

## **UNITED WAY LAUNCHES FOOD SECURITY INITIATIVE IN PEEL REGION**

### **General Mills investment will increase access to nutritious, culturally appropriate and affordable food in Mississauga**

**October 16, 2019** -- Today, United Way Greater Toronto is announcing support to increase food security in Peel Region. Funded through a \$1-million investment from General Mills, United Way will launch six Community Food System Grants in Mississauga and promote community education in a two-year food security initiative. This initiative is focused on going beyond the traditional food distribution model by connecting community agencies, residents and partners across the food system to increase access to food. It operates with the belief that your postal code should not be a deterrent to accessing the food that everyone needs to live a full and productive life.

Over 4 million Canadians — 1 in 8 households — experience food insecurity. That means that financial constraints are preventing families from accessing the food they need, potentially impacting their physical and mental health and well-being. Despite living in a place of abundance, the number of people visiting food banks in the GTA is increasing. The Mississauga Food Bank reports an 18 per cent increase in the number of residents accessing their network of food banks and meal programs in 2018.

Six new Community Food Systems Grants will connect Mississauga residents living in poverty with nutritious, culturally appropriate and affordable food:

- **Seva Food Bank, *Fundamentals of Cooking Classes*.** These cooking classes in Seva's new Malton-based Community Teaching Kitchen will bring together volunteers and chefs with families in need to show client families how to use all the nutritious items in the food bank to prepare healthy meals on a lean budget at home.
- **Ecosource, *Deep Roots*.** This program will connect residents who experience barriers to food access with a network of ten community gardens across Mississauga to tailor gardens to local needs, lead food-based workshops and build the capacity of community partners to address emerging challenges.
- **WellFort Community Health Services, on behalf of a collaborative of organizations, *Peel Food Action Council*.** The first of its kind in Peel Region, this Council will be a platform for coordinated action to improve community-level food security. It will work intentionally with community, public and private sectors across Peel to identify local food issues, understand the food environment, and map out actions to improve and address food access and security in Peel.
- **Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services, *Food Brings People Together*.** This program will create a toolkit to help newcomers and refugees in Sheridan access local food services and supports.
- **The Mississauga Food Bank, *Matching Client Needs with Local Support*.** This program will build relationships with local grocery chains and discount outlets to donate surplus product for food bank network distribution.
- **MIAG Centre for Diverse Women & Families, *Nourishing Communities*.** This community development organization offers food education, cooking techniques, food safety and handling workshops, and food demonstration and testing for newcomers and others who are experiencing low income in Malton, Hurontario and Dundas, and Dixie and Bloor areas.

**Quotes:**

**Ruth Crammond, Vice President, Community Investment and Development, United Way Greater Toronto**, “Access to appropriate, healthy, life-giving food is a universal right, and nevertheless, thousands of our neighbours across Peel Region go without. Food security is both an immediate and a systemic issue – and inextricably linked to poverty. The grant recipients will help families put food on the table in varied, creative, and dignified ways.”

**Mary Jane Melendez, President of the General Mills Foundation, Chief Sustainability & Social Impact Officer**, “At General Mills, we believe in the power of food as a force for good in our communities. We are proud to work together with our longtime partners at United Way Greater Toronto to ensure everyone in our hometown community of Mississauga has affordable and reliable access to the food they need and prefer in order to thrive.”

**Britt McKee, Executive Director, Ecosource**, “At Ecosource, we believe achieving food security in Mississauga is possible through enhanced cooperation and innovation across all players in the food system. It is our collective responsibility to work together to address the complex barriers to food access residents face by implementing creative and culturally appropriate solutions that are specific to Mississauga. This generous support will allow us to strengthen collaboration among community agencies to achieve our shared vision of a city in which all residents have the food they need to thrive.”

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The General Mills Food Security initiative is managed in partnership with Greater Twin Cities United Way.

**About United Way:** As the largest non-government funder of community services in the GTA, United Way Greater Toronto reinforces a crucial community safety net. United Way’s network of agencies and initiatives in neighbourhoods across Peel, Toronto and York Region works to ensure that everyone has access to the programs and services they need to thrive today. Mobilizing the network and other community support, United Way tackles #UNIGNORABLE issues linked to poverty. United Way’s work is rooted in ground-breaking research, strategic leadership, local advocacy and cross-sectoral partnerships committed to building lasting solutions to the GTA’s greatest challenges.

**Downloadable photos:** Photos can be found [here](#). Full cutlines can be found beneath each image.

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