthan assumes responsibility for strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, program development, advocacy and financial oversight. He is committed to developing a strong and trusting connection with Uptown businesses, BIA staff and the Board of Directors. Improved stakeholder relations through collaboration and community engagement will also be a priority.

A passionate community builder with a track record of delivering results, Mr. Balaskanthan will lead the organization on a mission to create a vibrant and thriving city core. A recent news release from the Uptown Waterloo BIA notes their members play a pivotal role in driving innovation, creating jobs and fostering a sense of belonging across the community.

KidsAbility Kitchener to Expand in New, Fully Accessible Deer Ridge Location

KidsAbility has announced plans for an expansion and relocation of its Kitchener site this fall.

A brand new, state-of-the-art Centre at 4273 King Street East will be designed for young clients with disabilities and their caregivers in mind, and the goal of strengthening families while also fostering community. Twice as large and located entirely on one floor, the new location offers increased accessibility and a continuation of essential and groundbreaking pediatric rehabilitation services.

The move is driven by a profound 113% increase in client demand over the past decade, mirroring the Region's rapid population growth and the ever-evolving pediatric needs of the community. KidsAbility will maintain services at their existing sites in Guelph, Waterloo, Cambridge and Fergus.

The total cost of this project is \$2.9M. If you would like to support the KidsAbility Kitchener Reimagined Capital Campaign, please contact Paige Phillips, Senior Development Manager, KidsAbility Foundation, at pPhillips@kidsability.ca.



Junior Achievement South Western Ontario Reports Significant Progress Across 2022-2023

In a September 1, 2023, release, Junior Achievement (JA) South Western Ontario highlighted significant progress through the 2022-2023 school year. The organization effectively reached 21,681 students in 270 schools and 903 classes, with support from 549 dedicated volunteer partnerships.

Notably, JA South Western Ontario surpassed a major milestone by raising more than one million dollars to sustain their charitable mission to inspire youth and prepare them to succeed in a global economy. This accomplishment indicates the community's recognition of the organization's role in equipping students with practical skills for their future careers and financial stability.

Karen Gallant, President and CEO of JA South Western Ontario, emphasized the organization's commitment to poverty reduction through education. "Education is a pathway to breaking the cycle of poverty. JA South Western Ontario is dedicated to providing students with the tools they need, such as financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills, to create better opportunities for themselves."



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AET Group Celebrates 25 Years of Sustainable Solutions

AET Group Inc. (AET), a leading environmental, consulting, auditing and scientific services firm is celebrating their 25th anniversary of serving the needs of clients as a trusted partner for sustainable solutions.

Founded in May 1998, the company, then known as Associated Environmental Technologies (which was later renamed to AET Consultants Inc.), began with a mission to put construction and demolition organizations in compliance with waste regulations, reduce waste generation and increase waste diversion onsite through the development, implementation and monitoring of solid waste management programs.

Merging and acquiring several other environmental consulting companies has elevated AET into a multi-disciplinary consulting, auditing and scientific services company. Scott Freiburger, AET Managing Director and CEO, noted “we are the company we are because of the people that work here. I’m truly humbled by our amazing staff. Without them we wouldn’t exist.”



Kitchener Manufacturer Receives Federal Assistance for Electric Vehicle Industry

On July 10, 2023, the Honorable Filomena Tassi, Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario), announced a \$3 million investment to Kuntz Electroplating Inc. (KEI) for strengthening their manufacturing capabilities, creating 45 new jobs in the Electric Vehicle (EV) industry, and supporting an expanding green economy.

Kitchener-based KEI is one of Waterloo Region’s longest-running family-owned businesses and is one of North America’s leading manufacturers of electroplated and powder-coated exterior components for the automotive and motorcycle industries. This investment will assist KEI to modify their existing production lines and add new equipment to meet growing demand from the EV market for its services.

This project will assist KEI to enter the clean technology sector and serve new clients by offering more environmentally sustainable solutions. The company will also strengthen the manufacturing sector in Kitchener and position itself for long-term growth.



YMCA of Three Rivers and KW Titans Partner for Youth Basketball Programs

Starting in fall of 2023, KW Titans coaches and players will work alongside YMCA of Three Rivers staff to train and mentor young basketball enthusiasts at locations in Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge, Guelph and Stratford. Programs will be geared towards ages 9-12 and 13-17, providing support for new or experienced players.

The YMCA of Three Rivers will become the home of the KW Titans Skills Academy, providing local youth with access and opportunity to further develop their basketball skills. This new partnership has the ability to impact many youth across the community in a positive direction.

David Schooley, CEO of Titans Basketball Corp, noted there has never been more excitement around basketball than there is right now. By supplying pro players and coaches to the YMCA of Three Rivers, the next Jamal Murray could be discovered and perhaps local youth will be provided with opportunities they might not have had before.



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