

## UNITED WAY BACKS GRASSROOTS INITIATIVES IN PRIORITY AREAS

\$2.3 million invested in projects enhancing community opportunities and well-being

**August 1, 2019** -- United Way Greater Toronto is investing \$2.3 million in grants over two years to help Toronto neighbourhoods improve economic opportunities, enhance social well-being, and bolster neighbourhood sites. The grassroots projects, led collaboratively by residents, agency leads, and other stakeholders, will touch underserved communities in Toronto's inner suburbs.

The *Our Strong Neighbourhood Grants* activate local impact from United Way's work of over a decade towards supporting community leadership and engagement. The grants are supported in part by BMO Financial Group.

"Too often in the GTA, your postal code determines your future success," says **Alex Dow, Director of Community Connections, United Way Greater Toronto**. "Some neighbourhoods don't have access to the services and opportunities to thrive. Residents and local agencies know what change is needed in their community, so with these grants, we are ensuring people have the skills, tools, and funds to take action on the issues that matter most to them and their neighbours."

**Koa Thornhill**, a program coordinator with Malvern Family Resource Centre, is looking forward to working with residents to establish *Malvern Takes Root* – one of the 12 *Our Strong Neighbourhood Grants* recipients. Thornhill's community sees many new refugees, a high rate of food insecurity, and few local outlets for affordable food. The project will develop a culinary arts bridging program to support aspiring young caterers, create mobile markets to reach isolated communities, and develop an urban farm to improve access to affordable produce. It is an ambitious project, but Thornhill is unwavering. "These projects have been developed by and for community, and we're confident they'll make a tremendous impact due to the passion, dedication, and collaboration that's driven them."

*Our Strong Neighbourhood Grants* will create meaningful change on the following issues:

**Economic opportunities:** Projects help attract investments and develop a skilled local workforce.

- *KGO Works*, with East Scarborough Storefront
- *Our Strong Jane and Finch*, with Jane Finch Community and Family Centre
- *Partners in Prosperity*, with Working Women Community Centre
- *Economic Opportunities Project*, with Jane Alliance Neighbourhood Services

**Neighbourhood infrastructure:** Projects support public places to offer safe community spaces, better connectivity, and revitalized areas that drive social cohesion.

- *Creating Change Together*, with North York Community House
- *Neighbourhood Infrastructure Initiative*, with Rexdale Community Hub

**Social well-being:** Projects strengthen the social fabric of the neighbourhood, supporting access to healthy food and building safer communities.

- *Steeles-L'Amoreaux Community Food Network*, with Agincourt Community Services Association
- *Malvern Takes Root*, with Malvern Family Resource Centre
- *Action for Food Security*, with Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities
- *Our Strong and Beautiful Bathurst-Finch*, with Unison Health and Community Services
- *The Dorset Park Safety Initiative*, with Agincourt Community Services Association
- *TMO Strong Neighbourhood Project*, with The Neighbourhood Group

"The Our Strong Neighbourhood Grants announced today will strengthen these communities and equip residents for a more prosperous future," said **Nada Ristich, Head, Community Giving, BMO Financial Group**. "Through our long-time partnership with United Way Greater Toronto we are proud to support programs such as these grants that empower residents to make real change in their neighbourhoods."

In addition to resident-led work such as the initiatives above, United Way and BMO are tackling inclusive economic growth at an institutional level. In 2018, the two organizations announced a partnership to establish a new model for corporate-community partnerships for building stronger neighbourhoods by bringing together leaders in the private, public and community sectors to propose ways to ensure that the fruits of economic development are shared in all parts of the community.

"Working together, we are also deeply committed to creating a new model that will address systemic challenges standing in the way of inclusive economic development. This partnership is one of the ways we at BMO fulfill our Purpose, building an inclusive society and growing the good in the communities we serve," said Ristich.

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**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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