



United Way
Bruce Grey



THE STRENGTH IN
OUR NUMBERS

Our Message

2020 has been a tough year and we at United Way of Bruce Grey, and all our community partners, have been working really hard to help our community get through these unprecedented times. We have all added more projects and ways to help our community this year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some of the ways we have helped our community include:

- A daily food run to those sheltering in motels
- An initiative where we help the public write to people in the long term care facilities
- Programs to provide shelter for people who are in need of a home due to the pandemic
- Providing essential supplies such as toilet paper to hot & frozen meals and much more

While we celebrate all of these efforts, we recognize that the pandemic has exposed the underlying weaknesses in our society with its income inequity, classism and racial discrimination. We recognize the “working poor” and the precariously employed who have played such a pivotal role as essential workers i.e. PSWs, grocery store clerks, etc.

We are all so grateful for the many organizations, community leaders, volunteers and donors who are doing their best to help everyone feel safe and comfortable during this pandemic. This report scratches the surface of the Bruce Grey pandemic response. We know there are many more stories to be told, so stay tuned.

Stay safe everyone. Pots & Pans.

Francesca Dobbyn

This document represents data and information collected from March to mid November 2020 unless otherwise stated. While there is an effort to have strong, current and relevant data, the ever-changing situation with the pandemic can make this a challenge. Funding tracked only reflects known funding, it is certainly not representative of the support and donations people have made to various community organizations. We acknowledge and express our gratitude to every donor who is the backbone of the pandemic response.



Food Security

Known Grants: \$1,693,000

Bi-weekly 34 food security related organizations continue to come together to support the running of food banks (21), community meal programs (10) community gardens (7), Good Food Boxes (17) under pandemic conditions. In addition, public health experts and policy makers worked with the community food programs to develop new policies and procedures to ensure safety.

As the pandemic forced people into self-isolation, many free meal programs were closed to the public. Immediately, local organizations stepped up and adjusted how to run their programs.

Area hot and frozen Meal Programs have provided over 100,000 meals for members of our community with low income, no transportation, physical mobility issues, negative health status, medical issues, etc. For many people the pandemic has affected people's mental health which results in a lack of appetite or motivation to cook and/or eat and these meal programs are a welcome support.

The United Way, Zehrs Owen Sound, Grey County, Bruce County Housing and volunteers packed and delivered 600 hampers. Working with the Saugeen Shores Chamber of

Commerce, Bruce Power provided 3,000 care packages to the Kincardine, Saugeen Shores, Saugeen First Nation and Neyaashiinigiing First Nation.

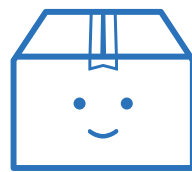
From April to November, a total of 5,185 meals have been delivered to people without housing who are sheltering in motels. Each day a person sheltering receives a hot meal and a lunch for the next day. This involved a Grey County Social Services Relief Fund grant, OSHARE doing the cooking, Habitat for Humanity delivering, YMCA Housing managing along with M'Wikwedong and Women's Centre for assessment.

Keeping "Not-For-Profits Connected Under COVID-19" is a process that has been developed for distributing surplus food to area meal programs and food banks. This includes excess perishable food through the Foodrescue.ca program as well as non-perishable food from Feed Ontario and Food Banks Canada.

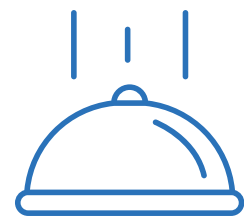
Habitat for Humanity continues to visit Food Banks bi-monthly dropping supplies as they are requested and available.



Over
100,000
meals for members
of our community



Packed and delivered
600
hampers



5,185
meals have been delivered to
people without housing

Shelter

Known Grants: \$633,500

Since April, 12 housing-focused agencies have come together weekly to respond to immediate emergency needs to address homelessness and affordable housing needs.

Between April and November, YMCA Housing, in partnership with Safe N Sound's volunteers, provided 4,555 nights of shelter to people without housing. Almost 700 people accessed homelessness services at Y Housing during the reporting period. They have been able to track 172 people into housing from homelessness, knowing many more were able to find housing through their own connections.

The United Way has provided 59 beds (including a mattress and bedding) to people who attain housing during the pandemic.

