

UNITED WE CAN.
TOGETHER WE WILL.

2021-2022 **ANNUAL REPORT**



What needs
to be done to
CREATE
CHANGE
?

OUR MISSION

Building on deep local knowledge and relationships, we inspire individuals, networks, and organizations to work together in making chatham-kent the home we all want it to be.

OUR VISION

We identify the root causes of our community's most complex challenges and we work together to find solutions for one reason and one reason only, nobody left behind.

OUR VALUES

- Community First
- Meaningful Relationships
- Courage
- Tenacity
- Vulnerability
- Adaptability
- Kindness



MESSAGE TO THE COMMUNITY

From basic needs to complex issues, this year United Way of Chatham-Kent focussed on changes, large and small – within our organization and within our community.

We made a deliberate, intentional effort to reach out to community; to listen to the hopes, challenges and benefits of living in Chatham-Kent and find a way to help build and support the community we all want to live in.

We paid attention to how the ongoing pandemic was affecting our mental and physical health. We supported upstream programs for students that encouraged young people to acknowledge and name feelings before they could overwhelm, and supported the fundraising drive for a residential Withdrawal Management Service for those needing multi-faceted, immediate care.

And as the pandemic continued to affect the overall health and well-being of many, there were new, unexpected emergencies that occurred to compound the distress in several communities. In such times, we are proud to be one of the first organizations people call to look for help, and more often, ask how they can help. And we are thankful to be agile enough to offer solutions, often in partnership with other trusted organizations, to both.

During the year, over \$900,000 was spent in making an impact in community. In addition, over \$140,000 was spent on addressing needs arising from COVID-19. As our year ended, we took stock of the challenges, celebrated the triumphs and renewed our dedication to making a difference in our community every day – differences large and small.

MEETING BASIC NEEDS



DID YOU KNOW?

Approximately 10% of the requests at the Tilbury Information & HELP Centre are related to emergency or on-going housing needs.

TILBURY INFORMATION & HELP CENTRE

The Tilbury Information & HELP Centre has served the West Kent area under the UWOCK banner since 2005. Its ability to be there for an underserved community throughout the pandemic has made a difference to dozens of people every week, whether local citizens needed guidance in accessing the right social services and municipal resources or to use the food bank – something happening for more and more people, more frequently than ever before.

This year at the Tilbury Information & HELP Centre:

- An average of 320 clients used the food bank each month
- Of those clients, an average of 47 clients each month were first-time food bank visitors
- 133 Families received Christmas packages
- An average of 53 clients visit the HELP Centre for resources other than the food bank
- The HELP Centre is currently only open part-time hours

VILLAGE RESOURCE CENTRE AND WHEATLEY AREA FOOD BANK

UWOCK is the main financial supporter of The Village Resource Centre and Wheatley Area Food Bank, a community-driven access point that was quickly opened after the August 2021 explosion in downtown Wheatley. Initially launched to offer information and emergency resources, including the food bank which was relocated from its original home in a church within the evacuation zone, The Village Resource Centre soon expanded to accommodate the many needs of a community in crisis.

By November 2021, the hub housed not only The Village Resource Centre and Wheatley Area Food Bank but a clothing bank, an internet “café,” meeting space, municipal outreach offices including social services, and a library branch—plus a temporary provincial government office to help residents navigate aid and information at the provincial level.

IN ITS FIRST FIVE MONTHS OF OPERATION:

311 VISITORS

TO THE VILLAGE RESOURCE CENTRE

28 USERS

OF THE INTERNET CAFÉ

33 WEEKLY USERS

OF THE FOOD BANK (ON AVERAGE)

70 HOURS

OF STAFF TIME WEEKLY



RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES

We are proud to be a continued, trusted source of information, comfort and support during unexpected and ongoing emergency events. Our ability to connect people to services, support those services and help disseminate goods, funding and information into the community during times of upheaval, is a privilege we appreciate and work hard to uphold.



