BLG supports United Way COVID relief efforts

December 07, 2021

Could you make the month?

According to the United Way, one in 10 Canadians currently live in poverty. Make the Month is the United Way Centraide's digital poverty simulator. It shows Canadians what it's like to live paycheque-to-paycheque and have to make impossible decisions, such as choosing between paying rent or buying groceries. The simulator customizes costs and scenarios based on where in Canada you live.

BLGers across Canada participated in the Make the Month challenge as part of our annual United Way campaign. Across our five offices, we also participated in silent auctions, costume and decorating contests, a trivia night and many other fundraising events. Throughout the month-long campaign, we raised more than $585,000 and counting.

BLG members also contribute their time and talents to United Way Centraide. Beth Reimer-Heck is a member of the Board of Directors of United Way Calgary and Area and Andre Dufour sat on Centraide's Campaign Cabinet for the professional services sector.

Hearing firsthand experiences

Each office held a virtual campaign launch featuring United Way and community representatives who discussed, among many topics, the impacts of COVID-19 on those living in poverty.

"United Way British Columbia helps build thriving local communities for everyone, addressing critical social issues and delivering resources and support for the people who need it most," said Steve Winder, BLG Vancouver's regional managing partner, in an email to Vancouver firm members.

The Ottawa office invited Mohamed Sofa, a passionate volunteer and director of Community Initiatives for United Way East Ontario, to speak at its launch. Prior to joining United Way he was executive director of Britannia Woods Community House and has worked and volunteered with many of Ottawa's social services providers,

including Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre, Somali Hope Foundation and the Catholic Centre for Immigrants.

In Toronto, Lee Soda, the executive director of United Way of Greater Toronto-supported agency Agincourt Community Services Association, discussed how the pandemic has magnified issues community members already faced.

Loana Valdez, community relations co-ordinator for Catholic Family Service, an organization supported by United Way Calgary and Area, shared stories of how donations like ours impact change with CFS clients.

John Godber, BLG partner and a champion of the firm's Centraide of Greater Montreal campaign, emphasized the need to give back to Canadians who are struggling.

"More than 600,000 people in the Greater Montréal area live in poverty," he said. "The pandemic has caused even more challenges for those already struggling, which is why it's so important to continue supporting the most vulnerable in our communities."

United Way Centraide and the pandemic

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than $47 million has been raised through United Way for COVID relief, going to crucial community programs and services.

Through a combination of fundraising and government funding, the organization has focused on assisting low-income individuals or those in poverty, helping children succeed, providing supports to seniors not in care homes, and supporting those struggling with their mental health and addictions.

Visit www.makethemonth.ca to participate in the poverty simulator challenge, and www.unitedway.ca to learn how you can help support those in need.

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