

UNITED WAY SEEKS TO RAISE \$10 MILLION TO HELP MOST VULNERABLE

The United Way of Halton & Hamilton (UWHH) will seek to raise \$10 million to help those struggling as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The local charity kicked off its annual fundraising campaign with a virtual scavenger hunt that saw teams visit 12 stops in Halton and Hamilton with a goal of raising \$30,000.

Organizers note there is a lot riding on this campaign's success.

The pandemic, they said, has only exacerbated already pressing issues, such as poverty, mental illness and isolation.

UWHH CEO Brad Park said individuals, families and neighbourhoods have been pushed to their limits, and the social sector is being stretched beyond its capacity to serve the overwhelming need.

That said, Park noted

the network agencies across Burlington, Halton Hills, Hamilton, Milton and Oakville that are funded by UWHH have been there throughout the months of crisis and will lead the recovery that is to come.

"In this time of great uncertainty, there are a few things we know for sure," said Park.

"We know that the most vulnerable among us have been the most negatively affected by COVID-19. We also know our community is facing a recovery and rebuilding that will likely be years in the making. And the final thing we know is that our community has always come together in time of crisis. We are confident this one will be no different."

Park acknowledged that addressing the great need that exists in the Halton



Melanie Hennessey/Metroland

Halton Hills councillors help kick off the United Way Halton and Hamilton's (UWHH) annual fundraising campaign. On hand were (from left) Councillor Jane Fogal, UWHH CEO Brad Park, Mayor Rick Bonnette, Janet Foster and Corinne Roynon with the United Way, Councillor Ann Lawlor and the UWHH's Brenda Hajdu.

and Hamilton communities will be challenging.

He said demand for social services has increased 42 per cent across Canada since the beginning of the pandemic and noted the longer COVID-19 drags out, the more people will need help recovering from it.

Next to government, Park said, the United Way

is the largest investor in the critical social safety net in Halton and Hamilton, sustaining a network of 64 agencies delivering 128 programs that serve more than 200,000 people annually.

In Halton Hills it supports 54 programs that serve 13,000 people.

These include food

bank programs, mental health programs and more.

Park said the ability of UWHH to raise funds is being hampered by the pandemic.

He noted workplace campaigns, which account for almost 75 per cent of the United Way's revenue, are affected by job losses, re-

duced hours, and economic uncertainty.

Donations have declined, gifts are being deferred and most of the key fundraising events can't happen right now, said Park.

"This is a momentous opportunity to come together to rebuild and move forward," said campaign chair John Chisholm.

"The reason for hope of a better future is our donors. If you are an existing supporter of the United Way, thank you and we hope you will consider giving more this year. And if you have never given to the United Way, there has never been a time when your community has needed you more."

The campaign will run from now until March 2021.

For more information visit <https://www.uwhh.ca>

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