



**United Way**  
British Columbia

Working with communities in BC's  
Interior, Lower Mainland, Central  
& Northern Vancouver Island

## **The Kids Are Not OK: United Way BC spring campaign aims to help combat children's mental wellness challenges**

*United Way BC hopes to "Help Bring the Joy Back to Childhood" in its spring fundraising campaign calling attention to child and youth mental well-being, featuring emotional renditions of children's video game characters, product mascots, and toys – and challenging popular children's brands to do the same.*

Central Office, Burnaby, B.C., May 3, 2023 – The life of school-aged kids are often portrayed as joyous, as reflected by the brand mascots, characters, and toys that fill their world. The universe of children's products is saturated with depictions of happiness, but – based on a recent UNICEF Report – this no longer reflects reality for many Canadian kids. In fact, one in four Canadian children between the ages of six and 12 struggle with their mental well-being as youth depression and anxiety rates climb at an alarming rate.

United Way British Columbia (United Way BC) – working with communities in BC's Interior, Lower Mainland, Central & Northern Vancouver – has launched a 12-week fundraising campaign to bring attention to the issue of child and youth mental well-being, featuring emotional renditions of children's video game characters, product mascots, and toys with the message: "Help Bring the Joy Back to Childhood". The campaign began in April and will be running through June, as kids say goodbye to their school schedule and look ahead to their annual summer break.

"Due to new societal and economic pressures, kids are carrying more emotional baggage than ever," says Michael McKnight, President & CEO, of United Way British Columbia. "We must come together to help kids in our local communities access programs that help them with their mental well-being, like United Way BC School's Out and School's Out Summer programs."

United Way BC has intentionally "flipped the script" and shifted the disposition and appearance of beloved childhood characters and mascots from typically happy and joyous, to sad and melancholy, to raise awareness of the rising rates of kids experiencing anxiety and depression, and with a hope for the public to take a step back, reflect and think about the current status of children and youth, particularly their mental well-being.

The campaign hopes to help children know that it's okay not to be okay, by building awareness on the importance of providing quality programs that support their mental well-being and build resiliency.



*Image Caption: One of the campaign's featured heroes, feeling not so super.*

With Canadian Mental Health Awareness Month running throughout May, Children's Mental Health Week between May 1-7, and National Child and Youth Mental Health Day on May 7 – youth wellbeing is top of mind all month long.

As an extension to the campaign, United Way BC is launching a call to action to popular brand mascots and iconic faces to temporarily alter their mascots this month, whether through their social media icons, their websites, and maybe even their packaging.

The general public can learn more and support United Way BC's children's and youth programs by making a donation at [uwbc.ca/joy](http://uwbc.ca/joy).

A [media kit](#) with assets is available for download.

### **About United Way British Columbia**

United Way supports healthy, caring and inclusive communities by strengthening vital connections that support people in need. Representing the six regions of Central and Northern Vancouver Island, East Kootenay, Lower Mainland, Southern Interior, Thompson Nicola Cariboo, and Trail and District, our organization serves a population of more than 4 million people, with a focus on kids and youth, seniors, poverty, mental health and food security.

[www.uwbc.ca](http://www.uwbc.ca)

### **About United Way BC School's Out Programs**

United Way BC School's Out programs provide healthy, safe, educational activities so that vulnerable school-aged children grades 1-7 have access to the mental wellness and developmental supports they need, particularly during the critical hours between 3 – 6 pm. Programs offer educational support and homework assistance, physical activity and development, mentoring, social and emotional support, and help at-risk kids develop basic life skills.

### **UNICEF Report**

Please see [here](#) for UNICEF's Canadian Summary of UNICEF Report Card 16.

SOURCE United Way British Columbia

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