

Peel United Way kicks off campaign

United Way of Peel Region kicked off its annual workplace fundraising campaign at the Century Gardens Community Centre in Brampton last Friday morning.

More than 200 community members joined Kris Smith, 2017 campaign chair and executive vice-president, Downstream, of Suncor Energy, Bruce McCuaig, board vice-chair and executive advisor at the Privy Council Office, and Anita Stellinga, interim president and CEO at United Way of Peel Region, at the breakfast rally.

"We need to talk about the difficult stuff. Poverty, hunger, lack of shelter, anxiety. Tough, real issues that people, right here, in Peel face every day," Smith said. "We can show just how much we care about one another by supporting programs in our community that are working towards United Way's mission to reduce poverty and support people living in crisis right now."

"Last year, together we impacted the lives of over 200,000 people across Brampton, Caledon and Mississauga," Smith added. "This year, we want to do even more. Scratch that. This year we need to do even more."

Lisa Clarke shared her personal struggle with mental illness with the crowd. Her inspirational speech showcased a few of the local supports United Way funds to help individuals and their families cope with mental health challenges.

"When you give to United Way, you're helping people get access to the supports they need and that are right for them," Stellinga said. "You're supporting people in crisis right now. Your donation is life-changing."

"When you give to United Way, you're pulling someone to the safe side of a ledge," she added. "You're reaching out your hands and offering your support. In order to be a strong, healthy community, we all need to support one another individually and as a whole."

Although the event touched on some of the issues affecting the community right now, such as the 235,000 people currently struggling with basic needs like food, housing and transportation, the atmosphere was a positive one of hope.

Community members were joined by Lindsay Zier-Vogel of the Love Lettering project, which has had significant coverage on CTV and Global Television. Attendees wrote short love letters to Brampton, Caledon and Mississauga, reminding people why Peel is an amazing place to live, work, and play. The letters will be shared throughout the next few months across the community.

Everyone was challenged to complete random #actsofpossibility across the community, holding doors open for people, volunteering and sending thank you letters, for instance, to create impact and possibility in Peel every day.

Possibility shone among the crowd throughout the morning, and the community was called on to dig deep, and share their experiences with people throughout the remainder of the year.

Creating possibility is part of United Way's mission to eradicate poverty in Peel by preventing poverty, reducing poverty and supporting people living in crisis right now.

The kick off event was sponsored by Suncor Energy.

To learn more about the work of United Way Peel Region or to invest in the community, visit www.unitedwaypeel.org