COVID-19

Evolving Pandemic, Evolving Solutions

As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to evolve, our role in supporting our community through it does as well. This year, we remained the local disseminator of SSRF government funding and Community Fund monies into the local community. We also distributed and were a local hub for PPE and pandemic-necessitated health and safety items,

Monies distributed through Social Services Relief Fund (Round Two):

- To R.O.C.K. Missions to support unhoused people via food and basic needs distribution through outreach
- To emergency Grocery Gift Cards to support food needs and insecurity for vulnerable citizens
- To Br113 Dresden Legion to support Christmas hampers

Monies distributed through Community Response Fund:

- To Chatham-Kent Gay Pride Alliance to support the development of Bill's Place community hub
- To Municipality of Chatham-Kent to support the health care needs of low-income clients not covered under Ontario Works

PPE from MAHLE

- 1,000 masks for distribution to organizations and workplaces across Chatham-Kent

COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Tests from Canadian Red Cross

- 755 tests for distribution to partner organizations upon request

WHEATLEY EXPLOSION

On August 26, the small town of Wheatley was rocked by an explosion caused by gas leaking from a decades-old well abandoned beneath the streets. More than 70 people were displaced by the blast, which destroyed several buildings and led to an ongoing evacuation of homes, businesses and other buildings. In the immediate aftermath of the blast, The Village Resource Centre was established as a central meeting point for the Wheatley Area Food Bank and information centre. Several provincial and municipal service providers and agencies are also operating out of the centre, and a clothing and household goods depot has been established.

With United Way of Chatham-Kent's support, the Village Resource Centre and Wheatley Area Food Bank has been able to pivot to meet the changing needs of the community while continuously offering a welcoming, helping hand.

ELGIN STREET FIRE, WALLACEBURG

Tragedy struck the community of Wallaceburg in the early hours of February 17, when a fire began at a large rooming house on Elgin Street. James St. Drop-In was able to quickly open its doors that bitterly cold day to offer emergency shelter to those displaced by the fire. In an example of rapid community mobilization, Victim Services and Public Health came in to set up temporary service provision on site, and UWOCK was able to process an immediate donation and provide several days' worth of food for those who needed it.

As with so many precarious housing situations, it was difficult to determine how many people were in the house on Elgin Street at the time of the fire. In the immediate aftermath, James St. Drop-In became a hub where people could check in and find out if their friends and neighbours had as well.

Sadly, three people died in the fire, and our condolences remain with all those who continue to grieve and rebuild.



A RETURN TO COMMUNITY

It was wonderful to step out of our bubble and back into community when provincial and municipal public health guidelines allowed it this year. While mandates changed often in 2021-2022, we were able to enjoy a few face-to-face events, and even find a new, colourful way to get UWOCK out around town.

BLENHEIM BBQ FUNDRAISER

Van with a Plan made its official debut in August when it took centre stage at The Pit Crew Café in Blenheim for a BBQ fundraiser. Playfully acknowledging the busy roadways as motorcycle enthusiasts from across Southwestern Ontario hit the road on Friday the 13th, a “Biker Burger” special was on offer, with \$2 from each meal donated to UWOCK to support programming in Blenheim. Diners were also offered free hot dogs in exchange for a monetary donation or non-perishable food item, which was then delivered to a local food bank.

- **9 Community Partners**
- **59 lunch specials sold**
- **\$457 raised**
- **150 Food bank items collected**

DRESDEN SUPPORTS! DRIVE-THRU FUNDRAISER

Safety and comfort weren't the only things on order at our Burns' Broasted Chicken Dinner event in the welcoming town of Dresden this past October. Tickets were sold in advance and hungry participants were able to drive through our mobile restaurant area to pick up their order. The weather was gorgeous, the food was delicious, and it was a great way to give back to a supportive community. All proceeds and collected food bank items directly supported organizations in Dresden.

- **9 Community Partners**
- **189 Dinners sold**
- **\$4000 Raised**
- **450 Food bank items collected**



SONS OF KENT FESTIVE FRIDAY MARKET

It was a pleasure to be invited to take part in a local holiday market this year, where we got to visit with shoppers in the brisk evening air and hand out information regarding programming and resources. For those looking to purchase gifts or make a donation, we did a swift trade in lawn signs, red scarves, and mental health bracelets.



HATE HAS NO HOME HERE SIGNS

Chatham-Kent can spread a message of love and to show their pride in building a safe, inclusive community for all with UWOCK-branded Hate Has No Home Here lawn signs. Designed by local artist Christie Obalek and printed by Planet Print, signs are available for a donation that goes straight back into local initiatives and programs.

Currently, more than 75 Hate Has No Home Here Signs have been distributed throughout Chatham-Kent, and beyond.



