



2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Food is a Basic Human Right.

thestop.org

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“Poverty is a health issue. Access to adequate income, food & housing determines & protects health. The Stop’s innovative programs & commitment to confronting the systemic causes of poverty advance social justice & health equity in our city.”

-Dr. Danielle Martin

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

Last summer, our staff had a special opportunity to reflect on our early days when The Stop’s founder, Cam Russell, came to speak at a staff meeting. Cam was Reverend at the Church of St. Stephen-in-the-Fields in Kensington Market during terrible economic times in the 1970s. People were struggling and turning to his parish for help. Cam and his wife Shirley invited them in, listening to their troubles over sandwiches and coffee. And that marked the beginning of The Stop – rooted in dignity, respect, and community-building.

Forty years on, we are proud that The Stop continues to be a place of dignity and respect, where people come for help, and keep coming back because of the community they find here. Hundreds of people volunteer every year to make our work possible. The majority of those volunteers also use our services – proving just how much people want to be part of building their communities and of strengthening their own lives. Reciprocity is an essential part of healthy, connected communities – and it is deeply embedded in this place.

While we were reassured listening to Cam that The Stop has maintained the dignified approach that began so long ago, it was an uncomfortable irony that the issues that led to our founding remain so unchanged.

The number of people coming to The Stop has only grown – more people in our drop-in for breakfast and lunch, more families relying on our food-bank hampers, more people living in isolation coming to our community kitchen and gardening programs. And the numbers are deepening across the city. One-in-five adults and 28% of our children are living in poverty, making Toronto the child poverty capital of Canada.

Making noise about poverty is another part of what we’ve been doing at The Stop for 40 years. This year we worked with the School of Public Policy at the University of Toronto to look at the impact of our food bank for people in our community. The results were stark: 80% of people using our food bank live on less than \$20,000 annually, and, as a result, almost 25% go at least one day a month without eating at all. We called the research *A Predictable Emergency* because, without adequate income, people will struggle to feed themselves and their families, and their health and communities will suffer devastating, lasting effects.

When Premier Kathleen Wynne visited The Stop this year we shared the

research with her, and community members spoke about the urgent need for leadership on poverty. We raised the potential of a guaranteed annual income, and are pleased to see the idea of a basic income pilot project announced in the 2016 Ontario budget. We are overdue for leadership on poverty and will be watching closely.

Cam Russell reminded us that magic can happen when people come together to make change. From those first conversations over cups of coffee, to the vibrant, energetic programs and services we offer today at our 1884 Davenport Road and Green Barn sites, The Stop remains a place of hope, which you will see reflected in the following pages. Because of the extraordinary generosity of donors and supporters, because of the hundreds of hours from devoted volunteers, people in our community come together over healthy food to rebuild their lives, and to build for the future.

Thank you for being such an important part of The Stop’s story. Our work is only possible because generous, civic-minded people wrap their arms around this place, make noise with us, and believe we can do better as a city.

Rachel Gray, *Executive Director*
John Montesano, *President*



6 Building Hope



8 Inspiring Change



4 Fighting Hunger

FIGHTING HUNGER

The Stop helps people meet emergency food needs with dignified, respectful services, all centered on healthy food. We believe that food is a right — fresh, nutritious & nourishing food. This belief is reflected in all of the food we make, serve, grow & distribute.



“ [The Stop] helps me get healthy food on the table. ”

Harvesting Pride

This past year, our After School Program partnered with the Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood and Community Health Centre to reach more children in our community. During a gardening session at Earls court Community Garden, participants Radtha and Ridthika were tasked with harvesting greens. They had never gardened before and took care to harvest each leaf of collard. They asked if they would be eating the greens. When told that they were helping to harvest food for our Drop-in meals, they were both excited. Radtha asked, with a huge smile on her face, “We get to harvest food for the Drop-in? My mum uses the Drop-in!” Radtha and Ridthika felt a sense of pride in being able to provide food for their families and the community programs in which they participate.



“ When I leave here, I’m not hungry and I have energy. It really picks me up, the food. ”

Moving Beyond the Food Bank

This year, we closed our Food Bank on Tuesdays to make room for our Good Food Market. This weekly community market – offering fresh and affordable produce in partnership with FoodShare – had been held on Tuesday evenings. By moving the market into the Food Bank space during regular program hours, we were able to reach more people in our neighbourhood. All of our Good Food Market customers tell us that the low prices have helped to get more fruit and vegetables into their diets, and to stretch limited food budgets even further. This is the next step in the evolution of our food bank, and in our work towards more accessible, healthy food for community members.



62,000+

wholesome and delicious meals prepared and served in our Drop-in and at Healthy Beginnings.



16

loaves of artisanal, sourdough bread made four to five times each week to serve with lunches.



1,910 lbs

of produce harvested from Earls court Community Garden (by volunteers aged two to 77!).



