UNITED Is The Way



2025-2026
IMPACT REPORT

United Way
Lethbridge &
South Western Alberta

United Way of Lethbridge & South Western Alberta acknowledges the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Blackfoot People. We honour the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people, past present, and future. We acknowledge the work done by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and recognize our responsibility in prioritizing reconciliation in the work we do and the decisions we make.

OUR MISSION

To build a better community by organizing the capacity of people to care for one another.

OUR VISION

We envision Communities where everyone works together to ensure poverty is temporary, individuals and families live healthy lifestyles, and that children and youth have the tools they need to reach their full potential.

Funding Priorities



FROM POVERTY TO POSSIBILITY

Poverty is a complex and far-reaching issue, often persisting across generations, making it exceedingly difficult to overcome. United Way is dedicated to ensuring that families and individuals have access to immediate support.



HEALTHY PEOPLE, STRONG COMMUNITIES

The pillar of Healthy People, Strong Communities revolves around engaging and mobilizing residents to collectively enhance access to vital resources and foster the revitalization and fortification of neighbourhoods. United Way plays a crucial role by investing in programs that contribute to the development of vibrant and inclusive communities, where residents can feel safe and experience overall wellbeing.



All THAT KIDS CAN BE

Recognizing that children and youth are the future of our communities, United Way acknowledges the significance of providing them with a solid foundation for success and independence. United Way emphasizes the importance of early literacy and development programs, positive school experiences, high school graduation, recreational activities, mentorship opportunities, and the exploration of talents and interests.

Message From The United Way Board President

As I look back on the 2025–2026 year, my overwhelming sentiment is one of profound gratitude. Everything United Way accomplishes happens because of the incredible generosity of our donors, partners, advocates, and volunteers. Together, we have put our mission into action by organizing the capacity of our people to care for one another, proving that when a community unites, we can build a landscape where poverty is temporary and everyone has the chance to reach their full potential.

This year has brought immediate relief, hope, and dignity to individuals navigating incredibly tough times. Through our funding priorities and the generosity of our stakeholders we kept local families securely housed and provided a critical safety net when emergency circumstances seemed overwhelming. Together, we protected the health and dignity of young people by keeping local schools stocked with essential sanitary products through our Period Promise campaign and we teamed up with local chiropractors to ensure our neighbors were supplied with warm socks during the coldest winter months.

In our efforts to nurture healthy, vibrant neighborhoods, your local love directly addressed food security and holistic well-being. Your support wrapped around expectant mothers and newborns with essential care packages, and provided hot, nutritious meals to seniors and individuals with disabilities so they could continue to live independently with dignity.

Believing deeply in the potential of our youth, we threw our full support behind the next generation. Our investments in school mentorship networks gave local kids positive role models to help combat bullying and build self-esteem. For families navigating complex hardships, we funded partner agencies to support summer camps and youth programs that offered safe, gentle spaces to learn and grow, alongside family literacy programs and dedicated inclusion supports in our surrounding rural communities.

Finally, your support allowed us to tackle systemic barriers and build long-term community strength. We invested in partner agencies to provide vital financial literacy programs that helped individuals replace lost identification, removing the immediate roadblocks to filing taxes, securing employment, and accessing independence. We expanded local empathy by hosting immersive poverty simulations , and we proudly collaborated to advocate for fair wages, making our community a provincial leader in certified Living Wage employers. Whether you pulled a city bus at our Campaign Kickoff, hit the greens for our golf classic, or generously gave your time as one of our passionate volunteers—you made this life-changing impact happen.

Thank you for standing with us and ensuring that no one in our community gets left behind.

Molly Pletsch, Board President
United Way Lethbridge & South Western Alberta

The donations you make stay 100% LOCAL and make a local impact

In 2025-2026 Your Donations Supported:

- Big Brothers Big Sisters
- Crowsnest Pass Food Bank
- Family Centre
- Inclusion Foothills
- Interfaith Food Bank
- Lethbridge Family Services
- Lethbridge Food Bank
- Pincher Creek Community Food Centre
- Womanspace Resource Centre
- Wood's Home Foundation

Three Pillars

All That Kids Can Be

From Poverty to Possibility

Healthy People Strong Communities

UNITED in the Community

TOOLS FOR SCHOOL

Over $5,000 in Staples gift cards were distributed to purchase schools supplies for kids. With the donation we teamed up with the YMCA & MyCityCare for READY, SET, GO and with the generosity of many others we were able to contribute school supplies to over 1,500 kids to go back to school.





