



**MEDIA RELEASE**  
*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

July 28, 2021.

## **A Collaboration between Service Providers in the South Georgian Bay Ontario Health Team Aims to Reduce the Impact of Poverty**

**South Georgian Bay** – Thanks to a 3-year, \$233,742 grant from United Way Simcoe Muskoka, the South Georgian Bay Ontario Health Team (SGB OHT) is beginning the work on a collaborative project to expand the community's ability to more easily connect people who are struggling to meet their basic needs, to the services and supports they need.

"In the first year of the project, we are working on developing a shared technology platform to allow physicians, health care providers and also community service organizations to make electronic referrals to 2-1-1 for people who are impacted by the social determinants of health," says Pamela Hillier, Executive Director of Community Connection. "Like a physician prescribing medicine, this is social prescribing, a structured way of referring people to the broad range of local, non-clinical services such as food resources, transportation services, income supports or even social activities for those who are alone. With their basic needs supported, people can be more focused on their health and wellbeing. We are so thankful to donors in our communities who support the United Way Simcoe Muskoka, for making this work possible."

Digitally enabled Ontario Health Teams also create opportunities to establish more efficient channels for delivering services.

"United Way's community investment will enable 211 Community Connection to be connected to the Ontario Health Team's eReferral technology," says Dr. James Lane, Digital Health Lead for SGB OHT and the Chief Medical Information Officer at the Collingwood General & Marine Hospital. "This eliminates traditional faxed referrals, and automatically updates the patient's medical chart so the patient and their care team, including their primary care provider, can be continuously updated as to the status of the referral."

In year two and three of the project, the collaborative plans to develop a community assistance network to respond to urgent needs of individuals with the aim of moving people out of crisis to stability, and, when possible, self-sustainability.

"Access to resources is one of the biggest hurdles that keeps people living in poverty," says Dale Biddell, Chief Executive and Philanthropy Officer of United Way Simcoe Muskoka. "This new project will help fill the gap that exists between health care and community services to better address all of the unique needs of our most vulnerable residents. By creating a digital platform to facilitate care for mental, physical and social health, this program will not only lower this barrier for South Georgian Bay residents but can serve as a model for communities throughout Simcoe Muskoka and beyond."

**About the United Way Simcoe Muskoka**

Poverty touches most aspects of a person’s life from food, shelter and employment to mental and physical well-being. United Way Simcoe Muskoka seeks to improve lives and build communities by leveraging collective resources and mobilizing collective action to achieve the greatest impact. By funding critical services throughout our communities, United Way Simcoe Muskoka is ensuring that local residents have the resources and assistance they need to unlock their full potential. To learn more, please visit [www.uwsimcoemuskoka.ca](http://www.uwsimcoemuskoka.ca).

**About the South Georgian Bay Ontario Health Team (SGB OHT)**

The SGB OHT is a new model of organizing and delivering health care that better connects patients and providers in their communities to improve patient outcomes. We are comprised of eleven anchor partners and a strong network of supporting community organizations. SGB OHT members collaborate with patients, families, caregivers and the community to co-design the best possible care for our region. To learn more about SGB OHT or get involved please visit [www.southgeorgianbayoht.ca](http://www.southgeorgianbayoht.ca) or follow us on Facebook [@SGBOHT](https://www.facebook.com/SGBOHT) and Twitter [@SGBOHT](https://twitter.com/SGBOHT)

“We strive to be the healthiest community in Canada”

**Media Contact:**

Dominika Zapolnik, Communications Specialist  
South Georgian Bay Ontario Health Team  
705-890-3646  
[dzapolnik@gbfht.ca](mailto:dzapolnik@gbfht.ca)

Douglas Landsborough, Marketing and Communications Specialist  
United Way Simcoe Muskoka  
705-726-2301 x2025  
[dlandsborough@uwsimcoemuskoka.ca](mailto:dlandsborough@uwsimcoemuskoka.ca)

Cutline: South Georgian Bay is a Leader in Digital Health

Pictured is Dr. James Lane, Digital Health Lead for SGB OHT and the Chief Medical Information Officer at the CGMH.