92%

of participants describe The Stop as a source of healthy food.



9,800+

Food Bank hampers fed **18,000+** people.



BUILDING HOPE

The Stop uses healthy food to bring people together, supporting community members in creating connections, making friends, building health, developing skills, and advocating for change.



“If you cook and eat healthy food, it gives you more energy and you can exercise more. It's like a snowball, improving your mental health and then social health.”

Connecting With Wellness & Identity

The Stop and the Sagatay program at Na-Me-Res (Native Men's Residence) work together to bring the community garden at Hillcrest Park to life. This garden includes the Mashkikii;aki'ing (Medicine Earth) Medicine Wheel Garden, a place where the men of the Apaenmowineen (Having Confidence In Myself) program can share teachings, grow food, develop programs, and harvest medicinal plants. Participants have shared that their connection to plant medicines is important, and that their growing knowledge and wisdom help them to feel more in control of their health and wellness.



“I'm feeling good about myself. I was feeling really destitute, but being at The Stop, I have a little community.”

46

new garden matches made this year through YIMBY (Yes In My Back Yard).



91%

of participants feel they belong to a community at The Stop.



30+

participants in our peer-led Breastfeeding Café.



Finding Community

Sue is a senior who has been coming to our Drop-in for two years. At first, she was quiet and shy. She came in for meals every day, but she was new to the area and didn't know many people. Over time, our Drop-in staff got to know her better, and she shared that she was deeply depressed and didn't have any family nearby. As she grew more comfortable in the Drop-in and began connecting with neighbours, she shifted from talking about depression to smiling and commenting on how well she was doing. She is now a Drop-in volunteer, eager to help, and has developed friendships with some of her fellow volunteers. Sue was offered a place of support and found the will to make some very positive changes. For Sue, finding community was a way forward.

8,000

seedlings grown for The Stop's gardens and for community gardens throughout the city.



96

babies born in Healthy Beginnings.



INSPIRING CHANGE

The Stop empowers community members to become engaged citizens, connecting the dots between food, health, community, policy, and the environment.



Putting Philosophy into Practice

The Stop's Healthy Food Philosophy guides us in providing fresh, locally-produced foods that are seasonal, affordable, and accessible to all. We believe we have an important role to play in building a sustainable food system, and we use our purchasing power to support growers, producers, and retailers who share this philosophy. Last year alone, The Stop spent over \$123,000 on local food from Ontario farmers and distributors, boosting our local food economy. In fact, each month we feature a different food in our Drop-in meals, community kitchen menus, food demonstrations, and Food Bank hampers – from tomatoes in September to rutabaga in January to asparagus in May – building healthy communities and local economies.

12

graduates completed our Community Action Training program.



190

meals prepared and served by kids in our camp programs.



“The Stop is an engine for activism.”

Starting At the Grassroots

Our Bread & Bricks Social Justice Group engages and supports community members in taking action on issues of poverty and other social, political, and economic injustices. This past year, Bread & Bricks met with leaders and representatives from all levels of government, as well as Her Excellency Sharon Johnston, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, and federal election candidates. The Stop and Bread & Bricks were also actively involved in pushing City Council to adopt Toronto's Poverty Reduction Strategy. Bread & Bricks members meet regularly, finding voice while supporting other networks and efforts for change.