Partners such as the Safe 'N Sound, YMCA Housing, Owen Sound Police Services, the Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy and other partners continue to respond to mental health and addiction issues that challenge people to stay housed. Over 25,000 needles have been turned into Safe 'N Sound through a 'sharps for groceries' program.



4,555

**nights of shelter to
people without housing**



Social Inclusion & Learning

Known Grants: \$439,000



At the beginning of March, we asked the public to write letters, cards, birthday wishes and/or drawings to community members who are isolated in long term care facilities. The idea behind this was to spread some warmth and smiles to the people that are missing out on visiting with family or friends. Since this initiative began, we have 12 long- term care facilities in our region that are receiving letters and cards from our community. We are currently encouraging people to send Christmas and holiday cards.

Thanks to Federal and County funding we were pleased to announce that our free Financial Literacy Program is back to help people navigate the ever changing income programs. Since the recent hiring of Caroline Araujo Abbots as the Program Coordinator she has received over 100 referrals. The program provides basic budgeting and income advice, referrals to programs that decrease living costs, some

credit advice and external referrals to bankruptcy and credit counseling.

Bruce Power partnered with NPX Innovation and the Nuclear Innovation Institute on the creation of the Grey Bruce Huron Strong app and website (also includes the All in Ontario fundraising challenge). – gbhstrong.com

Since the start of the pandemic, Bruce Power has hosted a number of virtual events with local public health officials to help the public learn about the latest public health guidance. They have also hosted telephone town halls that were broadcast on local radio stations, to help raise awareness of the latest public health guidance.

You can view recordings of the virtual video events here: brucepower.com/past-events/

Information & community navigation

Known Grants: \$226,000

The Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force has been preparing daily and now weekly Community Updates on the coordination and emergency response amongst partners. Thirty-four Community Updates have gone out via email and as blog posts on the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force website and Facebook page. The Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force helps co-ordinate and support weekly emergency homelessness meetings, bi-weekly emergency food security meetings, monthly health equity meetings and monthly income and employment meetings.

The Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force COVID-19 Pandemic Community Resource page on our website continues to be updated regularly as are the Community Support Lists. The Resource Page has been included in the GreyBruceHuronStrong app.

Twelve (12) income and employment agencies come together monthly to coordinate information on emergency income supports. They have produced joint information sheets on government income supports, provided guidelines on accessing supports and facilitated access to supports.



211 continues to provide information and referrals to the community 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Current top needs* that people are asking about are:

- Utility Assistance – 511 calls
- Housing – 481 calls
- Health – 402 calls
- Income support/ Financial Assistance – 350 calls
- Mental Health and Addictions – 279 calls

*Calls tracked March 23 to November 12

211 also tracks unmet needs which help us and partners resource and highlight these challenges. The top unmet needs* are:

- No resource found to meet need
- Inquirer unable to connect with agency/program
- Ineligible for service
- Full/waiting list
- Hours of agency/program did not meet needs of inquirer

*Calls tracked March 23 to November 12



Mental Health & Wellness

Known Grants: \$159,000

The pandemic has hit people's mental and emotional wellness significantly. From economic stresses, to isolation to the loss of connections to family and loved ones.

Many grants focused on providing connectivity, tablets enabling people to video chat not only with friends and family, but also with caregivers and medical professionals.

The Alzheimer's Society created activity kits for people with dementia. This enabled them to engage with family members and provided much needed distraction and respite for the caregivers.

Bruce Grey Child and Family Services created "Camp Covid" a 'camp in a box' for local children full of activities and learning opportunities.

Funds have also supported increased cleaning, provision of PPE as well as fun items such as new flooring to make cleaning easier, umbrellas for social distancing walks, yoga mats for outside socially distant conversations as well as outside painting classes.

The REACH Program worked with Public Health to restart in person sessions. While remote support was a life line for many families, they realized that the core strength of their program was in the connections they facilitated between their peers and the opportunity to strive toward independence. They also realized that families needed respite from the high needs of their adult dependents, and the ability to return to work (often more than one job) with peace of mind. As a result, REACH was the first agency, of its type, in the area, if not province, to resume in person programming for this vulnerable population. This was achieved after countless hours of research and consultation to create a modified program that met and actually exceeded Public Health guidelines. Suitable temporary space was found and REACH was able to operate a modified summer program and provide some relief to families, as parents returned to work or were able to get some respite after months of lock down.