UNITED WE CAN.
TOGETHER WE WILL.



OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO TRANSPORTATION

In a municipality like Chatham-Kent, where towns are connected by rural roads stretching over 2,500 km(2), reliable and safe transportation is a necessity. But for many, especially during the pandemic, available transportation could easily become a barrier to accessing services, work, family, and basic needs. Through internal and external programs, we are committed to helping community members overcome transportation barriers and ensure that, quite literally, no one is left behind.

VAN WITH A PLAN

Based specifically on the requests and feedback on the Social Planning and Action Tables, The United Way of Chatham-Kent launched Van with a Plan in July 2021.

The shared-use vehicle is intended to address transportation and accessibility issues experienced by both people receiving services throughout Chatham-Kent, and local agencies providing the services & programs that people need. The full-size van is sponsored by Blenheim Chevrolet Buick GMC, owned and administered by the United Way of Chatham-Kent, and offered to agencies for use at no cost.

In its first nine months on the road, Van with a Plan:

- Saw regular use by 6 agencies across Chatham-Kent
- Travelled an average of 487km per month
- Is booked on average 3 days per week
- Is used by participating agencies to take clients to appointments, on social outings, grocery shopping and more
- Has been used to deliver food and meals, emergency supplies, school supplies, personal hygiene products, harm reduction items, Hep C testing
- Has become a judgement-free, private and dignified meeting spot for agencies and clients



A true community partnership, the success of Rebuilding Wheels, Rebuilding Lives is thanks to the collaboration of numerous businesses, service providers, students and volunteers who all work together. Through this program, a car is donated, refurbished by high school students, registered and then awarded, through an application process, to a citizen of Chatham-Kent who is currently experiencing transportation barriers.

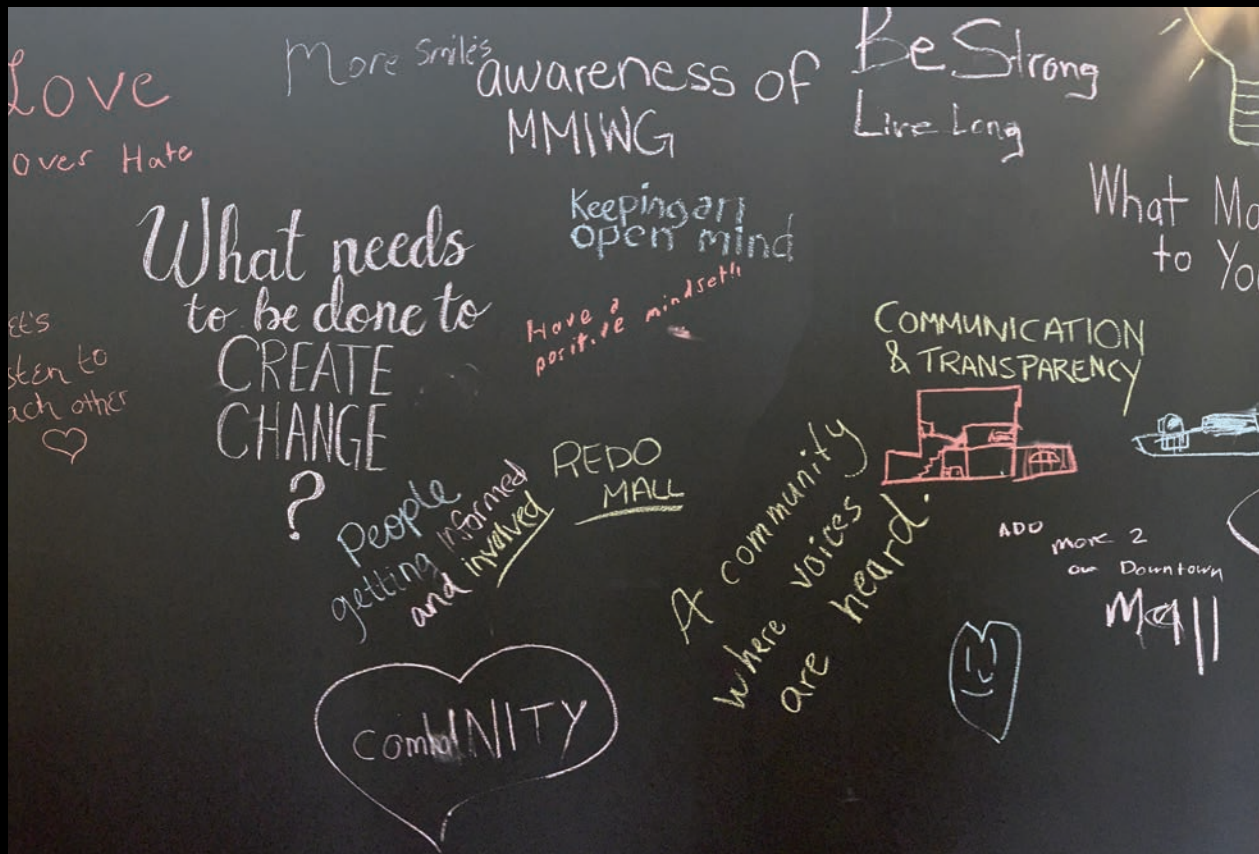
After a hiatus due to the pandemic, we were happy to restart the program this year, presenting the car to Kirk Peters of Walpole Island First Nation.

