



New Toronto Community Foundation chair John MacIntyre (second from left) looks on as Councillor Pam McConnell and Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment executive vice president and COO Tom Anselmi prepare food at Recipe for Community's media launch. Cooking classes for children, youth, and adults are a key activity in Recipe for Community. Photo: Michael Skaljin.



# The Community Connection

Thanks to the work of the Toronto Community Foundation, there's no longer an excuse for companies not to give back. The organization is building an outreach model fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century that connects donors to causes, with the click of a button. **BY JULIE EDWARDS**

**W**ith a finger fully on the philanthropic pulse of the city, the Toronto Community Foundation works with individuals and families, helping them build charitable legacies and providing a means to pool endowment resources to magnify impact.

"We are in the business of helping individuals and private industry leverage philanthropy to create the kind of city they want to live, work, learn, and grow in," says Rahul K. Bhardwaj, president and CEO of the foundation. "Our mission is to connect their philanthropy with needs and opportunities in the community, and to build the kind of city they would be proud to leave behind for future generations."

The Community Foundation is an area leader, connecting donors (or fundholders) to community and government organizations and private businesses. The goal is "to create innovative solutions to address the city's most pressing issues," Bhardwaj says. "Our goal is to invest in the best and brightest solutions to the city's various challenges and needs."

The innovation isn't in the mission but in the way that the Community Foundation

forms a link between community needs and business/community donors. Each year, it partners with more than 125 different organizations and groups to gather data to diagnose the city by identifying existing issues, determining opportunities, and finding solutions. This data is then published in the its *Vital Signs* report, a concise overview of life in Toronto across 11 key areas, including the environment, safety, and socioeconomic levels.

"*Vital Signs* is at the heart of our business model—philanthropy guided by community knowledge—and [serves as] the compass that guides our organization," says Simone Dalton, media-relations and communications officer. "Since we launched the report in 2001, it has become a national program of the Community Foundations of Canada and garnered international interest."

In response to the findings in *Vital Signs*, the Community Foundation began convening local organizations and business leaders to discuss the report's results, generate solutions, and invest in these solutions via grant programs and special initiatives. "Then, we leverage additional resources through partnerships and

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Photo: Bryan McBurney.

bring in collaborators to sustain the impact,” Bhardwaj says. “We call this two-pronged approach of identifying and granting ‘strategic philanthropy.’” These findings help form the core of another of the Community Foundation’s publications, *The Art of Wise Giving*, which introduces the organization and provides information about getting involved with interested companies/donors.

The Community Foundation also strives to leverage the assets of nonprofits in the community by identifying those organizations already making an impact and helping to boost their activities and services. It also does the same for fundholders by offering them opportunities to maximize their donations through pooling, allowing them to reach specific organizations and initiatives.

This “strategic philanthropy” has generated numerous successful initiatives. In 2005, *Vital Signs* identified high youth unemployment as a serious concern, dramatic drop-off rates in the recreational activity of youths, troubling high-school drop-out rates, and an increasing rate of youth violence. As a solution, the Toronto Sport Leadership Program (TSLP), a collaboration between the Community Foundation and five institutional partners, was created.

“An intense coach-training institute, the program benefits young people aged 16 and older who demonstrate leadership potential, have proficiency in a selected sport, and could not otherwise afford the training,” Dalton says. “To date, 650 program participants have successfully completed the TSLP and are now nationally certified coaches—such as life-guards and soccer coaches—with the prospect of secure employment opportunities.”

Also born from *Vital Signs’* findings is the organization’s Beyond 3:30 program. Created in partnership with SAP Canada, the program aims to provide a safe and stimulating place for middle school students from underserved neighbourhoods to gather between the hours of 3:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. on school nights. The program is available at no cost to the participating youth, and provides activities such as homework clubs, cooking classes, and creative art, all supervised by positive role models.

“The program started with six schools and now, moving into its second year, serves more than 1,200 kids across a dozen schools,” Bhardwaj says. “More than an after-school program, Beyond 3:30 is cultivating a new learning culture. Students now say they feel

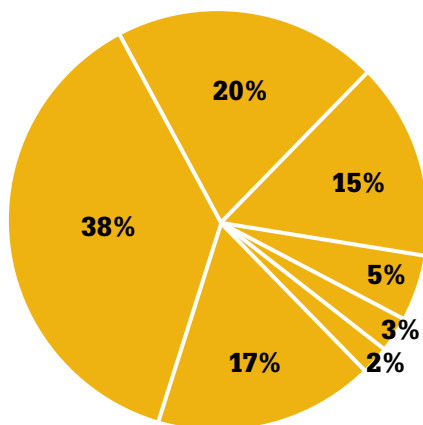
more connected to their schools, and they are forming positive lifestyle habits that help them avoid delinquent behaviour.”

Recipe for Community is another innovative initiative led by the Community Foundation and the Toronto Office of Partnerships. A community revitalization program, the model is “built on four key ingredients: food, convening, youth engagement, and neighbourhood beautification,” Dalton says. “We are currently working in our second neighbourhood, St. James Town, to engage residents—young and old—to improve the sense of belonging, to strengthen the community’s sense of opportunity, and to build the skills and capacity of residents.”

