COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

BLG makes an impact with United Way Centraide

Every fall, BLG's annual United Way Centraide campaign brings firm members together across all five offices to make a difference in their communities. This year BLG's United Way committees organized a series of fun and engaging events to encourage their colleagues to support the critical programs funded by United Way Centraide.

From a lively auction in Vancouver, a carnival and bake sale in Ottawa, to poker games in Montréal and even challenging climbs up the CN Tower in Toronto and the Centennial Place tower in Calgary, BLG team members showed their commitment to supporting this organization that provides vital support in our communities across Canada. After a month of dedicated fundraising efforts, over $600,000 was raised by BLG firm members and alumni for their respective local United Way chapters.

While many of the campaign activities provided fun and games for our firm members, the true impact of United Way can be felt through the stories we heard. Our BLG offices had the honour of welcoming United Way Impact Speakers, each of whom shared their personal stories with us. These speakers ranged from dedicated United Way volunteers to individuals managing local programs, as well as community members who have directly benefited from the invaluable services.

Speaker highlights

Firm members in our Ottawa office had the opportunity to hear from Sue Hutton, Director, Corporate Philanthropy & Partnerships at United Way East Ontario, who has been involved with United Way for over 20 years. Sue spoke of some of the programs supported by United Way and highlighted how these programs can positively impact the trajectory of one's life. Sue's words brought awareness to the diverse needs of people in our community and inspired several firm members in Ottawa to donate not only to their office's annual United Way Fundraising Campaign, but also to other charitable organizations within their community.

Our Calgary office had the privilege of listening to Impact Speaker Danisha Bhaloo-Shivji's inspiring journey, where she shared how she went from a United Way client to her current role of leading engagement and affinity groups at United Way Calgary and Area. She opened up about her childhood challenges; raised by a hardworking single mother juggling three jobs. Danisha found solace in Big Brothers Big Sisters Edmonton, a charity backed by United Way, where a remarkable mentor sparked her academic pursuits and encouraged her to pursue postsecondary education. Danisha shared that the trajectory of her life changed when she became the recipient of a scholarship from United Way that paid for her college in full. Many are unaware of the crucial role scholarships play in United Way's initiatives, like the transformative one that changed Danisha's life.

At the United Way kick-off lunch in our Toronto office, firm members had the opportunity to hear an emotional story from United Way Impact Speaker Cynthia Oakden, who shared how she turned to Heartache2Hope, an organization supported by United Way, to receive support after the tragic death of a family member. The emotion during Cynthia's presentation was palpable as she courageously shared how the supports she received from Heartache2Hope helped her get through this difficult chapter in her life. While many of the campaign activities can be fun and games, Cynthia's story illustrated for our attendees that the true purpose of the campaign is to lend our support to organizations like Heartache2Hope that are supported by United Way.

Our colleagues in our Vancouver office shared similar sentiments about the engaging and passionate presentation they heard from United Way Impact Speaker Karen Curtis. Karen shared the story of Super Cooks, a United Way-sponsored program that she runs that provides young people with cooking-related life skills such as grocery shopping and reading food labels and aims to use these skills to boost their self-esteem. Catherine-Anne Curtis, a member of the BLG Vancouver United Way Committee, shared with us that "Karen is very engaging and clearly very passionate about Super Cooks. Hearing from her was a great way to kick off our office's United Way campaign."

The impact

Hearing first-hand stories provides a deeper understanding of the issues facing people in our communities and highlights the crucial role United Way plays in providing essential support and services to those in need. We hope that our firm members will carry Sue, Danisha, Cynthia and Karen's stories forward, using them as motivation to make a positive difference in their communities. The firm is dedicated to creating an environment where members are empowered to create positive change. Initiatives like the United Way campaign showcase BLG's commitment to giving back and fostering a spirit of generosity towards those in need.