

Caring Report

Fall-Winter 2007



without **you**, there would be **no way**

Preparing children and youth for future success: Meet Dustin



In a little over a year, Dustin has gone from being a kid at loose ends to a young man in charge of his life.

A big boost in his transformation came from a program called Youth Action Centre, which is operated in London by Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU) with funding from United Way.

“For the last few years, I’ve been taking care of myself,” says Dustin, who is 18. “I didn’t have any confidence or motivation to get on with my life.”

When he was growing up, he bounced between his parents’ homes after they split up. There were few programs in the small town where he grew up to help

him deal with his situation. He ended up in London, couch-surfing among those who would take him in, but always at risk of being on the streets. Dustin doesn’t blame his family for the choices he felt he had to make.

When he was 17, he tried to register at an alternative high school but was disappointed to find out he didn’t qualify. However, a staff member there didn’t want to send him away without at least some help, so he tipped Dustin off about Youth Action Centre.

“I got into the program with YOU, which taught me all different life skills,” Dustin says. He learned how to budget, shop for groceries, communicate with others and develop a work ethic. “Everybody had told me I couldn’t make it on my own, so I kind of listened to that. Then the United Way funded program proved I can,” he says.

Now Dustin has two jobs. Although he lives with an aunt, he does pay rent, so he considers himself to be independent now. And he’s going for his General Education Development (GED) test, which would give him the equivalent of a high school diploma.

“I feel pretty good. I go to work every day - on time,” he adds with a chuckle. “I’m proud.”

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United Way remains in heart, and good hands



Helen Connell, Executive Director

When you really love something, it's very hard to let go. And as much as I look forward to the challenges in my new role at Western as part of the communications and public affairs team, my heart has not wanted to face leaving United Way.

It's not the time that I've invested since joining United Way in May 2000 that caused me to be so wholly

committed to this organization. It is without question the people – the donors, staff, volunteers, agencies and community partners. It's an extraordinary feeling to be part of a huge team that has a single focus of improving the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in our community.

The roots of United Way go back more than a century in this community and during that time it has seen a lot of change. We've moved beyond being an organization that responds to the crisis in people's lives to leading and working in collaborative efforts to get to the root causes of social issues.

It was because I believe in this work so passionately, that I was so delighted to learn that Bob Adams would be assuming the role of CEO here at United Way.

I've known Bob for years and he has all the personal and leadership qualities required to take United Way to the next level. The problems so many people face today are so complex and interwoven they are beyond the ability of any single organization to solve. Our name – United Way – reflects the importance we put on partnerships. Bob is well known amongst service providers and funders for his ability to collaborate and build strong partnerships.

As Director of Service Canada Operations for the London-Windsor Service Area, Bob has a lot of experience in leading people and he's known as someone who listens carefully to the ideas of others.

Bob is also someone who always sees the possible in what others see as an impossible challenge. Behind his wide smile and gentle manner resides a lot of determination. He gets things done. Bob also has a great sense of humour and a sense of fun, which is a requirement for leadership in a sector where the problems and needs can be overwhelming.

United Way will always be in my heart and I hope to continue my involvement in a volunteer role. But I leave the position of Director content in knowing that the organization and the people I care so much about are in excellent hands.

By the numbers: Children and youth in London and Middlesex County

15%
London's youth unemployment rate; 14% nationally

16%
15 to 19 year olds that deal with depression; 11% nationally

17%
London's child poverty rate; 15% nationally

43%
clients of London Food Bank 17 years old and younger

70%
increase between 1995 and 2001 in number of children in care of Children's Aid Society of London and Middlesex
445 - children in 1995
758 - children in 2001

1 in 3
SK children Early Development Indicator (EDI) determines not "ready to learn" going into Grade 1; 1 in 4 provincially

Sources: The Child and Youth Network for Best Start (2007). Laying the Foundation for London's Child and Youth Agenda; City of London (2004). Looking at our Quality of Life in London: Incomes, Shelter & Necessities; London Homeless Coalition (2004). Community Plan for Homelessness; Campaign 2000 (2006). The Child Welfare Wall: Can Social Policy Become Child Neglect?; Leschied et al., (2003). Protecting Children is Everybody's Business; Investing in Children (2006). Snapshot of London's Children and Youth.

Investing in children and youth

Dustin's story, on the front cover, is just one example of how United Way is helping children and youth prepare for future success.

The health and prosperity of our communities tomorrow depend upon our ability to support our children and youth today. Investing in our children and youth is the most effective return on investment a community can make.

United Way's investment in children and youth is particularly focused on those considered 'at risk', meaning those who are not on a level playing field with others their age. This happens most often because of a combination of social factors that include, but are not limited to, living in a family with a low income, single parent or history of domestic violence, substance abuse and/or mental illness.