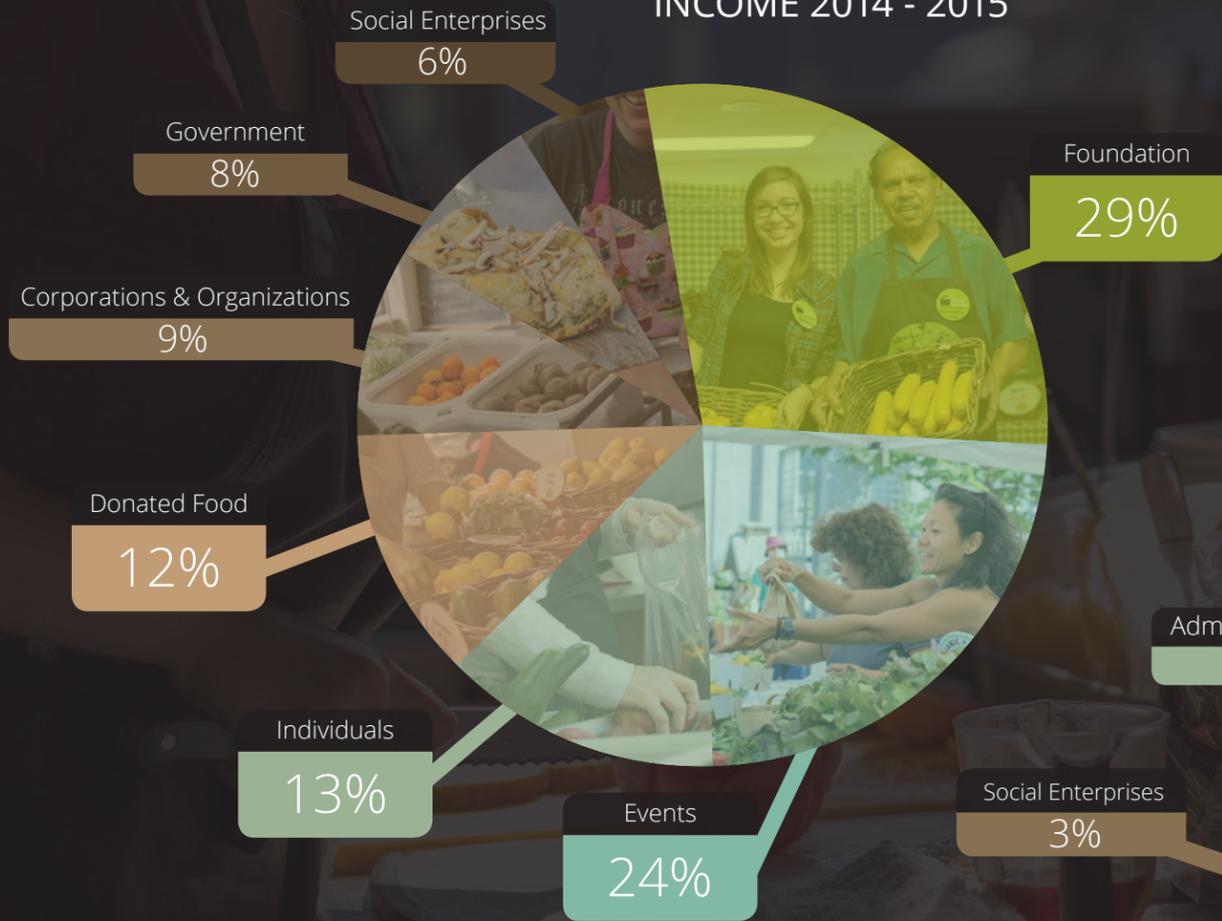
84%

of participants made healthy changes to their diets because of something they learned at The Stop.

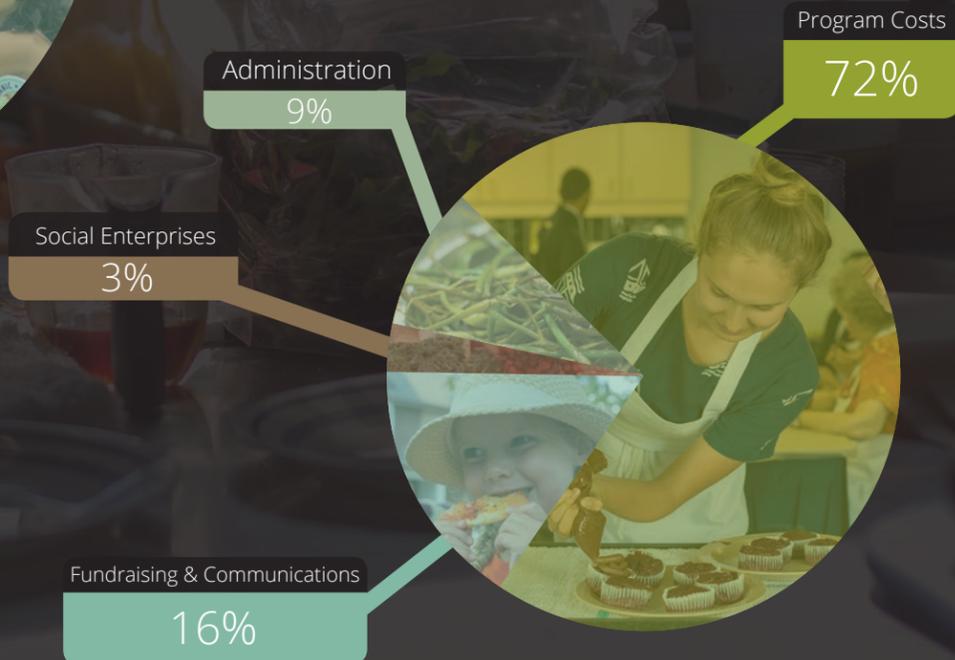


Financials

INCOME 2014 - 2015



EXPENDITURES 2014 - 2015



Our Supporters

Thank you for your generous support over the past year! Due to limited space, this list recognizes organizational supporters who have contributed more than \$1,000. We acknowledge, with gratitude, the significant contributions made by all of our other donors, including individuals, those who gave in-kind support, and the many restaurants, wineries, breweries, chefs, and auction donors who contribute to our events. This list includes those who contributed during our 2014-2015 fiscal year.

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The Stop Community Food Centre

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The Stop Community Food Centre is a registered charity.
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