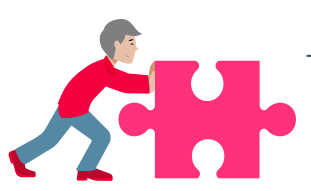


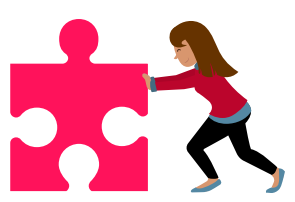
**The SRPC is dedicated to collecting, analyzing, and distributing information that inspires social change.**

Operated by United Way, the SRPC is made up of community partners and volunteers who work to build awareness of social issues and advocate for collective solutions. United Way shares information with the community and all levels of government as policy recommendations and suggested actions, all supported by evidence-based research.

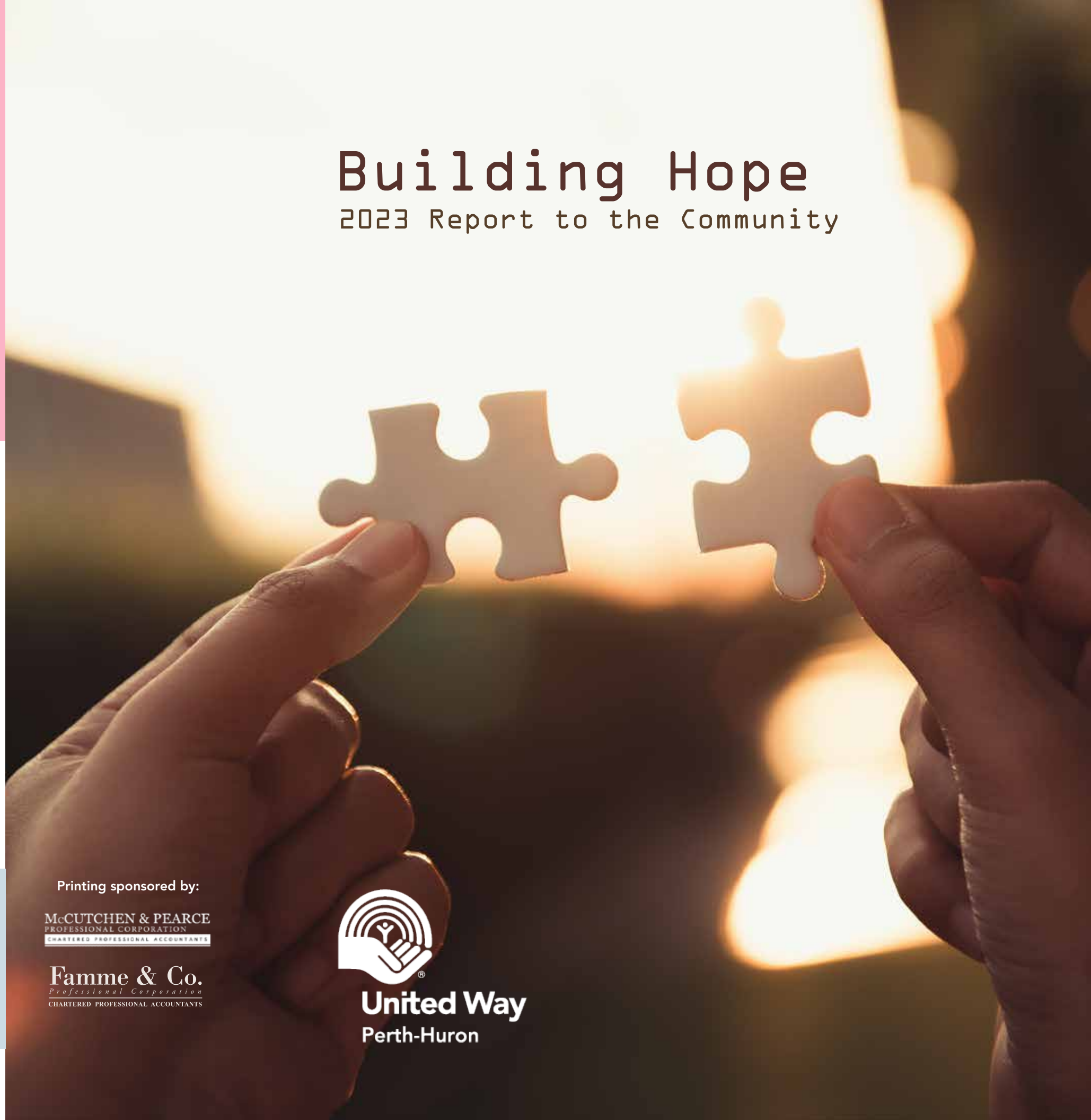
The *Quality of Life* Reports help our community understand the places we live, and aim to create conversations and inspire change through recommendations highlighting what is working, and what we can do to improve life across Perth-Huron.



