



MID-YEAR UPDATE

SEPTEMBER 2022-
FEBRUARY 2023





A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



When I was a frontline worker at The Stop, I was giving a donor a tour of our drop-in program, and I recall being struck by the concept that private philanthropy was playing such a key role in ensuring that people in our community were able to access healthy food.

As the need for emergency food assistance in our community continues to soar – the number of new households accessing our food bank each month has nearly doubled compared to pre-pandemic levels - the question of who is responsible for upholding the right to food has never been more pressing.

The problem is complex. When our neighbours struggle to put food on the table, it's a symptom of government policies that fail to support people to access the most fundamental of human rights. Social assistance rates, for example, are nowhere close to matching the cost of living. More people accessing food banks are working full-time. If you're a part-time minimum wage earner or receive social assistance, as a significant proportion of our service users do, you're living in deep poverty.

At The Stop, food has always been central to our work. But the provision of emergency food services by agencies like ours was never designed to be a permanent solution to hunger. I hope you'll join us in calling on our elected officials to respond to the crisis in our community with government policies, including income supports, that allow our fellow citizens to live healthy, dignified lives.

Thank you for being part of our community and for standing with us in the fight to build a more equitable city where no one gets left behind.

In Solidarity,

Shae London
Executive Director





EMERGENCY FOOD ACCESS

We continue to experience unprecedented demand for emergency food access services, as more and more new households register for our services. This is indicative of the growing need for supports as inflationary pressures, unaffordable housing and insufficient income economically destabilize individuals and families.

Indoor dining resumed in our drop-in, which was a welcome change after nearly three years of takeaway meals! As an extension to our drop-in meal service, we restarted drop-in programming with karaoke, bingo, movies, computer access, and other activities between meal times. This programming is critical to building community and reducing social isolation.

Our Good Food Market, which provides fresh produce and other local goods at affordable prices, continued to expand with new products on offer, and we look forward to the outdoor market with the warmer weather!

Key Highlights

- 10,040 individuals reached through our food bank, with a 91% increase in new food bank memberships compared to the same time period last year and an 83% increase compared to pre-pandemic levels
- The cost of a food hamper rose by 11%, from \$54 to \$60
- 35% of food bank budget spent on locally grown food. This will increase in the summer months with better seasonal availability
- 37,814 culturally diverse, nutritious meals served across our two drop-in locations
- All milk, eggs, and root vegetables served in the drop-in are sourced locally
- 1,489 visits/customers to our Good Food Market
- 56% of the Good Food Market budget spent on local produce

"Being connected to the Stop's drop in has given my life a meaning. I feel valued at The Stop and I'm excited at the opportunity of me giving back to such a great organization by volunteering weekly." - Wychwood Open Door drop-in participant

Community Kitchens

Our Community Kitchens program brings people together to learn, cook, and share nutritious, culturally diverse, and inexpensive meals. We offer a range of cooking groups, all designed to build food skills, reduce social isolation, and increase access to healthy food.

Key Highlights

- We're back in person as of this past winter!
- 4 Community Kitchen groups including Men's Cooking Group; Sabor Latino; Crosspollination @ Earls court Garden; Crosspollination @ the Green Barn
- 407 meals shared on-site
- 42 referrals to other social services



"Building community is good for your health. Lots of people live alone and there is a different energy when you eat alone compared to when you eat with others. It's healthy to eat together. Cooking with others encourages me to cook at home. The cooking is important, but eating together is as important."



Healthy Beginnings

Healthy Beginnings is a weekly drop-in program for new and expectant parents. The participants are on a low income and often experience a combination of challenging life circumstances such as single parenting, poor housing, mental health issues, marginalization, recent immigration, and language barriers. We're finally hosting the program in person again!

During the past six months we have seen an increase in families needing support due the fallout of the pandemic and inflation. We continue to prioritize the registration of participants within our catchment area to be able to provide services within our scope of capacity and budget.

Key Highlights

- 109 unique participants
- 32 new participants
- 32 sessions
- 918 meals shared on-site
- 23 food demos/nutrition workshops
- 423 food hampers distributed

"The Healthy Beginnings team is very kind, careful, respectful, and patient. I feel the love they put into their work. The Stop is important because they provide support to the mothers and provide fresh foods for a healthy diet. They make us feel good and we can count on them. It's great they provide translation."



Community Advocacy Program

Our Community Advocacy Program (CAP) empowers people to challenge chronic income and food insecurity by building stronger community support networks, raising political consciousness, and taking direct action. The Community Advocacy Office is a peer-run project where trained advocates (who are also community members) provide information, referrals, and general assistance to fellow community members.