Health & Hygiene

Known Grants: \$127,000



27,680 rolls of toilet paper made available

In the early days of the pandemic, panic buying in our community quickly became a concern for our United Way. Many food banks were unable to bulk purchase toilet paper as local grocery stores were limiting everyone to 1 package per person. Sending volunteers to shop in stores was not feasible. Fortunately, we were able to reach out to Bruce Power's Supply Division, and we were able to source and secure a toilet paper supplier. Habitat for Humanity was able to promptly pick up skids of toilet paper and distribute them to area food banks. To date **27,680 rolls of toilet paper have been made available.** Bruce and Grey's Social Services Relief Fund covers the costs of this initiative.

United Way has provided backpacks to children within the community for 15 years. In response to the pandemic, a package of two reusable masks was added to each backpack utilizing Social Services Relief Funding. We worked with the local Public Health office to include their postcard on how to and why you should wear a mask as well. With the help of our donors, volunteers and partner agencies, we have provided **2,700 fully stocked backpacks** to children of low income families. We had **1,600 packages of masks** left over that were divided up and sent to 27 Bruce County based elementary schools and provided to Grey County Social Services for further distribution.

Bruce Power has donated and distributed **2 million pieces of personal protective equipment.** This included items such as masks, hand sanitizer, gloves, face shields, gowns/coveralls and more. The supplies were donated to healthcare workers across Bruce/Grey/Huron Counties as well as across the province. Supplies were also donated to Indigenous communities, food banks, Community Living organizations, small businesses (via Chambers/BIA's), schools and community groups.

Additionally, Bruce Power **secured 55,000 liters of hand sanitizer** which has been distributed by Habitat for Humanity to Food Banks throughout Bruce, Grey and Huron Counties.



Resiliency – Build Back Better



Health Equity Statement

We know that marginalized and disadvantaged people in Grey Bruce are disproportionately at higher risk: the Indigenous, homeless, individuals on social assistance, the incarcerated, people with disabilities/compromised immune systems and the elderly. Even workers who are self-employed, in precarious jobs, in retail or service sector are starting to experience layoffs.

Marginalized people become even more vulnerable during emergencies. The populations most at risk are those that: depend heavily on the informal economy; occupy areas prone to shocks; have inadequate access to social

services or political influence; have limited capacities and opportunities to cope and adapt and; limited or no access to technologies.

Under the pandemic, 5 health agencies come together monthly as a Working Group of the larger Health Equity Working Group. They have updated the resource material and added more pandemic related equity material to the Health Equity Tool. One area of challenge has been the access to online COVID-19 testing results for seniors. The SWLHIN and Grey Bruce Public Health Help Line were able to develop a working relationship to assist seniors.

Basic Income Statement

Income security is one of the important social determinants of health. We support access to a Basic Income Guaranteed that aligns with four core principles: human rights, equitable access, poverty reduction and adequacy. We recognize a Basic Income Guaranteed as one component of a poverty reduction strategy.

To eliminate deep poverty we need to increase social assistance rates, centering community-based responses in poverty reduction, invest in new job opportunities, reduce precarious work and ensure sufficient income wages/benefits.

We recognize that the government can't afford to provide all income support and that we will need the private sector paying a living wage. We need to move away from "maintaining poverty".

The United Way of Bruce Grey annually calculates the Grey Bruce Living Wage as \$18.39. In 2020, this has not been calculated under pandemic conditions, but we are using the 2019 calculation. Anecdotal data has shown a significant increase in the cost of living during the pandemic.



**Sincere gratitude to everyone who has
contributed and made our community stronger!**

This report was a result of Capacity Canada's CD4SG
(Social Day for Community Good)

United Way of Bruce Grey

380 9th Street East, Owen Sound N4K 1P1 • manager@unitedwaybg.com • 519-376-1560

www.unitedwayofbrucegrey.com • www.donatetoday.ca • www.foodbrucegrey.com

Twitter: @weRpossiblity • **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/Unitedwaybrucegrey>

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