To read the latest Quality of Life Reports, visit our website:



Seven-year-old Emma endured a life full of trauma, a life that taught her to keep quiet and trust no one except her beloved pet cat. Even after she was safe at the *Emily Murphy Centre*, Emma struggled emotionally; not talking around adults and using cat sounds when she was stressed. With support from caring staff, the Emma began opening up. Now, she is doing better, expressing herself easily with staff and making new friends at school.



# Building Hope

## 2023 Report to the Community

Printing sponsored by:

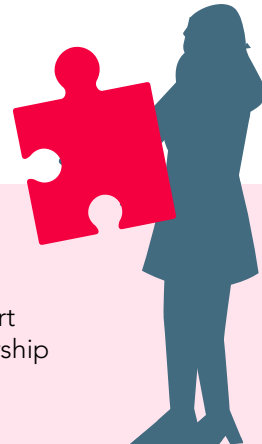


**United Way**  
Perth-Huron





United Way helps here in the communities you care about, tackling issues including homelessness, mental health, and access to services through partnerships and programs. Thanks to 600+ volunteers, and our commitment to a hyper-local approach to solving issues, we're helping build stronger communities where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.



## Youth Initiative Grants Awarded

United Way supports youth-led projects that positively benefit the participants' communities and support youth development. Youth and/or groups of youth (14–24) were invited to submit applications in partnership with an adult trustee. There were 12 grants of up to \$1,000 awarded.

### Safe Places

- 2SLGBTQIA+ Youth Connections/Weekly Social Activity (Stratford Pride Community Centre)
- New & Improved Picnic Tables (Stratford District Secondary)
- Youth Space/Decor and Pantry (Tanner Steffler Foundation)

### Equity

- Microscope Lending Program (Huron County Library)
- Equitable Living Program/Homelessness Support and Awareness (Central Huron Secondary)
- Students Helping Students/Supply and Food Cupboard for Those in Need (Stratford District Secondary)



### Mental Health

- Motivational Mondays/Learning Workshops (St. Marys DCVI)
- You are Not Alone/Speaker and Gatherings (Goderich District Collegiate)

### Building Community

- The Kindness Project/Community Service Activities (South Huron District Secondary)
- Building Community Wellness/Speaker (Listowel District Secondary)
- Urban Farming Project/Learning Regenerative Practices (Stratford District Secondary)
- Bedford Intermediate Youth Project/Tutoring (Nancy Campbell Academy)

Just like a puzzle, every piece of our social sector community is essential.

United Way brings those pieces together, with donors, leaders, and volunteers helping provide the framework and support needed to tackle the challenges facing our community.

Piece by piece, we build hope.

The dedication of our region to United Way's mission of lifting everyone up is inspiring. Thank you to everyone who supported us this past year, helping us raise more than ever before and creating the possibility of many more brighter futures!

We'd also like to thank our outgoing Campaign Co-Chairs, Rob and Leslie Edney, for all their work, and welcome our new Co-Chairs, John Wolfe and Kristin Sainsbury.

Thank you once again to all our supporters. We are grateful for everything you've helped us accomplish and look forward to continuing our work.

– Ryan Erb, Executive Director –



Pictured (L to R): Rob Edney, Leslie Edney, Ryan Erb, Kristin Sainsbury, and John Wolfe

## Housing & Homelessness



Homelessness isn't just about sleeping on the streets. People may also be in a temporary shelter, incarcerated without a place to go after release, or couch surfing. Homelessness affects every aspect of life—including family well-being, employment, and physical and mental health—and those experiencing homelessness have shorter life expectancies, are more likely to be victims of violence, and go hungry at least once a week.

The odds can often feel stacked against those dealing with homelessness due to a mix of complex interrelated issues such as mental illness, addiction, and abuse. Homelessness also disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, including individuals with physical disabilities, chronic health issues, and mental health challenges.