Since 2004, another of the Community Foundation’s initiatives has played a key role

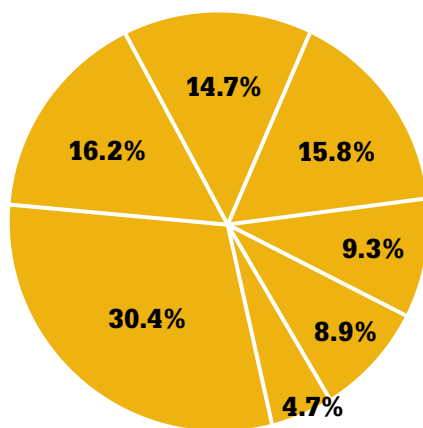
in assisting other nonprofits. Called the Vital Toronto Fund (VTF), the initiative has provided more than \$3.5 million in strategic grants to 230-plus local nonprofit organizations. The VTF supports three grant programs: Vital Ideas, which has invested \$2.2 million in 89 high-impact organizations to stabilize, expand, or replicate programs with successful track records; Vital People, which has invested approximately \$305,000 in 63 of Toronto’s exceptional nonprofit leaders, supporting their growth through training and professional development; and Vital Youth, which has invested more than \$1.1 million in 96 organizations, offering free, high-quality sports and recreation programs for youth that enhance community connections and develop leadership skills.

## Where Toronto's Budget Comes From:



Property taxes: **38%**  
 Provincial subsidies and grants: **20%**  
 User fees: **15%**  
 Reserve funds: **5%**  
 Land transfer tax and personal vehicle tax: **3%**  
 Federal grants and subsidies: **2%**  
 Other: **17%**

## Where the Money Goes:



Police and emergency services: **16.2%**  
 Employment and social services: **14.7%**  
 TTC: **15.8%**  
 Shelter, support, and housing: **9.3%**  
 Public health, children, and longterm care: **8.9%**  
 Debt charges: **4.7%**  
 Administration, planning, transportation, parks, and other services: **30.4%**

Source: *Vital Signs* 2010.

The latest innovation of the Community Foundation's strategic philanthropy is the Community Knowledge Centre (CKC), a website connecting community needs with potential supporters to community needs and opportunities. "We wanted to create a top-of-mind website that connects the issues identified in *Vital Signs* with the solutions nonprofit organizations are providing," Bhardwaj says. "The CKC website allows community organizations to create a profile to tell their stories and fundholders can, in turn, search for granting opportunities."

The website is able to connect numerous businesses and other donors with a variety of philanthropic initiatives. "We share our in-depth community knowledge with our donors," Dalton says. "We offer the same service to businesses that are looking to engage more deeply with the communities they work in. Businesses come to us asking for advice on the significant priority needs in the community; we introduce their employees to the issues and engage them to get involved—as volunteers, for instance—then we encourage granting towards solutions."

Indeed, as far as the Community Foundation is concerned, the successful effort of CKC only looks to get even bigger. "The expansion of our Community Knowledge Centre is a major priority," Bhardwaj continues. "The site currently features organizations that have received a grant directly from the Community Foundation, but we want to extend participation to a much larger pool of all registered charitable organizations serving Toronto and its residents. Our vision is that the CKC will eventually connect community needs and opportunities with philanthropy

## Connecting Philanthropy with Donors: The Community Knowledge Centre

▶ Seeking to create a top-of-mind website that connects the issues facing the community with the solutions nonprofit organizations were providing, the Toronto Community Foundation launched the Community Knowledge Centre (CKC) in 2010. Through the CKC, community organizations can create an online profile to tell their stories of impact, allowing donors to search for granting opportunities and community members to better understand and support the needs of their city.

IBM Canada contributed technology and services to the establishment of the CKC, and now more than 100 organizations are profiled on the CKC. The response has been incredibly positive, with many organizations securing new funding sources. For instance, Arts for Children and Youth, an arts-based charitable organization working with marginalized youth, just established a new donor through the CKC. Media outlets also have been using the CKC as a source-gathering tool.



Among the Community Foundation's many grant recipients is Arts for Children & Youth. Photo: Annie Sakkab.

in every community in Canada through each community foundation."

Even with the expansive range of its outreach, the Community Foundation still strives to educate the public on its work. "If we could change one misperception about a community foundation, it would be that you have to be a millionaire to establish an endowment," Dalton says. "The power of community foundations is in the diversity of their base. Community foundations provide generous citizens of all income levels with a means to pool resources so they can magnify their donation's impact."

"By establishing an endowment at the Community Foundation," Bhardwaj says, "our fundholders have all the flexibility, involvement, and recognition of a private foundation, but can focus on creating positive change through their granting. We believe that the prosperity of nations has been built by competition, but the way forward is collaboration. Philanthropy is the space where the public and private sectors can come together to develop innovative solutions to the world's problems." \_a



Photo: Michael Salem.

## The Milestones, Achievements, and Partnerships of the Community Foundation

### 1981

The Toronto Community Foundation is founded by a Toronto businessman, Fraser Deacon, and a group of his partners and friends.

### 2001

The publication of Toronto's *Vital Signs* report begins.

### 2008

The remodel of the Museum Subway Station is made possible through the Arts on Track public/philanthropic partnership.

### 2009

Beyond 3:30 is launched as a partnership between the Community Foundation, the Toronto Foundation for Student Success, and the Toronto District School Board. The Recipe for Community initiative is created as a collaboration between the Community Foundation, the City of Toronto, and the Toronto Community Housing.

### 1994

The first major bequest of \$2.7 million is received.

### 1988

The B&B Hamilton Fund, the first of the major family funds, is established.

### 2007

Unprecedented vacancy rates and housing expenses cause the Community Foundation to take action, resulting in a \$3.6 million investment from the Ontario government in the Strong Communities Housing Allowance Pilot.

### 2010

The Community Foundation is recognized as an Outstanding Foundation by the Greater Toronto Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. It teams with IBM to create the Community Knowledge Centre.

### 2004

In order to establish discussions across sectors as a way to catalyze action on the city's pressing issues, the organization initiates the Toronto Dialogues.

### 2005

The Toronto Sport Leadership Program is launched as a partnership between the Community Foundation, the City of Toronto, United Way, YMCA, and the Toronto District School Board.