

GivingTuesdayNow inspires donations locally and abroad



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By Michael RileyLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter

GivingTuesday heralds itself as the international day of giving, where communities are united to share with and empower each other. May 5 was GivingTuesdayNow, an event initiated by the Rideau Hall Foundation and CanadaHelps, to assist communities ravaged by the effects of COVID-19. McDougall Insurance and Financial, headquartered in Belleville, generously pledged to match donations up to \$10,000 on the GivingTuesdayNow campaign that is being organized locally by United Way Hastings Prince Edward County. McDougall Insurance and Financial are tremendous community ambassadors and they are a long-time partner of United Way HPE. When we introduced the concept of GivingTuesday with them, they very generously offered to match donations up to \$10,000. The traditional GivingTuesday is held in November, however due to the pandemic, there is an additional one added for tomorrow, says Brandi Hodge, executive director of United Way HPE. Caley Weese, marketing and executive assistant to the president, says that McDougall Insurance supports a number of local United Way events, including being the title sponsor of their Food Trucks United event. With the cancellation of many events in 2020, the food truck event was also cancelled, and the GivingTuesday was presented to us. We are always looking for a way to give back and be part of our local communities, and given the current situation around the world, the time to help out even more just seemed right and \$10,000 seemed like the right number to boost their campaign, she says. The Rideau Hall Foundation is a charity that works toward creating a better Canada, working with partners to improve lives and foster the conditions for more Canadians to succeed and thrive. CanadaHelps builds effective and affordable fundraising technology so that national charities can reach their full fundraising and volunteerism potential. Both charities came together to bring GivingTuesday Now to fruition. Jill Clark is the communications manager with the Rideau Hall Foundation. Giving is an essential part of what it means to be Canadian, and encouraging giving, whether time, treasure or talent, is a priority for Rideau Hall Foundation. We teamed up with CanadaHelps in support of GivingTuesdayNow because it's a really timely way to come together as a country to address the unique needs of the situation we're all facing. All with the goal of supporting communities in need across Canada and around the world, she says. Through GivingTuesdayNow, the Rideau Hall Foundation and CanadaHelps are hoping to amplify the call to action for all Canadians to join a global moment of unity, with over 60 other countries. The journey to see this through, and begin the process of healing will carry on in the weeks, months and years to come.

We want to look at that beyond the lens of a one-day initiative and foster the culture of giving that is a part of our national identity. Every act of generosity counts! Donations to community, national or international charities are certainly encouraged, but acts of kindness, generosity of spirit and extending a helping hand (at a safe distance) are all ways in which we can give. It's easy to feel powerless and disconnected from our friends and communities at a time like this, what better way to feel connected and hopeful than to give?? she asks. Lys Hugessen is the vice president of partnerships and special projects at CanadaHelps, and is part of the GivingTuesday team. She says when they first saw it happening in the States, they immediately wanted to bring it to Canada. ?It's one of the best U.S. imports ever! CanadaHelps.org and GIV3 worked with many other organizations to launch in Canada in 2013. That first year, we were so amazed how quickly it caught on. It's an idea with universal appeal and inspires people to engage in so many different ways. Now, in response to COVID-19, GivingTuesdayNow is an opportunity for people in Canada and around the world to stand together in unity, to use their individual power of generosity to remain connected and heal together,? she says. Hegessen is very happy with the number of people and organizations that participate. Six million Canadians got involved last year, and over \$21 million was raised online in just 24 hours. ?We would like to see GivingTuesday continue to grow, perhaps to become the first global holiday. We envision a day when everybody in the world is aware and celebrating generosity as a global community,? she says. GivingTuesday is now heading into its eighth year. It was adopted to the Canadian landscape by GIV3 and CanadaHelps, and now has thousands of partners. The results are impressive. According to CanadaHelps, in its first year, Canadian online giving rose by 169 per cent versus the same day from the previous year. Online giving has increased by over 1,247 per cent since then, and nearly \$22 million was donated online last year. The traditional GivingTuesday takes place each year after Black Friday, in December. While Black Friday caters to spending and consumerism, GivingTuesday furnishes opportunities for giving and volunteerism. It also brings together a wide range of partners; non-profits, businesses, civic organizations, corporations, individuals and families, who help foster this change. Last year, over 7,000 charities participated. This year, Canadians are asked to support GivingTuesdayNow in several ways. They can donate to their favourite local, national or international charity and share their giving stories, they can volunteer to help neighbours and community leaders while maintaining physical distancing and they can put up colourful artwork in their homes' windows or make inspiring sidewalk chalk art. They can also share their stories of giving using hashtag #GivingTuesdayNow.