

## ***United Way of Greater Simcoe County Celebrates 50 years of Community Impact! .....a look back at the inaugural year through our 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Report.***

In 1960, Barrie United Appeal, as it was then known, held its very first campaign, having been officially incorporated in the final days of 1959. The inaugural appeal was able to raise a quite remarkable \$77,000.36 or 116% of their campaign objective of \$66,500, well “*over the top*” as the Chair Trustee R.M. Jennings shared in his 1960 annual report. To put this in perspective, the funding was raised at a time when minimum wage was \$1 per hour and the population of Barrie was less than a fifth of what it is now.

Mr. Jennings offered thanks in the report on behalf of the Board of Trustees (who were named by the Barrie Chamber of Commerce, at the behest of Barrie Town Council) to their media friends for providing awareness, including “Ralph Snelgrove and his associates on TV and radio and from Ken Walls and his key people at the Barrie Examiner.” Heart-felt appreciation was also offered to Earle Little, first Chairman of the Campaign Committee, A.E. Powell who provided the campaign audit and the other Trustees including such well-known Barrie luminaries as Willard Kinzie, Maurice MacLaren, Gord Roach and Jack Webb to name but a few.

At that time, there were nine social service agencies conducting regular campaigns in Barrie, seven of whom decided to join forces with the United Appeal. The seven agencies included CNIB, March of Dimes, Red Cross, Retarded Children (as it was then known), St. John’s Ambulance, VON, and YM/YWCA, many of whom are still operating in our area.

Campaign highlights of that first drive included corporate gifts of \$11,000 – *well above* the Canadian average per employee; more than 45 industries and organizations implementing payroll deduction plans with approximately 2,000 donors participating and 16 captains and 400 volunteers covering the city in a house-to-house canvass.

The anecdotal information within the first annual report is an interesting and likely unintentional snapshot of culture during the final days of the fifties and early sixties. For example, the Board of Trustees cautioned that “...pledges could shrink if someone left work to get married”! Additionally, the Trustees shared “There are at least 4,000 housewives in Barrie. Over 400 of these women participated in the last campaign. We felt that it was proper that they have a direct voice in resolving policy matters. “ Women have come a long way at United Way of Greater Simcoe County, which now has compassionate and visionary women appointed to key roles, such as our Chair, Board of Directors, held by Joanne McPhail, B.A. LL.B., Partner, Burgar Rowe Professional Corporation; Chair, Allocations Committee held by Ligaya Byrch, Director of Health Promotion, Barrie Community Health Centre; Chair, Cabinet Leadership Division held by Linda Nixon, Owner Signature Suites; Chair, Development Community, held by Cheryl Shindruk, Senior Vice President, Land Development, Geranium Corporation; CEO held by Seija Suutari, MBA, CHRP, CMC and United Way’s own Honourary Chair, Jennifer Robinson, six-time Canadian Figure Skating Champion!

United Way’s very first report concludes with the determination that financial objectives should be readdressed each year because “...as time goes on the needs of agencies may increase. We might well be in a recession period, be faced some year with lower donations and greater requirements”. As much as some things have changed dramatically, (i.e. women’s roles and people’s ability labeling), some issues have remained just as relevant today! And while the economy may be experiencing a down-turn, United Way’s 50 year history has clearly shown right from the beginning that Greater Simcoe County citizens are willing: to **inspire** their fellow community members with the vision that *everyone has something to contribute*, to **build** infrastructures and programs with which to protect and support those in need, understanding that a *safe and supportive community is everyone’s responsibility* and to **change** their community to one which supports their belief that *every person has value*.

Please contact the United Way office if you have been involved over its 50 year history (or wish to become involved this year) and find out how you can participate in our celebrations, share your stories of past involvement, or become active in the 2009 campaign.

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