

SERVICE **IN** ACTION

A real-world leadership case study from the Service Leaders at [FourSimpleWords.ca](https://www.foursimplewords.ca)

The Reciprocal Symphony of Service



A real-world case study from the Service Leaders at [FourSimpleWords.ca](https://www.foursimplewords.ca) about how the power of service transforms lives and organizations and the habits we need to build around service.

These insights have been generously shared by Ray Stultz, Campaign Chair for the 2023 United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin Campaign

In a world that increasingly measures and celebrates importance by what we can gain, the idea of being in service to something other than personal needs can sound like a faint echo. Yet, when we take a pause and listen outside our heads and hearts, we can hear stories of service that compose a melody of hope, action, and mutual growth. This edition of Service In Action reminds us that we all have the responsibility—and gift—to listen for opportunities to be of service.

Our conversation with Ray Stultz, a Guelph/Wellington community stalwart and current Campaign Chair for the 2023 United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin Campaign, is a great example of this symphony. Ray's journey to better understand the power of service isn't a single note of action. Instead, it is a lifelong learning quest of ever-evolving giving and receiving through service. Ray's example invites each of us to find the rhythm of service in our own lives.

Since a young age, Ray has intentionally explored his understanding of service. He and his siblings inherited the ability to see and benefit from this learning through his parents who modelled what being in service looked like. He remembers his self-employed father and his hard-working mom (who was a nurse) talking about and inviting their kids to get involved. A pivotal moment of learning was when Ray saw his father taking time at the end of the day to attend and fully participate in a Toronto Rate Payers Association meeting. This was the first time outside of their home that Ray witnessed his parents putting time and energy toward something that was bigger than themselves.



**United Way
Guelph Wellington
Dufferin**

United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin has worked in our community for over 80 years to monitor and meet the pressing social needs of our community, including poverty, social isolation, and mental health. Directed by a volunteer board, managed by committed staff, and supported by thousands of donors, United Way works with partners in all sectors to improve lives and build community. Donations stay 100% local, always. For more information about United Way and the 2023 campaign visit unitedwaygwd.com

Through watching this and countless other examples, Ray and his siblings started building their personal rhythm of service. And perhaps coincidentally, each of them ended up in service-related professions: accounting, teaching, and banking. Ray’s parents modelled for their kids (and us!) that when the spirit of service is ignited, it will ripple out of a family, business, or organization—perhaps without us even knowing. This contagious nature of service is being amplified in his current leadership with United Way.

Ray’s tenure as the 2023 Campaign Chair isn’t about lofty ideals but a grounded, genuine endeavour to foster a culture of reciprocal service. And raise money. This important volunteer role will consume countless hours of time this fall as he inspires and helps to coordinate the team that will raise millions in just a few months. Ray recognizes that he is just one of hundreds of volunteers in Guelph and Wellington who echo this communal rhythm of giving and receiving.

Ray’s intentional approach to learning from and sharing with others is an important lesson in building a sustainable rhythm of service. He is clear that good service is not about sacrifice to the point of personal depletion, and instead is about engaging in a cycle of goodwill that reverberates through the community. His story underscores that service, especially when intertwined with organizations like United Way, becomes a pathway to personal and collective growth. Part of that commitment is each of us being open and transparent about the energy that we can put toward service at any given time in our lives. Too much and we drain ourselves. Too little and we deny ourselves the physical, emotional and financial benefits. That is the rhythm of service.



“In the past, campaigns like this used to be a few community champions who would run the show and drive donations”, reflected Ray. “You can’t do that these days. It isn’t fair to those doing all the work (they burn out and rarely come back) and we are not sharing the benefits of experiencing Service Leadership with more people. We must invite the full community to be involved because everybody has a part to play.”

Ray shares a specific story of what listening to the rhythm of service looks like. He recalls an experience from another NGO board where he witnessed a long-serving staff person step into a new leadership role during a time of major transition. This individual modelled Service Leadership by



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Four Simple Words is building a movement to transform organizations and lives through the power of service. We have seen the future and it is demanding we embrace service as a way to heal ourselves, build sustainable relationships and solve our 21st-century problems. This case study is a gift from Ray about what it means to be in service to others. Learn more about the four simple words and our passion for service at FourSimpleWords.ca.

graciously taking on this new role and managing the physical and emotional needs of the team through this change. For a period of months, this individual was giving. A lot. Witnessing this flow of energy becoming less rhythmic and joyful, Ray intentionally stepped into service and worked with the individual and org to reimagine processes and make sure they had time to recharge themselves. Ray heard a rhythm of service that was off-beat and, rather than skipping past the tune on his busy playlist, he briefly jumped into the mixing booth to get the song back on track. Literally.

Ray also reminds us that this rhythm is something we need to pay attention to over different periods of time. We can create a rhythm of service in the minutes it takes to order a cup of coffee. The story above was an intense period that lasted for four or five months. He points to another long-term example of this rhythm after seeing interns hired through a summer work program return to an organization years later to become full-time employees. It is important for all of us to remember that being in service to others does not require a life-long commitment. It requires us to listen to our own internal rhythm and understand if and how we can add our musical skills to someone else's song.

As Ray navigates this give-and-take of service, each interaction helps him grow. The symbiotic essence of service shines through his efforts to uplift others at home, at work, and in the community. And while beneficial to those he was serving they also impact him. These experiences elevate his understanding, empathy, and leadership. "I think the magic of inviting others into service happens when we can help people understand what their personal driver or motivator is. Once someone understands—and embraces—this personal benefit or return on service, their service to others can go deeper and become more rewarding for them and those they are helping."

Ray's experiences underscore a pivotal lesson—personal growth and service are not separate journeys but intertwined paths. Ray understands that as he became more entrenched in service, his perspectives evolved, his leadership matured, and his ability to collaborate flourished. This commitment to growth and learning through service experiences—both good and not-so-good—illustrates its transformative power. It turns out that on the way to helping create a better world, we are in fact creating a better, happier, and more successful version of ourselves.