About **1/2** of Perth-Huron residents\* earn less than a living wage

\*Residents over 15 yrs. of age  
Source: Statistics Canada. T1 Individual File, Table IB-05C. Reference 22057 - 1004794

**285** people are experiencing homelessness in Perth-Huron

Source: Huron County and City of Stratford Social Services Depts. As of March 2024.

## Activating Solutions

Our region is experiencing a housing crisis, and there are also diverse needs to consider. United Way works to implement short- and long-term solutions to tackle pressing challenges. Helping ensure everyone has an affordable home suitable to their needs is the cornerstone of our vision for the future. This is the story of how we'll get there.







425

INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILY MEMBERS RECEIVED FINANCIAL SUPPORT

## Help Ensure Basic Needs Are Met

The Urgent Needs Fund helps local individuals and families in a time of crisis with financial support for essentials. The Fund is part of a broader strategy to prevent homelessness.

*Daima was struggling to pay the bills AND buy groceries for her family. The Urgent Needs Fund provided support so she didn't have to choose between keeping the heat on and buying food.*



Hear Zach & Amy's stories:



Perth-Huron's first non-profit housing organization dedicated to creating and sustaining mixed rental units.

United Housing's goal is to support and build on existing work being done by the City of Stratford and the County of Huron, further increasing the amount of available housing stock. It's a local solution to the very real issue of housing affordability we face across our region.



Learn more about the crisis by watching Joan's story:



## Building Housing

312 SERVED IN STRATFORD

Operated by CMHA Huron Perth

53 SERVED IN NORTHERN HURON

Operated by The Community Table

31 SERVED IN SOUTHERN HURON

## Serving People Experiencing Homelessness



Connection Centres are safe places for vulnerable people to build trust and connect with supports while accessing basic needs including shower, laundry, and food. The Centres are client-centred, and housing focused.

*Colin endured serious health challenges and without stable housing he was more vulnerable. Thanks to staff at his local Connection Centre, Colin was able to get an apartment as well as in-home help to make his day-to-day life more manageable.*



Hear about Kyle's journey out of homelessness, to a staff position at one of our Connection Centres:



## Addressing Housing & Homelessness: Short- & Long-Term Actions

94

MEN ACCESSED SUPPORT FOR COUNSELLING AND REINTEGRATION

Supported by the John Howard Society

## Reintegration Support

*After being incarcerated Mark felt hopeless, but a meeting with an Institutional Worker changed that. Together, they created a release plan to help him successfully re-enter the community.*



44

WOMEN & THEIR CHILDREN ACCESSED EMERGENCY SHELTER

Services by Huron Women Shelter



## Huron Homelessness Initiative

The Initiative includes shelter for women and children, shelter supports for youth, emergency shelter during cold months, transitional housing for men, and housing support.

81

ACCESSED EMERGENCY SHELTER DURING COLD MONTHS

Served by Huron Out of the Cold: Heart to Home in Goderich

15

ACCESSED SUPPORT FOR HOUSING STABILITY

Served by staff housing stability worker at the County of Huron

13

VULNERABLE MEN RECEIVED TEMPORARY HOUSING SUPPORT

Served by Huron Turning Point transitional housing in Exeter

75

YOUTH HAD A SAFE PLACE TO GO

Served by Shelterlink Youth Services & Huron Safe Homes for Youth



## Shelter Placements for Youth

*"I left home at 17 after years of fighting with my mom. Before I left, I contacted Safe Homes for Youth, and they found a home where I felt supported and could start planning what came next in my life."*



Watch Hannah's story to learn how she reached her goal of becoming a nurse:



## Outreach Worker

*After aging out of the youth system, Kofi experienced homelessness. Thanks to help from the Community Outreach Worker, he connected with the services he needed and started working toward his goal of a stable place to call his own.*

82

ACCESSED SUPPORT FOR HOUSING STABILITY

Served by the St. Marys Community Outreach Worker





# Mitigating the Effects of Poverty

Through our support of over 40 partners and programs, including United Way-led initiatives, United Way Perth-Huron is able to address the effects of poverty on individuals and families across our region. Thanks to our partners and donors, we helped ensure vulnerable local people had access to the resources they needed in the places they live.



