



ONE YEAR LATER: COVID-19 RELIEF WORK LOCAL IMPACT

As we approach the one year anniversary of COVID-19, an anniversary I'm sure we all are looking forward to putting it behind us, at United Way Cape Breton, we'd like to take the opportunity to reflect on the positive work that we've witnessed during the past year.

With support from a generous donor, who reached out to United Way Halifax, to ask how they could help, the Atlantic Compassion Fund for COVID-19 relief was born mid-March 2020. United Way Halifax brought the other ten Atlantic United Ways together to work on COVID-19 relief. This collective response allowed each individual United Way to respond quickly and nimbly to the emerging and individual needs of their very own communities and as a result we were one of three charities of choice for the Federal Government chose to work with. Because of United Way Cape Breton, over \$ **\$825,000** was invested across our island.

United Ways have always been a bridge between donors and community need, and we quickly jumped in to make that connection easier and faster than ever. The response from community was heartening – individual donors, and local businesses stepped up, gave generously, and found innovative and creative ways to help. Their trust in United Way meant we were able to quickly provide food, connection, safe shelter, transportation and mental health supports to those who needed it most. It was a bright light in what was otherwise a dark time.

At United Way Cape Breton, we worked specifically to bring local charities, non-profits and grassroots organizations together who work with youth and seniors, two demographics monumentally affected by COVID-19 restrictions. With schools being closed, children lost access to breakfast programs and social interaction. Our local seniors, too, lost those important social connections and access to meal programs. With the help of New Dawn Meals on Wheels, a Better Bite Kitchen, and the Good Food Bus, the Good Food Packs program came to fruition, providing low-income families and seniors with grocery hampers. Local community groups who work with both seniors and youth did not hesitate to pivot from their regular programs in order to help get grocery hampers to our most vulnerable community members.

Another relief program worth highlighting is an internet and device program developed due to COVID-19 restrictions last April. This program provided online access to isolated seniors and families who lost face-to-face social connections and in-school social interactions. United Way Cape Breton identified this need quickly and worked with the Canadian Mental Health Association and local internet service providers to get local community members connected. The onset of COVID-19 has further magnified the issue around the digital divide- the economic, educational, and social inequalities between those who have access to internet and devices and those who do not. Many community members were left behind when supports and resources moved to an online platform. United Way Cape Breton recognized this gap and brought together program partners to get vulnerable community members connected.



With Cape Breton our catchment area, we have helped over 30,000 community members, in over 50 communities. When we look back at the last year, although it had its obvious challenges, challenges that we are still trying to navigate, we are choosing to celebrate the many donors, volunteers, organizations, businesses, all levels of government, and community members who came together to help, when our most vulnerable community members needed it most. To be a part of the collaborative, collective work that took place across the region is a memory we will cherish.

We understand the indirect effects COVID-19 continues to have on our most vulnerable community members and we will continue to listen to their needs and help invest in programs that are addressing those needs as best we can.



United Way Cape Breton summer students- Bhreagh MacKinnon, Kallie MacKinnon and Nathan Livingston help New Dawn Meals on Wheels deliver meals to local seniors. Due to COVID-19, there was more of a demand for meals as more seniors were isolated during Nova Scotia's State of Emergency between April and June 2020.