



1956
2006

50 years. United T.O.gether

United Way's 50th Anniversary History

In 1918, the first federated fundraising effort for community services – United Way's early roots – launched in Toronto. The organization's name changed over the years, ranging from Community Chest to Red Feather to United Appeal to United Way. Over the past 50 years, United Way of Greater Toronto has raised more than \$1.5 billion to for the community. Here are some civic milestones and United Way highlights from the past five decades:

The 1950s marked the beginning of the so-called Golden Economic Era. The first commercial colour television broadcast was made by CBS, Elvis Presley reached national fame and the space race began with the USSR's launch of Sputnik I. Here at home, immigrants and their offspring started to transform the face of Toronto. Suburbanization began in Toronto as the first subway line opened and businesses chose to build on former agricultural land beyond the city limits.

1956 Business, labour and community leaders join forces to create and incorporate the United Community Fund. Edgar Burton is the first to institute a united health, welfare and recreational organization, with 88 appeals merging into one single fundraising campaign.

Simultaneously, the Red Cross formed an Association of Red Cross Branches of Metropolitan Toronto, agreeing to participate in partnership with the United Community Fund in a United Appeal.

On October 1 at City Hall, Mayor Nathan Phillips rings in the first donation towards United Community Fund's \$7.2 million goal, with a final tally of \$7.7 million.

The 1960s saw Martin Luther King Jr. lead a non-violent movement for civil and political rights for African Americans. The women's liberation movement sparked a rise in radical feminism, and the Baby Boomers rose into adulthood. The decade was significant for Canada – the current national flag was inaugurated, the country celebrated its centennial year, Pierre Elliott Trudeau stepped into office, and the nation was redefined as "bilingual." In Toronto, CFTO began broadcasting, the first GO commuter train pulled out of Union Station, and the Caribana festival brought colour and life to our city's streets.

1960s The creation of controversial public housing blocks at Regent, Moss and Alexandra parks, and St. Lawrence Heights begins.

1960 United Appeal is promoted within ethnic communities, and a volunteer committee is composed of 23 members representing 12 ethnicities. United Way receives support from 41 ethnic newspapers and radio stations.

1961 United Community Fund supports an 18 month-long study to provide a five-year blueprint of social welfare, health and recreation in the city. The study, released in 1963 and funded by Metro Toronto, the Atkinson Foundation and United Community Fund, is cited as being unique in Canada, possibly North America.

The Seventies ushered in many technological developments, including microprocessors and the home computer. There was a marked rise in environmental awareness, the green movement, the peace movement and the women's liberation movement. For Torontonians, the seventies meant the opening of one of the world's most prominent landmarks, the CN Tower, and the start of a baseball legacy with the Toronto Blue Jays playing their first game at Exhibition Stadium. Toronto also surpassed Montreal as Canada's most populous city.

1972 Developers create Harbourfront to transform much of the old industrial port into cultural and residential areas.

1973 While the overall organization is still referred to as the United Community Fund, the United Appeal campaign is now termed the "United Way".

1977 Helen Margison is the first female Chair of the Board of Trustees of United Way of Greater Toronto.

1978 The first CN Tower Stair Climb for United Way is held. Since its inception, over 120,500 participants have conquered the Tower at what is now called the Enbridge CN Tower Stair Climb.

1979 In attempt to identify more directly with the annual campaign, the United Community Fund is renamed United Way.

In the Eighties the Cold War peaked and the Berlin Wall came down, signalling the beginning of unification for East and West Germany. The AIDS epidemic was identified. A new constitution for Canada meant that the country was at last a sovereign nation, and the numbers of women in the workplace increased. Terry Fox began his Marathon of Hope, and the first Quebec referendum was unsuccessful. Locally, the SkyDome opened.

1982 George Cohon of McDonald's of Canada and Allan Slaight of Slaight Communications organize "Sounds United", which includes 10 days of music and raises \$250,000 for United Way.

Gordon Cressy is appointed President and CEO of United Way of Greater Toronto. The organization commits itself to a new vision of a more inclusive, more responsive, and more dynamic United Way with increased ethnocultural examination of how to meet the needs of different communities.

1983 The first-ever campaign kick-off rally at Nathan Phillips Square includes a giant helium balloon launch, music and a Trivial Pursuit tournament.

Board member Dr. Joseph Wong and the Chinese community organize the first-ever Walkathon for United Way.

1984 A RUSH concert at Maple Leaf Gardens raises a record \$214,000.

1985 The South Asian Committee organizes an unprecedented charity concert by the world's most prolific songstress, Lata Mangeshkar, at Maple Leaf Gardens.

The Black Development Committee is the driving force behind the first-ever fundraising effort held by the black community for United Way in Canada.

- 1986** United Way makes it into the Guinness Book of World Records when Sukhbir Dhillon races to the top of the world's tallest freestanding structure – the CN Tower – in 8 minutes, 17 seconds. His record is broken in 1989 when Brendan Keenoy reaches the top in 7 minutes, 52 seconds.
- 1987** Anne Golden is appointed President and CEO, United Way of Greater Toronto.
- 1989** Ben Sennick leads the South Asian and Black/Caribbean communities in the organization of the first United Way cricket match. This event attracts more than 40,000 people and raises over \$600,000, making it the largest and one of the most lucrative special events to date.

The Nineties saw explosive growth in the Internet and mobile telephones. Successful cloning was achieved with the duplication of Dolly the sheep. In Canada, Kim Campbell became the country's first female prime minister, and the second Quebec referendum rejected independence by a margin of only one percent. The Toronto Blue Jays won their first World Series, and the population of the City of Toronto reached 653,734. At United Way, a new tagline: *Without you, there would be no way*, was adopted.

- 1997** Research and advocacy by United Way take on a major focus. Two major reports, *Metro Toronto: A Community at Risk* and *Beyond Survival: Homelessness in Metro Toronto*, are released.
- 1998** President Anne Golden chairs the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force as homelessness becomes a major city issue.

On January 1, Etobicoke, North York, Toronto, York, Scarborough and East York amalgamate into the City of Toronto.

The New Millennium has seen the SARS outbreak, the Asian tsunami and Hurricane Katrina cause devastation and contribute to donor fatigue as people struggle with how to make the most impact with their charitable contributions. Toronto's population has reached over 2.5 million with more than half of Torontonians born outside of Canada, making it one of the most diverse cities on earth.

- 2001** United Way and Community Information Toronto create a 211 telephone service and website, providing 24-hour access to community and social service information.

Frances Lankin is appointed President of United Way of Greater Toronto.

- 2001** The Scotiabank Rat Race 5 km run kicks off, and continues to draw more than 1,000 participants each year in support of United Way and its network of 200 agencies.
- 2004** United Way releases the *Poverty by Postal Code* report.
- 2005** The *Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force* report is released, and United Way's Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy is announced.

Donors give a record \$96.1 million to United Way of Greater Toronto.

- 2006** Rick Waugh, President and CEO, Scotiabank, chairs United Way's 50th anniversary fundraising campaign.

