



## ***For Immediate Release - June 27, 2008***

From: The United Way of Perth County  
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### **(Stratford, ON): The United Way “Listening for Change : Grades 7 & 8 Youth Speak Up”**

The United Way of Perth County has released its findings of a fact-finding, priority setting initiative involving grade 7 & 8 youth from across Perth County.

“We want to share with the broader community, other funders and decision makers what local grade 7&8 youth think is important, what they are concerned about and what they would like to see in their communities in the next five years”, commented United Way Executive Director Ellen Balmain.” We especially want to share *The Listening for Change* findings with educators who work closely with the age group”.

Ms. Balmain reports that “Through that process we were able to consult with citizens from across the county about their concerns. They told us repeatedly that they were concerned about our youth. As a result we included focus groups with high school students in the first report and are now following up with this exciting reflection of the perceptions, ideas and concerns of grades seven and eight students from across the County.”

Volunteer facilitators Charlene Gordon and Dale Howatt conducted focus groups with youth in 11 elementary schools throughout the County. **“Student participation was critical. We wanted to know what they think about their community and what are they facing in today’s society.** Does this report reflect their experience? That of their friends and peers? Have we missed something?” states Dale Howatt.

This report is part of a Community matters project that began as an extensive two-year consultative project funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation to identify the social service needs within Perth County. The consultation process was designed to promote civic engagement, facilitate community collaboration, identify innovative solutions to community challenges, enhance the impact of the United Way and help build stronger, healthier communities. The initial process culminated in the release of the *Listening for Change: Identifying Community Priorities* in Oct 2006. The release of this report coincides with a second Perth County Social Research & Planning Council report *Voices of Youth - An Inventory of Programs and Services for Youth in Perth County* which was also released Friday.

The report is available on our web-site at  
<http://www.unitedwayperth.on.ca/YOUTHMattersFINAL4pg.pdf>

For more information please call Ellen Balmain, at the United Way 519-271-7730  
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The United Way of Perth County is a locally guided organization dedicated to identifying key local priorities and supporting the mobilization of local resources to create sustainable community improvements. Our communities are forever changing, however, so it is critical that we seek out information about the most pressing and urgent needs our friends and neighbours are facing.

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