PERIOD PROMISE

United Way's Period Promise campaign was able to distribute over 20,000 menstrual products to schools in Lethbridge & South Western Alberta to ensure no one was without proper sanitary supplies. Often, people have had to choose between a meal and menstrual products. United Way wants to ensure no one ever has to choose.

TOASTY TOES

In partnership with the AB Chiropractors Association, United Way was able to distribute over hundreds of pairs of socks to help keep people warm through the winter months.





EDUCATION ON POVERTY

Through Poverty Simulations, United Way educated over 300 individuals about the complexities of poverty and the interconnected issues of poverty through a simulation workshop.

CONNECTING PEOPLE

Through various opportunities, United Way was able to connect, develop skill sets, and reduce isolation through our volunteer opportunities. Well over 100 volunteers contibuted to over 2,000 hours including Hurricane games, Poverty Simulations, delivering school supplies, pancake breakfasts, reviewing grant opportunities, serving on committees and more! Thank you volunteers!

UNITED
in Supporting Food Security

THE NEED

21.8% - The increase in total visits to Alberta Food Banks from 2024 to 2025

1 in 3 Food Bank Clients are Children

Food insecurity is directly linked to income. Poverty and affordability of food contribute significantly to food insecurity, as does systemic discrimination, high food costs relative to income, accessibility of food, and colonial policies. Soaring inflation and living costs have reduced purchasing power. Between January 2020 and June 2024, the cumulative inflation was 18%, while the price of food increased by 24%.

United Way Helps by:

Investing in programs to enhance mental health and overall well-being promoting nutrition, physical activity and social engagement.

- 162 expectant mothers and newborns were supported through 1,087 service interactions with Baby Bundle Hampers to ensure proper development so that families can grow together.
- A total of 4,259 service interaction took place between the 4 different food banks supported by United Way in 2025-2026.
- Provided $7,000 in funding towards the community water drive. This helped to ensure bottled water reached those who needed it the most during the hottest summer months.







UNITED

in Supporting The Community

THE NEED

Students in Southern Alberta need support. On-time High School graduation rates are at a lower percentage rate than across the country. The cost to society of youth not graduating is approximately $18,000.

Access to more supports including mentorship programs, early learning, and reduced barriers help individuals and families ensure they have the resources they need from early life to adulthood.

United Way Helps By

- Investing in mentoring programs in schools 1,033 children and youth were able to receive supportive mentorship interactions over 8,000 times throughout Lethbridge & South Western Alberta. Programs utilized in schools help address low self-esteem, bullying, self-care and general support. Teen mentors gain leadership skills, while mentees benefit from positive role models. Programs reduce isolation, supports mental wellness, and build a stronger foundation for future success in school, employment and relationships.
- Family Support programming to 89 people with 171 service interactions in Claresholm and area helped individuals with education and transition planning while filling the gaps when families needed alternative government resources for Inclusion supports. There was an increase of 16 new families in Claresholm in 2025, bringing the total number of families served to 148.
- Since July 1, 2025 the Family Literacy Program has served 147 unique individuals through drop-in play sessions, parent support groups, and the Kimochis Play program. These programs promote early literacy, language development, social-emotional learning, and positive parenting by providing engaging play-based activities, parenting education, and resources that support children's healthy development. Over the reporting period, participants engaged in 418 service interaction, reflecting ongoing involvement and continued support for families in the community.
- Indigenous Initiatives in Lethbridge served 45 unique individuals, providing culturally grounded, trauma-informed mental health and family support services for Indigenous children, youth, and families. Guided by Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, the program fosters healing, identity, belonging, and resilience while addressing the impacts of intergenerational trauma and systemic barriers. During the reporting period, participants accessed the program through 68 service interactions, reflecting ongoing engagement and support.
- Financial literacy programming was provided to 1,080 individuals with 1,459 service interactions that supported Income Tax and ID replacement in order to access financial support and file income tax to ensure they are able to move forward with their lives and remove barriers to gain access to employment and government payments.