REACHING OUT. LISTENING DEEPLY.

From August 2021 to January 2022, we reached out across the region asking people what matters to them about the place they call home. We spoke with people living across Chatham-Kent, from Wallaceburg to Erieau to Ridgetown.

We asked members of different organized groups to talk with us – groups such as the Older Adults Social Planning and Action Table, the CK Local Immigration Partnership, volunteers and helpers of R.O.C.K. Missions, the CK Realtors Association, and the Chatham Horticultural Society, to name a few. Conversations were hosted by many informal networks and groups including students at College Boreal, migrant workers, residents involved in arts and culture, and a chapter of Red Hat Ladies.

We listened to people's hopes, concerns, and sense of what needs to happen next. Information from these conversations will be gathered into a snapshot and available widely. It will act as an important resource in guiding our own work. Here is a brief overview of what we learned.



THE KIND OF PLACE WE WANT CHATHAM-KENT TO BE:

People told us they want to live in a kind, caring, and welcoming community that we all take pride in. “So much is possible when we come together,” important things like making sure everyone’s basic needs are met, that we “thrive not just survive.” As expressed by one resident:

“I don’t want everyone to be the same; I want us all to be comfortable to be different...”

WHAT’S GETTING IN THE WAY?

People told us about the challenges they’ve seen and felt that can get in the way of becoming the Chatham-Kent we want to be:

- **Everywhere we went people talked about not feeling heard or seen.**
- **There are real tensions that we need to work through together.**
- **Basic needs aren’t being met for too many people.**

WHAT WE CAN DO?

During the conversations, there were many suggestions for action. We heard that our communities take a lot of pride in their ability to come together in a crisis. People believe if we are willing to adapt and take small steps together, we will make our way forward to become the kind, caring community we want. We are compiling all of what we heard from these conversations into the Community Voice Snapshot. The Snapshot will talk more about specific issues and actions and will be released in 2022. It will be available on the UWOCK website for everyone to read and share.

WHAT’S NEXT?

United Way of Chatham-Kent invites you to get involved. Look for the release of the Community Voice Snapshot. Read it and talk about it with people you know. Groups who would like to hear more about the Snapshot can contact us for presentations about what we heard and about how we can each take action to make Chatham-Kent the community we want it to be.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS

Demonstrating unparalleled resilience and flexibility while facing the prospect of yet another uncertain school term, students once again endured a truncated, fractured year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. There is now no denying the toll it is taking on students' academic and social development, which made it even more important to focus on ways to support students and teachers through June and beyond, whether learning took place in the classroom or at home.

DURING THE PANDEMIC,

items like alarm clocks, cell phone chargers and comfy pillows became vital school supplies.

TEACHERS' TOTES

Developed with the participants of the Youth Social and Planning Action Table, 54 Totes filled with items to facilitate learning in class or online were delivered to each and every school in Chatham-Kent.

"As soon as I opened the box, I instantly thought of many of my students who could benefit from these items. Running the school's success centre, we encounter students coming from so many financial situations." – Mme Peck, Student Success Teacher at École Secondaire Catholique de Pain Court

BACK TO SCHOOL GIFT CARDS

In a year when learning felt anything but normal and much of it took place online, it was imperative to rethink the traditional backpack program, usually offered to children throughout the municipality each summer.