Services and activities

- Peer-led referrals to other community agencies within our network
- Information and support to community members facing multiple challenges
- On-site services from various clinics and partner agencies
- Four policy committee meetings to strategize how to address structural barriers our members face
- Two peer-led events with the goal of education and/or community-building

Key Highlights

- 828 visits to the CAP office
- 326 referrals to other social services
 - 33% to income support
 - 30% to housing services
 - 14% to meal programs
- Emotional Wellness and Peer Support Program
 - 12 support group sessions
 - 1,658 personal care items distributed



"The Stop was able to help me gain access to my Ontario Works rep who approved my application and issued a same day med card to get an urgent prescription filled."



*"Thank you. Merci. Gracias. Chi miigwetch. The Stop volunteers, staff, you have enriched my life with your caring, commitment, humanity, goodness, creativity, compassion and vision. It is an honour to be a part of The Stop community."
Wychwood Open Door participant*



Volunteer Program

Volunteers play a vital role in every aspect of our work. Many of our volunteers have lived experience of unemployment, poverty, and homelessness. This creates a unique sense of community in a nonjudgmental and empathetic environment.

In November, we had our first program meeting with 30 volunteers in attendance!

Key Highlights

- 206 currently active volunteers
- 9,789 volunteer hours donated
- 31 new volunteers



"Volunteering turned the unexpected downtime during the pandemic into one of the most meaningful experiences in my life. I was making a difference and gained a sense of purpose. Volunteering gave me a something to look forward to and most importantly gives me a sense of achievement, belonging, purpose and empowerment."

"For me it is all about the connections. I have really enjoyed the opportunities to get to know the community, staff, and volunteers at The Stop."



Urban Agriculture

Despite the cooler weather, The Stop's Urban Agriculture programs continued to connect our community to locally grown food through the fall and winter. Our activities included educational community workshops, the expansion of our microgreens social enterprise, growing in our greenhouse, and our indoor Farmers' Market.



Key Highlights

- 46,488 total patrons' visits to the Farmers' Market, with over 1800 visits weekly
- \$647 of market bucks redeemed. The Market Bucks pilot enables volunteers to use their earned Market Bucks in our Farmers' Market, supporting the local food movement, increasing access to fresh produce and locally made goods.
- Through 10 Metre Greens, we were able to create three paid work opportunities at a living wage for local community members who experience barriers to employment, and who have identified interest in urban agriculture and food systems work. They play a key role in growing, selling and distributing the microgreens at our Farmers' Market, through the subscription program and to a local retail partner.
- We successfully grew over 60 plant varieties in the greenhouse, including baby eggplant, sweet pepper, green onion, and lettuce. They were harvested regularly and donated to the food bank, the Good Food Market and the 1884 drop-in kitchen!
- Engaged seven participants in our Community Buds program, which offers low-cost access to our commercial kitchen and growing spaces to racialized and marginalized small business owners.
- Winter Workshops delivered to help connect the community to growing knowledge: propagation, microgreen growing, infusions/teas/salve-making, seed starting and garden planning.

Social Connection through Urban Agriculture

In the Fall of 2022, we evaluated some of our urban agriculture programs as part of a Social Connection Project, a partnership between The Stop and the Samuel Family Foundation. A key goal was to understand The Stop's impact on social connection by evaluating both the common and unique aspects of the programs as it relates to:

- participants' experience of social connection
- drivers of social connection, and
- social change that results from social connection

Key Highlights

- 85.7% of participants reported an improvement in how socially connected they felt
- 84.1% of participants reported they had made at least one friend
- 83.7% of participants reported feeling an improved sense of belonging and connection to community

Each program shared common drivers of social connection including:

- The collaborative nature of program activities
- The opportunity to share knowledge and skills with one another
- A sense of commonality
- The opportunity to gather and socialize
- The opportunity to share food and drinks

"In the pandemic, I was alone and locked up. Leaving the house to do activities greatly improves my mental, emotional, and physical health.'
Another added, 'Planting together promotes mutual care. It's better than staying at home for prolonged periods of time.' - Urban Agriculture Program participant



"We are aware that working together, we can improve the quality of life of a very vulnerable population. Together, we are creating a sense of community." - Urban Agriculture Program participant