In addition to supporting over a dozen programs geared directly to children and youth each year, such as the Boys' and Girls' Club of London, Stevenson Children's Camp and Youth Opportunities Unlimited/Next Wave Strathroy Centre, United Way also invests our expertise and resources into our own programs to develop youth.

Thanks to the generosity and commitment of London Life, United Way is able to offer two programs to help prepare youth in London and Middlesex County to become leaders in their own communities.

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Youth in Action

Youth in Action gives youth the opportunity to develop a project to address an issue that is important to them and make a positive difference in their community.

Young Leaders of Tomorrow

Young Leaders of Tomorrow is a unique program that matches young people, serving as non-voting members, with Boards of Directors in the not-for-profit sector.

Visit uwlondon.on.ca to learn more about these and other United Way investments.



TOP: 2007-08 London Life Young Leaders of Tomorrow participants Lauren Vandervoort, Kyra Harris, Seth Climans, Amani Gharib



LEFT: Youth Leadership Program Assistant, Susan Cake; 2007-08 members of London Life Youth in Action Advisory Committee: Arielle Goldschlager, Chair; Emily Downs; Jordan Winter; Raquel Murcia; Andrés Ramírez

Funding strategic initiatives

Through the remarkable generosity of our donors, United Way of London & Middlesex has been able to provide strategic funding to five projects outside of our regular, annual funding of community projects.

With support from United Way staff, each project's funding request was carefully reviewed and decided by experienced United Way volunteers. Each project needed to demonstrate accountability and be aligned with United Way of London & Middlesex's funding priorities. In total, close to \$137,000 was invested in the following strategic initiatives this year:

My Sister's Stories

Through storytelling, narrative, drama and photography, women involved with My Sister's Place, a service of WOTCH Community Mental Health, gather, compile and bear witness to their own unique stories. With a special focus on the experiences of Aboriginal women, the goal is to help develop and increase each woman's personal strength, resiliency and ability to more fully participate as vital citizens of the London community.

Muslim Family Support Service

This service provides outreach to individuals and families from the Muslim community to connect them with local agencies to build and support healthy family relationships. Research through the Muslim Family Safety Project highlighted barriers to accessing mainstream services for Muslim women and children who had experienced woman abuse.

Helping and Help-seeking Behaviours for Men who are Abusive in their Intimate Relationships

Providing the most appropriate and effective interventions is critical to preventing men's violence against women. The purpose of this research is to understand the most effective way to connect and work with men who are abusive. The results will be used to inform people on how to appropriately challenge and engage a man that they know is abusive.

The Community Plan for Protecting Infants Living in High Risk Environments

Developed in response to the inquest into the death of baby Jordan Heikamp in a shelter in Toronto, The Community Plan enables professionals to work with families to promote optimal safety, growth and development for infants who have been identified as living in high risk environments in London and Middlesex County. Professionals plan together with families to address risks to an infant and help link them to services that are available in the community.

Northwest London Resource Centre (Sherwood Library serving Northwest London)

To help children and youth realize their full potential, United Way is supporting neighbourhood youth, ages 10 to 16, through an existing Youth Council, providing after school programs for tweens and teens and engaging youth as volunteers in centre programs.

Visit uwlondon.on.ca to learn more about these and other United Way investments.

Striving for \$7.2 million to help make lives better

United Way of London & Middlesex's 2007 fundraising Campaign goal was announced at the 3M Harvest Lunch and Campaign Launch in September.

Our Campaign goal is \$7.2 million. Our ultimate goal is to help make lives better.



Campaign Cabinet Chair, Chief Murray Faulkner speaks at the 3M Harvest Lunch and Campaign Launch



Shawn Dickey, Sponsored Employee from Vari-Form Inc. serves lunch at the 3M Harvest Lunch and Campaign Launch

United Way creates real change

United Way is dedicated to improving the quality of life of all people in our communities and helping individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities realize their full potential.

United Way is a leader in understanding root causes of social issues and bringing together people and resources to create real change in people's lives - meaningful, positive, lasting change. Not just for today, but for the long term. And that means a better community for us all.

Campaign Celebration February 28

Save the date! Join us at our 2007 Campaign Celebration, **Thursday, February 28 at 4:30 p.m.** at the Carousel Room at the Western Fair.

Help us celebrate the generosity and commitment of our community and learn where the funds are being invested to make a real difference in people's lives.

Web has new look

The United Way of London & Middlesex website got a facelift this summer. The newly designed website - still at uwlondon.on.ca - features news and updates, online event registration and is now fully searchable. Visit uwlondon.on.ca today. We're confident you'll learn something new about your United Way and its impact in your community.



Contact us

Caring Report is the newsletter of United Way of London & Middlesex. It is published twice a year and is distributed widely to our volunteers, donors and partners.

If you have a question, suggestion or address correction, please contact Nathalie Noël at:

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