Thanks to community partners and participants on the Youth Social Planning and Action (SPA) Table, \$50 gift cards were distributed to hundreds of households after a two-week registration window. This program allowed families to purchase the items that best suited their students' needs, whether learning at home or in school.

MENTAL HEALTH BRACELETS

Students and other young people across CK and Walpole Island First Nation have a new tool to use for understanding their feelings and communicating those feelings to others.

The Name It, Don't Numb It rainbow bracelets were sent to classrooms and outreach organizations throughout the municipality to distribute to students as part of Mental Health Awareness Week. The bracelet comes with a colour wheel that each wearer can fill in themselves, giving every section on their bracelet their own unique meaning. For some, red may mean angry while for others, it may symbolize excitement.

In a time when so much uncertainty has been part of young people's daily lives, being able to name these feelings and decide what the bracelet means to them helps give them back some of the power and security the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has taken away. The bracelets were developed in conjunction with the Mental Health Social Planning and Action (SPA) Table, which is made up of representatives from 17 local social services and organizations as well as community members living with mental illness

"The hardest part (of all this) has been not knowing what any given day will bring, so it's hard to not feel anxious, to just keep feeling positive. And it's (the months of lockdown) also been so boring." – Michelle, grade 11 LKDSB Student

UNITED WE CAN.
TOGETHER WE WILL.



United Way
Chatham-Kent



 United Way
Chatham-Kent
**UNITED WE CAN.
TOGETHER WE WILL.**
DONATIONS

MENTAL HEALTH, ADDICTION, AND THE ROOT CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

Addressing the root causes of homelessness in our community means looking at a complex issue through a local, compassionate, and creative lens. It means balancing short-term needs with upstream solutions. And it means working with partners and volunteers that contribute time, energy and expertise to finding answers that will benefit the community and meet people where they're at.

THE **ROOT CAUSES** OF HOMELESS ARE COMPLEX AND VARIED. THEY MAY INCLUDE:

- Lack of affordable housing
- Job loss and economic instability
- The rising cost of food, rent and utilities
- Mental health challenges
- Problematic substance use
- Intimate partner violence

WITHDRAWAL MANAGEMENT SERVICES

United Way of Chatham-Kent was proud to become a major donor to The Chatham-Kent Health Alliance Foundation's fundraising campaign in support of Withdrawal Management services and the Mental Health & Addictions program at Chatham-Kent Health Alliance this year.

The donation of \$155,000 will go directly towards the opening of the 10-bed residential facility, slated for June 2022.

This unprecedented community partnership marks a commitment to ensuring that as many people as possible desiring withdrawal management support in Chatham-Kent will not have to leave the municipality to seek help.

JAMES ST. DROP-IN

As affordable vacancies decrease throughout Chatham-Kent and the on-going pandemic contribute to many of the root causes of homelessness, safe and welcoming spaces to keep warm and connect to community resources were in greater need.

The James St. Drop-In opened its doors part-time in January 2022, offering food, shelter, respite and community resources to those in need throughout Wallaceburg and area.

Working in partnership with United Way of Chatham-Kent, Ska: Na Family Learning Centre, The Municipality of Chatham-Kent, and R.O.C.K. Missions, James St. Drop-In also became an emergency warming centre during Extreme Cold Weather Events as declared by the medical officer of Health.

In its first three months (45 days), the Drop-In:

- Provided warmth, food, shelter and services for 549 visitors (172 unique)
- Averaged 11 visitors per day
- Remained open for extended hours, including overnight, during 7 Extreme Cold Weather Events
- Operated on an average of 13 hours of staff and volunteer time per day
- Distributed clothing, personal care items and harm reduction supplies
- Offered services individuals, couples and families

BECAUSE WE CARE CK

The Because We Care CK Holiday Challenge returned this year, with local business leaders in the home construction and services sector challenging others to join them in raising money for programs that focus on the root causes of homelessness.

Raising more than \$150,000, Because We Care CK gave business owners and tradespeople the opportunity to showcase the generosity of their sector while contributing to important programming intended to ensure that no one is left behind.

WHAT DOES HOMELESSNESS IN CK

REALLY LOOK LIKE?

In some cases, homelessness looks like a tent or other temporary structure in a public space. But there are many other “hidden” versions of homelessness:

- Couch-surfing
- Crashing at a friend’s place
- Living in a vehicle
- Constant travel or movement



MAKING CONNECTIONS

SOCIAL PLANNING AND ACTION TABLES

Since March 2020, the Social Planning and Action (SPA) Tables have been meeting weekly through the facilitation of UWOCK, as we provide a virtual space, administration and organization of the meetings.

