COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Why we need organizations like United Way to do local good in our community

Introduction

BLG Counsel, Beth Reimer-Heck, was recently appointed United Way of Calgary's 2020-21 campaign co-chair. She has over 30 years of legal, board and executive experience with a specialization in governance. Beth has been recognized for her outstanding contributions to the legal profession in her appointment as Queen's Counsel and has been identified as a leading woman business leader by the Canadian Diversity Network. We recently spoke to Beth about the importance of organizations such as United Way.

Questions

What attracted you to United Way, more specifically?

What attracted me was its leadership role, its people and purpose. United Way invests in solutions that address the most pressing issues in our community, with a focus on outcomes. They collaborate and convene organizations, governments, corporations and people to solve the problems facing vulnerable people in our city–especially now, when anyone can be vulnerable, at any time.

We need organizations like United Way to do local good in our community. United Way serves as a steward, a collaborator, a problem solver, an influencer and, above all, is the only agency that plays this vital role in our community.

What do you think other people should know about United Way of Calgary?

United Way is the local expert that brings people together to solve complex social issues. They invest in areas that make systemic change, efficiently and strategically. They convene organizations and people alike, because complex social issues cannot be solved in isolation.

Just as, at BLG, we work with lawyers for our clients' legal needs, or with financial planners for our clients' finances, United Way stewards a donor's investments in the community, and gets them the highest return on social investment.

What can you reveal about the Calgary United Way 2020-21 Campaign?

It is going to be the most challenging year yet, given the impact of COVID-19 in Canada and especially in Calgary, because of the further economic downturn in the energy industry and resulting social challenges for our community. But it will be the most inspiring for me because of the opportunity to really make an impact when it is most needed.

What are some of the challenges you think you will face, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic?

My involvement as campaign co-chair increased significantly because of the pandemic. United Way stepped up immediately to collaborate with the City of Calgary, Calgary Emergency Management Agency (CEMA) and other organizations to support frontline community organizations supporting Calgarians.

It might take more work this year—more commitment, more ingenuity, more creativity and problem solving than before—but I am up for the challenge.

What does community investment mean to you?

I am a proud Canadian, Albertan and Calgarian.

I have always believed that it is our democratic duty to give back to those who have come before us and for those coming after us.

How do you think community investment will evolve, moving forward?

At a time of crisis, like COVID-19, there is always the opportunity to pivot. There is a saying: "never waste a good crisis."

Organizations that evolve will succeed.

Community investment has already moved to an online platform for donors and that will continue. We need to ensure that we are getting the best value for our commitments, moreso now as resources become constrained. Individuals and corporations must invest strategically, and they need to work with experts in this space. To do that, the key will be collaboration with others (government, organizations, funders, donors, etc.), strong stewardship, and measurement of results.