How United Way Makes Impact Happen

Everything United Way does happens because of the generosity of donors, advocates, and volunteers. Thank you everyone who was a part of the IMPACT in Lethbridge & South Western Alberta. Together we are making a difference in reducing poverty and that no one gets left behind.

LOCAL LOVE GOLF CLASSIC

Golfers took part in the annual golf tournament at Paradise Canyon Golf Resort. Our largest single day fundraiser is so much fun for everyone.



WHOOP-UP DAYS PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Alongside Sandman Hotel Group & Denny's Restaurant we hosted our annual Whoop-Up Days pancake breakfast. It was a huge success. Fundraising never tasted so good!



PULL THE BUS

We shut down the Canadian Tire parking lot and corporate teams showed who was the strongest! Teams of 8 pulled a Lethbridge city bus as part of our Campaign Kickoff.



Fundraising For IMPACT



WORKPLACE CAMPAIGNS

Most companies we work with run a campaign over the course of 1-2 weeks where employees are encouraged to examine their charitable giving and consider donating to United Way through payroll deductions.



LETHBRIDGE HURRICANES JERSEY RAFFLE

Jersey raffles at all the Canes home games raised over $26,500 during the 2025-2026 season. We also teamed up for a tailgate partie at the Home Opener. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped out and everyone who purchased a raffle ticket!

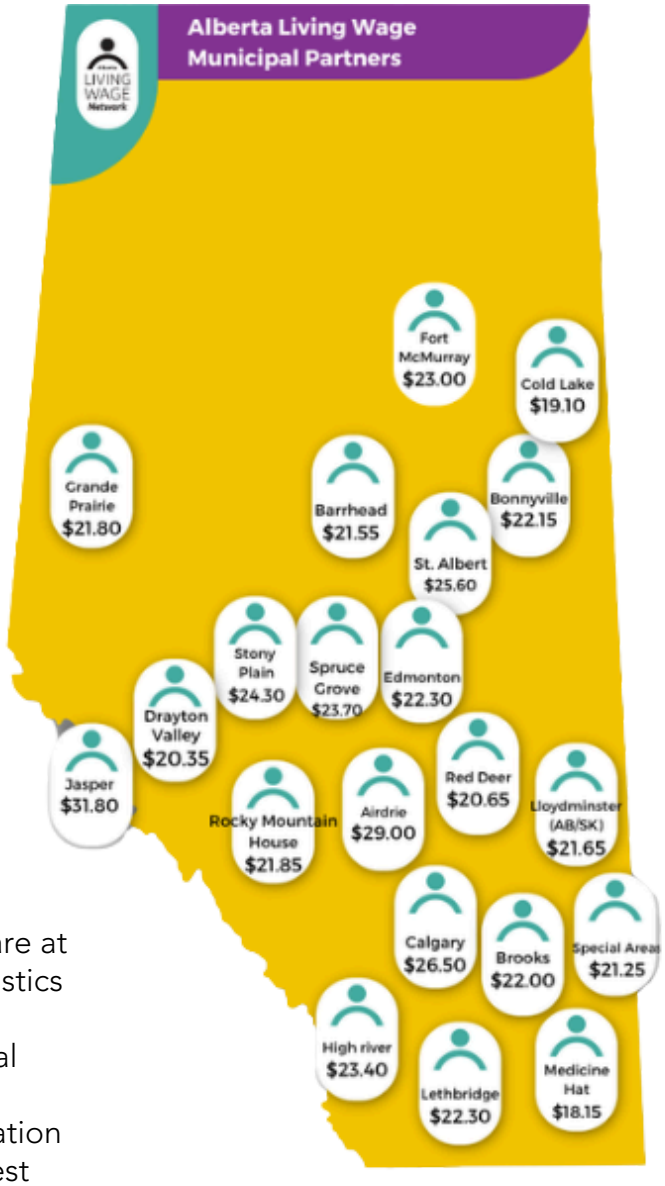


INDIVIDUAL & CORPORATE DONORS

Generosity of individual and corporate donors to our Community Fund & The Unification Fund has fueled our community with positive change. Your impact is felt in keeping people housed, fed, and provided the tools they need to be safe and healthy members of society.