## Living Wage Advocacy

Paying a living wage provides workers and their families with a better way of life, benefits employers, and helps build more vibrant and healthy communities. Over 50 local employers are certified as living wage employers. The Perth-Huron living wage is currently \$22.75/hr. (\$41,405/yr.)



**1,378**  
INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES  
COUNSELLED TO IMPROVE  
MENTAL WELL-BEING

**46**  
CHILDREN WHO  
WITNESSED VIOLENCE  
COUNSELLED

**1,467**  
VISITS TO THE NOURISH  
EQUAL ACCESS MARKET  
IN ST. MARYS

**152**  
PARTICIPATED IN  
HEALTHY FOOD SKILLS  
CLASSES

**9**  
DEVELOPMENTAL  
SERVICES CLIENTS  
ACCESSED COUNSELLING

**46**  
YOUTH ACCESSED  
EARLY INTERVENTION  
COUNSELLING

**703**  
PEOPLE CONNECTED  
TO SERVICES

Owned by United Way Perth-Huron, the *United Centre* is located in downtown Stratford and serves as our office. We have five non-profit tenants serving the community and our reception helps people connect to services.

**36**  
PARENTS &  
PROFESSIONALS  
PARTICIPATED IN A  
TRAUMA EXPERIENCE  
BOOK STUDY

**44**  
FOOD AGENCIES  
SUPPLIED

**76**  
SENIORS GIVEN  
HYGIENE  
PRODUCTS

**1,311**  
CRISIS CALLS  
ANSWERED FROM  
WOMEN FACING  
INTIMATE PARTNER  
VIOLENCE

**211**  
PEOPLE CALLED TO  
CONNECT WITH SERVICES

A hotline and website database of all available social services. Using a postal code, 211 Navigators can find local programs and services to address a caller's life challenges. 211 records are updated locally by United Way staff.

Discover more about  
our partners who  
deliver important  
programs and services:



**163**  
NEWCOMERS  
SUPPORTED WITH  
SERVICE ACCESS  
NAVIGATION



**79**  
YOUTH ACCESSED  
THE ST. MARYS  
YOUTH CENTRE



## Evangeline's Journey

"I moved from Montreal to Stratford after I came out to my family. They didn't kick me out, but they didn't take it well either and I didn't feel accepted for who I am. I'm only 24, so it was difficult to leave everything I ever knew.

"Even though I left a lot of stress behind, I was still struggling after I got to Stratford. I wanted to connect with people, to feel safe, but I had so much anxiety, depression, and anger. I came across a postcard from *Family Services Perth Huron* and learned they provided counselling. My therapist helped me recognize my emotions tied to leaving my family and came up with a plan to help me feel less anxious. This allowed me to connect with the community—especially the local 2SLGBTQIA+ community—and had a profound impact on my well-being. I am thankful for the help I got at Family Services. It's made a difference in my life and led me to lifelong friends."

**2,368**  
PARTICIPATED  
IN INDIGENOUS  
LEARNING EVENTS

**23**  
WOMEN PARTICIPATED  
IN COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT

**404**  
PEOPLE RECEIVED  
YMCA MEMBERSHIPS

**212**  
YOUTH ASSISTED  
FINANCIALLY WITH EXTRA  
CURRICULARS



## Leon's Journey

Leon never thought he'd be facing homelessness. As a new Canadian, he worked hard to build a life and felt blessed to have a job and a safe place to live. Then Leon was fired, and his life started to crumble. Without a job he couldn't pay bills, and because the place he worked also provided his apartment, he lost his home too. Leon didn't know where to turn until he found the *Connection Centre* in his community. Staff worked with him to find a place to stay, apply for EI, and connect with counselling to cope with the trauma of losing everything he'd worked so hard for. Now, Leon is doing better, and he's looking forward to starting on the next chapter of his journey.



## Maranda's Journey

Maranda's life was shattered after barely escaping extreme physical and sexual violence, harassment, stalking, and intimidation. The *Huron Women's Shelter* saved her life by helping her escape her community and provided emergency shelter far from her violent partner. Staff worked tirelessly to advocate for her, and connected Maranda with the resources she needed to start healing. Now, Maranda is doing better. She has moved on from the Shelter but still calls for support when she needs it and visits regularly to catch up with staff. For the first time in years, Maranda feels safe and hopeful for the future.