Comprised of stakeholders from human and social service agencies, local government, volunteers and others, the Tables work both collaboratively, sharing resources and ideas across Tables, and independently, focusing on the needs of their group. The SPA Tables have been instrumental in facilitating many of the programs UWOCK supported and/or developed this year, including Van with a Plan, Mental Health Bracelets, Teachers Totes and more.

THE 2021-2022 SOCIAL PLANNING AND ACTION TABLES ARE:

- Anti-Human Trafficking
- Child & Partner Violence
- Homelessness
- Maawnjidiimi Indigenous Network
- Mental Health
- Older Adults
- Poverty
- Youth

CO-INVESTOR ROUNDTABLE

The Co-Investor Roundtable was created to coordinate and distribute emergency funding from all three levels of government, and our community, while identifying gaps in funding. By tapping into their own networks, the Co-Investor Roundtable was able to offer solutions and support efficiently and effectively.

The 2021-2022 Co-Investors Roundtable participants are:

Andrew Thiel, Abstract Marketing

April Rietdyck, Municipality of Chatham-Kent

Barb Palace, United Way of Chatham-Kent

Cathy Cabral, Canadian Red Cross

Chris Pegg, Chatham Kent Community Foundation

Dava Robichaud, TekSavvy

Faith Hale, Ska:na Family Learning Centre

Irene Moore, University of Guelph

Lisa LaLumiere, TekSavvy

Margery Muharrem, Women United

Polly Smith, Municipality of Chatham-Kent

Ruth Hook, Chatham-Kent Community Foundation

Robb Nelson, Family Lending

Stacey Harris, TekSavvy

Shannon Prince, Buxton National Historic Site & Museum

Tammy Fauteux, Canadian Red Cross

Teri Thomas-Vanos, Linck

Wes Thompson, United Way of Chatham-Kent Board of Directors

CURRENT UWOCK STAFF

Barbara Palace
CEO

Eva Marie Clarke
Human Service Impact Partner &
Executive Assistant to the CEO

Jaclyn Gillier
Data Strategist

Karen Green
Marketing & Communications Specialist

Rose-Anne Mayor
Tilbury Information & HELP Centre Manager

Margery Muharrem
Individual Donor & Major Gifts Associate

Patty Peters
Director Resource Development

Courtney Wells-Doxtater
Business Liaison

Veronica Whittal
Finance & Administration Coordinator

**OUR FULL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
ARE AVAILABLE AT UWOCK.CA.**

CURRENT UWOCK BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Wes Thompson
President

Chris Appleton
Vice President

Darryl Pidduck
Treasurer

Ashley Church-Crawford
Director

Shirley Davies
Director

Aimee June
Director

Jordynne Lindsay
Director

Robb Nelson
Director

Kirsten Ramsay
Director

Shawna-Lee Rivard
Appointed Director, Labour United

Tania Sharp
Director

OUTGOING STAFF **AND** BOARD MEMBERS

OUR THANKS FOR YOUR HARD WORK, TIME AND DEDICATION.

Jackie Beatty, Director Community Development

Scott Roose, Chatham-Kent Nonprofit Centre Coordinator

Linda Reaume, Appointed Director, Labour United

Adele Metcalf, Appointed Director, Labour United



United Way
Chatham-Kent

United Way of Chatham-Kent

425 McNaughton Avenue West, Chatham, ON N7M 5K8

Tilbury Information & H.E.L.P. Centre






26 Queen Street West, Tilbury, ON N0P 2L0

Telephone: 519-354-0430 • Email: info@uwock.ca

uwock.ca

© 2022 United Way of Chatham-Kent

Follow us on social media

-  [@UnitedWayofChathamKent](https://www.facebook.com/UnitedWayofChathamKent)
-  [@UnitedWayofChathamKent](https://www.instagram.com/UnitedWayofChathamKent)
-  [@united-way-of-chatham-kent](https://www.linkedin.com/company/united-way-of-chatham-kent)
-  [@UnitedWayCK](https://twitter.com/UnitedWayCK)
-  [@UnitedWayCK](https://www.tiktok.com/@UnitedWayCK)