

**Comments by Sheldon Keefe
2011 Honorary Campaign Chair
Renfrew County United Way
2011 Campaign Kick-Off
September 01
Pembroke Waterfront**

Thank you Bob, and Good morning ladies & gentlemen,

Thank you for joining us today for the Kick-Off of the 2011 United Way Fundraising Campaign.

As Renfrew County United Way's 2011 Honorary Campaign Chair, I am pleased to be able to preside over this important event for the communities of Renfrew County and its many residents who rely on the services and programs funded by the United Way.

The annual United Way Campaign is critical in raising the necessary funds that will allow many recipient agencies to continue to provide important health and social services throughout the county. This is an organization with which I am genuinely proud to be associated. Let me tell you why.

Renfrew County United Way is working on behalf of Renfrew County communities without any agenda except to ensure that the needs of the most

vulnerable among us are met. This is an organization that works not for itself but simply to ensure that professional services are available when and where they are needed. It supports a variety of services and programs delivered by registered charities that touch many people.

The funds raised by Renfrew County United Way through the generosity of its donors stay in the county to work for our needs. This organization ensures that the donor dollars with which it has been entrusted are re-distributed in keeping with the wishes of the communities it serves to meet their highest priority needs.

Recognizing that it cannot address such needs alone, Renfrew County United Way is going to great lengths to partner with other organizations and agencies to ensure that the maximum resources can be brought to bear on issues that would otherwise create unhealthy stresses in our communities if ignored.

For those of us who are fortunate enough not to have to contend with serious health and social issues, we sometimes forget that other community members aren't as fortunate. It's not that we don't care, rather it's likely due to the fact that we aren't aware of them, because many of the issues facing people in our communities are hidden. How many know that homelessness is not only a problem in Renfrew County, but a growing one – with youth and adult men and women trying to cope

without safe and adequate shelter? Or that we have a generation of youth who are disconnected from their communities without hope that they can ever amount to anything. Or that we have seniors who are clinging to dignity while slowly losing their ability to remain productive and appreciated members of our society. Or that one out of nine children in Renfrew County are living below the poverty line?

These and other important issues, like a lack of transportation and the need for more healthy lifestyles, form six broad strategic priority areas that define the work of Renfrew County United Way today. The solution to these problems demands our attention and our support and I for one am happy to step up to the plate today to lend my hand and whatever influence I can bring to bear on their resolution.

We need **“Community Champions”** to join us on this journey. Champions in the workplace, champions in the marketplace, champions at home – ordinary people who are willing to Give, Volunteer and Act to help make our communities more resilient, healthy and inclusive places in which to live and work.

I invite YOU, to be a “Community Champion” when someone from the United Way asks for help – whether you are a financial institution and asked to become a donation centre; or a public or private sector workplace and asked to authorize and

run an employee donation program based on payroll deduction; or a retail business when asked to support the United Way's need for donor access or to provide sponsorship for one of its many community projects; or as an individual when asked to volunteer or provide a personal donation. We need and value your support. **We need total community support. We need Community Champions!**

Renfrew County United Way receives no government assistance. It does not even own a money tree! It relies on people like you and me to help it make a difference. From what I have seen so far, the United Way is well on the road to making a significant difference in our communities, but the battle cannot be won without continued public support **and** from all sectors.

The 2011 United Way Campaign Kick-Off ceremony will be followed today by a community barbeque sponsored by Lou & Lisa Hammill of Giant Tiger-Pembroke and the Brum Family of Brum's Dairy-Pembroke. Community youth who participate in The Grind Salvation Army Youth Centre are here as well with their mobile skate park to help entertain any youth that attend. This group of youth, as well, will be entertaining us during the BBQ through a couple of bands that they've formed at the Youth Centre. Volunteers from the Boy's and Girl's Club of Pembroke and the Petawawa Military Family Resource Team, two of our Member

Agencies, are here as well to help with face-painting for any children who might attend. Let's give these "Community Champions" a great round of applause. The BBQ, by the way, is free to all but donations will be appreciated in aid of the United Way's homelessness initiative. The money will be used to fund a study to quantify the extent of the homelessness problem in Renfrew County. We need factual information to enable us to move forward in finding a solution to a lack of emergency and long-term sheltering in the county.

In closing, I invite you to get involved in some of the United Way's fun events being organized throughout the campaign. Watch for its signature 13th Annual Gerry Edwards Memorial STARlite Golf Tournament coming up on September 10th at the Pembroke Golf Club, and the 20th Annual 24-Hour Ball Marathon on September 24th & 25th at Pembroke's Riverside Park. If eating is your forte, come out to one of the United Way's Harvest Breakfasts – to date breakfasts are confirmed for Pembroke and Eganville in partnership with their respective Legion branches in aid of local food banks. Breakfasts are also being planned for Arnprior, Renfrew and Barry's Bay. Or support one of several 100-Mile Dinners being planned throughout the county at local restaurants in aid of the student nutrition program for Renfrew County schools. The first of these dinners, catered by the Trillium Bistro is confirmed for September 9th at the Deep River Yacht Club in aid

of the Deep River food bank. If you'd like to get in the spirit and help your community through the United Way, do what the OPP is doing and organize your own fund-raising event. The Annual OPP Charity Bike Ride takes place on September 24th, and Valley Heritage Radio's Charity Radio-thon airs on November 26th.

Be the change that you want to see in your community. Get involved. Partner with the United Way to help make change happen. Animate the United Way motto – **Change Starts Here!**

And now it is my pleasure to announce this year's Campaign Goal with the help of some of our volunteers. In choosing this goal, the United Way Board reviews the previous year's experience and the current economic climate and the capacity of our communities to give. But above all, the needs of people are front and centre in the deliberations. These needs continue to grow and so we must, as we have in the past couple of years, raise the bar once more and call out to community members to give more generously to those of our neighbours who are less fortunate. Having surpassed last year's goal of \$425,000, therefore, the Board has approved a campaign goal of *(note: six people will reveal, in succession from right to left, the*

individual numerals of the campaign goal – once all numerals are revealed, please repeat the whole number) - **\$500,000.**

I think we can do it and I urge you to rally around the United Way to make it happen.

Thank you.

And now, I'd like to turn the podium over to Mike Wright, Past Chair of the United Way Board of Directors, to present some volunteer and donor awards.