Thank you to our dedicated volunteers



Sara Abdella
Apeksha Agarwal
Carol Aikenhead
Rima Akl
Feyruz Ali
Abdelghani Aouita
Mickal Aranha
Josephine Armstrong
Miriam Arteaga
Rachel Azzopardi
John Bagnall
Miranda Bavdaz
Irina Belousova
Sandra Bertoia
Matteo Bozzo
Miriam Brown
Janet Burke
John Bush
Linda Buskin
Jake Byrne
Gladys Caceres
Douglas Cameron
Paul Carney
Erin Carroll
Suzanne Carte
Aerin Cartwright
Valentina Castellini
Yahaira Elizabeth
Cebreros Barron
Bruno Cerqueira
Daphne Chambers
Azali Charles
Enrique Chavez Rivas
Kalen Chen
William Woods
Sally Cho
Betty Chou
Carrie Clark
Kristian Clarke
Phoibe Clarke
Rhonda B Cohen
Grace Cover
Jane Cowan
Quaison Creary
Celeste Crevier
David Cronsilver
Julia Culpeper
Sharon Currie
Crystina Dang
Aimee Darcel
Akiko Date
Robin Dawson
Carla De Sousa
Irene De Sousa
Zhangwanlin Deng
Caleb Desalines
Maria Fernanda Diaz Gutierrez
Patrick (Pat) Dolan
Ann Dugan
Rosa Duran
Joanna Ebbutt
Brad Edelson
Rosalee Edwards
Michael Ellis
Shaheen Fa Mughal
Lolita Fernandez
Isa Ferreira
Teresa Ferrera
Arminda Filipe
Ben Yacob

Thank you to our dedicated volunteers

Josh Fogel
Hyacinth Francis
Juliet Francis
Ross Freeman
Gwen Friedman
Roxanne Futia
Ran (Raina) Gao
Lauren Genz
Indira Gobin
Jewel Gomes
Shannon Goodspeed
Poonam Goyal
Lana Hafez
Laurie Harada
Ivan Paul Haramustek
Kevin Hareguy
Richard Haubrich
Michelle Hayward
Diana Hernandez
Wendy Hernick
Idalia Herrera
Maria Hersht
Wendy Hillman
Kim Hoang Tran
Donna Holmes
Toby Houle
Sandra Hryhor
Niloofer Irani
Elissa Janca
Lynn Jewell Coon
Sandra Jimenez
Dave Johansen
Stephanie Johnson
Deborah Kanga
Teresa Kristina Wijaya

Nuala Kelly
Justine Keyserlingk
Bohfinai Konate
Carl Korte
Mike Lapenna
Maria Larizza
Madeleine Lavallee-Gordon
Liza Lawson
Margaret Laycock
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Jaehyun Lee
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Vanessa Lehan
Ron Leitold
Audrey Lengyel
Leila Lessem
Amy Leung
Natan Levi
Andy Lim
Carolyn Lim
Hui Yan Liu
Josephine Liu
Michelle Liu
Linda Lohmus
Lynn Lowes
Laura Lozada
Sanyo Lue-Kim
Michael MacDonald
Lindsay MacIntosh
Lorrie Macleod
Judy MacPherson
Kathy Williams



Thank you to our dedicated volunteers

Shayan Malik
William Marciales
Elissa Marks
Carmen Martinez
Carmen (Maria) Martinez
Paul Matyas
Cameron Maveal
Michael McKibbon
Emily McNamee
Jessica McQuoid
Ana Medina
Christine Mehling
Natasha Meissner
Mary Michaelides
Lindsay Moeser
Abdirizak Mohamed
Christelle Money Penny
Veronica Montero
Maria Morales
Sandra Moretti
Jen Murphy
Francine Neander
Anisha Neron
Carole Neron
Alda Neves
Christine Newman
Tran Nguyen
Jean Niravong
Honey Novick
Adam Nowaczynski
Chris Valentine
Tran Van Muo
Liz Yaworski
Mary Young-Leckie

Emilie O'Neill
Luz Ortiz
Pasang Pasang
Melita Paunic
Robert Pavlovic
Kent Pawziuk
Eti Pazos
Mical Pearlman
Marcia Peralta
Shizuka Perry
Elizabeth Pietrodangelo
Jamieleen Pingol
Lindy Pinto
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Jessica Poole
Ice (Chen Xue) Qing
Rhonda Rankine
Hali Rapkowski
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Patti Rennie
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Jill Roussy
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Lilla Stuart
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Danielle Tchao
Matthew Thompson
Stephen Thuringer
Gillian Toliver
Rosemary Tomlinson-Morris
Chris Valentine
Tim Watson
Sally Wellen
Paige Yip-felicio
Fermin Zelaya



Thank you for your partnership
in this vital work.



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Volunteer

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