LIVING WAGE

Living wages allow people to not just survive, but to meet their basic needs, live in dignity and participate in their community.



Provincial governments enforce and make it obligatory for employers to comply with the minimum wage. In Alberta, the provincial government has set the minimum wage at $15.00 per hour, while workers under 18 are entitled to $13.00 per hour. However, for many workers, even those working full-time, the minimum wage remains insufficient to lift them out of poverty.

On the other hand, living wages are not mandated by law and are at the discretion of employers. They are determined by using Statistics Canada's Market Basket Measure (MBM) and account for the average expenses associated with a specific set of goods in local communities. These expenses include childcare, transportation, shelter, clothing, and food. The living wage takes into consideration the hourly pay rate necessary for a household to sustain a modest standard of living after accounting for government transfers and taxes.

In 2025, United Way collaborated with the Alberta Living Wage Network to calculate the living wage for Lethbridge. Their aim was to encourage employers across all industries to commit to paying their employees enough to cover their living expenses. The weighted average for the living wage in Lethbridge was determined to be $22.30 per hour. A year over year increase of $2.30

United Way of Lethbridge & South Western Alberta takes pride in being recognized as a certified Living Wage Employer.

LETHBRIDGE HAS THE HIGHEST RATE OF EMPLOYERS PER CAPITA PAYING A LIVING WAGE.

For more information on how living wages are calculated, or how to become a certified Living Wage Employer in the province of Alberta, visit livingwagealberta.ca.

211®
HELP STARTS HERE

Make the Right Call.
For non-emergency health and social needs, anyone living anywhere in Canada can contact 211 to get connected to local supports and services.



Late in 2020, thanks to support from United Way Centraide Canada, and the Government of Canada's Emergency Community Support Fund, the 211 information and referral service was expanded to reach Canadians from coast to coast.

211 is free, confidential and available 24/7 with interpretation in over 170+ different languages. Navigators assist callers in locating and accessing community and government assistance programs best suited to address their unique needs.

In 2024, residents of Lethbridge and South Western Alberta contacted the 211 service more than 890 times with some of the most frequent reasons for contact being Basic Needs, Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Services, and Income Support followed by Organizational/Community Services. In total 1, 919 needs identified.

Across Canada, the 211 service was contacted 115, 929 times with 89.7% of the contacts occurring by phone, showing how critical the need for person-to-person support is.

Community organizations in Lethbridge & South Western Alberta are encouraged to connect with 211 Alberta to list their programs so that navigators can direct callers to the most appropriate local services.

THANK YOU INDIVIDUAL AND CORPORATE LEADERSHIP DONORS!

In 2025-2026, gifts to our Community Fund at the Leadership level of $1,200 or more have fueled our work and helped ensure a stable source of funding is available to support essential community programs.

THANK YOU!

- Agriculture & Agri Food Canada
- Allan & Fran Caldwell
- Alberta Labour
- ALL Anonymous Donors
- Andrea Ulmer
- BMO
- Canada Border Services
- Canadian Tire
- Cavendish Farms
- Chris Murray
- CIBC
- City of Lethbridge
- Community Foundation, Brandon Area
- Corteva Agriscience
- Costco
- CRA
- Davidson & Williams LLP
- Davis GMC Buick Ltd.
- ENMAX
- Estate of Clarence Beler
- GCWCC Retirees & Others
- Gordon Gilmour
- Government of Alberta
- Government of Canada
- Grant Geen
- Greg Flom
- Kasko Cattle Company
- Lethbridge Hurricanes Hockey Club & Fans
- Lethbridge Iron Works
- Lethbridge Toyota
- Lethbridge Truck Town
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- MNP LLP
- Murray Chevrolet Cadillac
- RBC Foundation
- Workplace Charitable Campaigns Retirees
- Robert Bissonette
- Roger & Elnora Durupt
- Ryan Christie
- Sabrina Samuel
- Scotiabank
- Servus Credit Union
- Sky & Table
- Subaru of Lethbridge
- TD Bank Group
- Terry Slawson
- Tim Schipper
- TransAlta
- Wawanesa Mutual Insurance Company
- Westco Construction
- Workplace Campaigns (GWWCC)



Thank You for making Impact Possible

PS: We have moved!
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