



From left, Lyndsey Butcher is the executive director of Planned Parenthood, which benefited from Social Venture Partners Waterloo Region's funding and expertise.

Jocelyne Murphy, 14, joined SVP Teens this year for the first time. Jocelyne's mother, Jacqui Murphy, is a partner and board member with SVP Waterloo Region.

PHOTOGRAPHY • CRESTINA MARTINS

POWER IN NUMBERS

Social Venture Partners Waterloo Region brings community members together for a common purpose: to help local not-for-profits succeed

BY CHERRI GREENO

Sometimes it's the heart behind an idea that best determines its success.

That certainly seems to be the case behind Social Venture Partners Waterloo Region, a network of community members that work together to donate money, time and talent to help local non-profit organizations succeed.

Social Venture Partners (SVP) operates in 39 cities around the world, including the United States, India and Japan. The Waterloo Region group began in 2010. When it started, 30 partners signed up. Today, there are 68 partners who contribute about \$5,000 every year. Associates under the age of 35 are asked to donate \$2,500 a year.

But the special thing about this program is not the money; it's the passion and heart behind it — because SVP members recognize that charities don't just need a cheque, they need access to skilled people who can help them develop.

"At SVP, we learn about where our money and talents can best be used," says Jacqui Murphy, a partner and board member with SVP. "Many people think of Waterloo Region as an affluent, successful, dynamic and exciting place to live — and there are parts of Waterloo

Region where you can live your life believing that. But one block over there are families who are not living that life. There are issues all around us. SVP educates our family about these issues, gives us an appreciation for organizations in our community that are tackling these issues and helps us give back in a way we know is meaningful."

A different organization is selected by SVP members each year and is given \$15,000 to \$25,000 annually for three years in what's called an unrestricted donation, meaning the organization is free to use that money however it wishes.

"We spend time with the charity we choose to assess how they can make a bigger impact through the work that they do, how they can reach more clients and be more efficient," says Rose Greensides, executive director of SVP. "We become partners with these organizations. We aren't just funders. We invest in them not just for a year, but for three years, because we know it takes time to get going."

Once the group's needs are known, SVP matches partners with the organization so they can donate their expertise to help the charity succeed, whether it's by creating a new website, helping the group rebrand its image or showing how to better market their group. Many partners

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JACQUI MURPHY
SVP WATERLOO REGION BOARD MEMBER

with SVP have backgrounds in several different areas such as finance, marketing, governance, planning and human resources — all areas that are essential to running a successful non-profit organization.

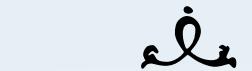
Most of the groups helped by SVP centre on children, youth and family development and have included Strong Start, Woolwich Counselling Centre, Kinbridge Community Association, Hospice of Waterloo Region and Planned Parenthood Waterloo Region (soon to be known as SHORE).

Lyndsey Butcher, executive director of Planned Parenthood, said the funding and expertise she received from SVP helped her organization do a complete rebranding.

"After 44 years, we decided to change our name and SVP helped make sure we did it in an effective way," she says.

In April, her organization will launch its new name — SHORE, which stands for Sexual Health Options, Resources and Education.

"We were finding younger clients facing



SOCIAL VENTURE PARTNERS

- SVP was established in Seattle in 1997 and is now active in eight countries (United States, Australia, Canada, China, India, Japan, Korea and the United Kingdom) and 39 cities
- SVP has more than 3,500 partners worldwide
- SVP has contributed more than \$54 million to more than 700 non-for-profit groups to date

unplanned pregnancies didn't know what Planned Parenthood meant," she says. "The thought was that we may try to pressure them to parent because 'parenthood' was in our name. The name SHORE speaks to all the work we do."

Members of SVP helped her group with the legal aspects of changing the name as well as

marketing and designing a new website.

"We were able to get access to a great network of skilled volunteers and professionals in the community," Butcher says. "You build a trusting relationship with SVP. To have that relationship with a funder is really unique. They trust us with their investment and give us the freedom to use it to strengthen our organization as a whole."

Another unique aspect of SVP Waterloo Region is a program it launched in 2013 called SVP Teens. This program aims to get young people in the community involved in fundraising and volunteering. There are 15 teens who meet monthly to talk about fundraising ideas and to select which charity they choose to support and then volunteer with. The teens commit to raising \$2,000 annually, which is matched by the adult Social Venture Partners. To raise the money, the teens come up with their own fundraising ideas, which have included lemonade stands, selling T-shirts and organizing car

washes and bottle drives.

"The goal is to show people that you don't have to have money or be older to help out in the community if you are willing to do the work," says Andrew Caputo, whose parents are members of SVP.

"It's a lot more fun than people think it would be," he says. "It's not just work. You get a good feeling when you know you are helping out."

Murphy's daughter, Jocelyne, has joined the teen group this year for the first time. At just 14, the Grade 8 Centennial Public School student says she is learning about more than just fundraising.

"It's a really cool experience because there isn't much adult influence," she says. "It's mostly run by the kids. Adults don't always realize how capable teens are. But being a part of this group helps everyone see just how big of an impact we can have on our community."

So far, the group has donated money to KidSport Kitchener Waterloo and

Reception House Waterloo Region, a temporary home for government-assisted refugees. They are currently looking for applicants for this year.

Murphy says both the adult and teen programs are looking to add more partners so they can, hopefully, invest in multiple organizations a year. Board members have found that a lot of people want to help out in their community but aren't sure what organization to donate their money or time to. SVP helps with that decision, ensuring all donations go to a worthy cause.

"I am a very lucky person," says Alex Brown, a partner and board member. "There are a lot of people in our community who haven't been as lucky, those that for the fickle finger of fate haven't been as fortunate. It's through no fault of their own. SVP is an innovative way of looking at how to help Waterloo Region."

Murphy agrees and says there is so much more that can be done if we all work together.

"There is a lot of talent and wealth here and we can share to help make Waterloo Region better," she says. "I believe that everybody has a responsibility to give back in some way."

And giving back can be done in many different ways. Members with SVP are members because they care about the community and the people who live here. As an example of the heart behind the program, Greensides points to a couple of past experiences she had with partners. One occurred when the members heard about a kid's Christmas party being hosted by Kinbridge. Within a couple of days, the partners donated a room full of gifts. When they heard soccer shoes were needed for new immigrant refugees at Reception House, one of the partners dropped off 12 new pairs.

"It's more than just the money; it's the heart of the partners," says Greensides. "That is what SVP is. It's the people and what they do." ☀

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