

NEIGHBOUR
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NEIGHBOUR

2020/2021

ANNUAL REPORT

n2ncentre.com



PRESIDENT & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

2020 was a devastating year for so many. Together, we experienced ongoing change at an astonishing rate and overwhelming loss that we could never have predicted. Jobs were lost, schools were closed, and grocery shelves were found bare. To keep our food bank open and our community safe, we had to change everything.

Our immediate response to the COVID-19 crisis was to ask over 600 volunteers to stay home. Our beloved bookstore was closed, preventative programming was shut down and the N2N staff was deployed to the frontlines, keeping the food bank open to serve the growing community who needed us. To ensure the safety of staff and clients, we created a new, socially distant service model, restricting the number of people in the building and offering premade food boxes with very limited contact. We also saw an immense expansion in our home delivery program, as the number of housebound clients increased due to COVID-19 related health risks.

While the spring and summer months were a time of apprehension and uncertainty, we started to feel hopeful by fall. We carefully and thoughtfully developed a plan to safely bring some volunteers back into our locations and were able to open some of our programming to limited public capacity. Our Hamilton Community Food Centre began offering weekly take-out meals and ingredient kits, along with the affordable produce market, and made vital food box deliveries to migrant workers in social isolation. Our Family Services department was able to provide services crucial to supporting the people we serve – Middle East Outreach, Utilities Supports, Community Counselling and Money Matters Financial Counselling all saw just how profoundly COVID-19 was impacting the community. Now, in spring of 2021, our Jack Parent Reading Program is resuming

virtually with volunteers working one-on-one with students in six participating schools and we could not be more optimistic about the direction in which things are moving once again. We continue to welcome and train new and returning volunteers and develop more parameters to ensure the safety of all who come through our doors.

We could not have done any of this without the incredible support of the community who has helped us in so many ways. Right from the start of the pandemic, we were receiving words of encouragement from hand-written notes, online messages and voicemails that meant the world. People continued to safely donate healthy food and personal care items to help fill our premade boxes. Financial donations of all sizes were so appreciated. People who themselves were suddenly without jobs found ways to give and business who found themselves thriving made sure to give back. We received critical pandemic response funding from the Government of Canada, the Hamilton Community Foundation and United Way, and the City of Hamilton committed to another year of funding to our Hamilton Community Food Centre. Moreover, the community rallied around our special events, ensuring that our annual golf tournament and Coldest Night of the Year walk raised just as much virtually as they did when we could all participate in person.

Finally, we could not be more impressed with the strength and resiliency we have seen in our staff and volunteers. It has not been an easy year, but they have collaborated and supported each other in a way that truly has us and the entire board inspired. We are ready for whatever 2021 has in store for us, because we believe in our team of staff, volunteers, participants, and clients. We as a community have got this.

STEVEN KARTONCHIK
President of the Board

DENISE ARKELL
Executive Director



COVID-19 IMPACT



39%

Increase in Food Insecurity in Canada in 2020-21



1,428

Home Deliveries Provided by N2N in 2020-21



1,632

Counselling Interactions Provided by N2N in 2020-21

CLIENT STORY

Mary is in her early fifties, has a lung condition and other health challenges. For years, Mary has taken the bus to Neighbour to Neighbour for her monthly shop at the food bank however, during COVID-19, it was recommended by healthcare professionals that individuals with underlying medical conditions stay home. There have been many who struggle to maintain access to food support when living with physical limitations during this difficult time.

The Neighbour to Neighbour Home Delivery program ensures that Mary receives a consistent monthly food support. Neighbour to Neighbour is providing a stable source of food and a link to other supports when she is unable to cope with her many challenges. We are a lifeline, a listening ear and vital support to those who are vulnerable in our community.

- Mary, Home Delivery Recipient



HAMILTON COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE

The Hamilton Community Food Centre offers food access, food skills and education and engagement programs in a dignified and welcoming space that brings the community together to grow, cook, share, and advocate for good food.

2020 was a year like no other. The economic impacts of COVID increased food insecurity by 39%. Now 1 in 7 Canadians are affected. Low-income and racialized communities have been hit the hardest, which highlights the systemic inequities in our society.

Yet Community Food Centres found innovative, safe ways to provide healthy food and connect with community members. Despite COVID restrictions, thousands of people across the country accessed our food programs multiple times a month.

FOOD ACCESS	FOOD SKILLS	EDUCATE & ENGAGE
<p>These programs increase access to healthy food & improve health.</p> <p>Weekly take home meals and ingredient boxes</p> <p>Pandemic support to emergency food bank</p> <p>Food boxes for migrant workers in isolation</p> <p>Affordable produce market</p> <p>\$90,150</p> <p>Distributed in Grocery Gift Cards to Supplement Food Access for Our Community</p>	<p>These programs build healthy food skills & behaviours.</p> <p>Garden Program, including Winter Walks and Plant Talks</p> <p>Cooking skills and Cooking Up Justice programs</p> <p>Kids Club, with takeaway activity boxes and safe in-person sessions</p> <p>134</p> <p>Food Skills Sessions Offered</p>	<p>These programs reduce social isolation & increase community engagement.</p> <p>Peer advocates</p> <p>Righting Relations: BIPOC storytelling series</p> <p>Community Advocacy Program</p> <p>Community Action Program</p> <p>510</p> <p>Visits to the Advocacy Office</p>

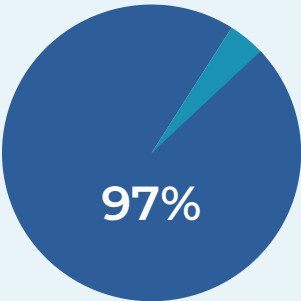
WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

“By visiting and participating in the programs, my food situation is better, healthier.”

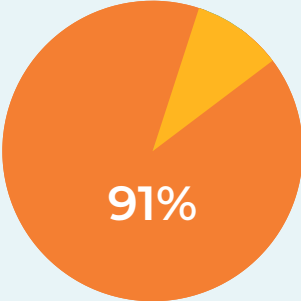
“A break from isolation. Feeling good about growing food. Feeling of unity with community.”

“[The CFC] provided assistance like a food box and necessary supplies to confront the virus.”

“I love this place. I feel that people know me and that I contribute as well as gain the bonus of healthy food and laughter.”



of people feel they belong to a community at the CFC, despite the isolation of the pandemic.



of people said that Hamilton CFC was an important source of healthy food during COVID-19.

THE HAMILTON COMMUNITY GARDEN NETWORK

The Hamilton Community Garden Network (HCGN) program is run by Neighbour to Neighbour to sustain and expand community gardens in Hamilton and support Hamiltonians using gardens to build the community, enhance the environment and promote wellness. In 2020, due to COVID-19 closures, we managed a total of 63 community gardens through the HCGN.

25 consults and 297 inquiries were responded to in 2020

47 garden coordinators received network expertise and support (including how to navigate running gardens safely during the pandemic)





FAMILY SERVICES

The Family Services program provides social, emotional, and financial crisis support to our neighbours. The spaces in the food bank reception are small, and meeting one-on-one with a person in crisis is challenging when staying safe means keeping a distance. Despite the challenges COVID-19 delivered, we rallied.

COMMUNITY COUNSELLING

Family Services provides critical social, emotional, financial crisis supports and service navigation to persons living on the Hamilton Mountain. This work is ad hoc, meeting folks in the moment either in-person, over the telephone, or online. Meeting one-to-one in our offices is a risk, and despite volunteers being largely unable to support participants on-site, **the student, utilities volunteer and manager were still able to support nearly 1,700 counselling interactions and referrals**, and we continue to be one of only three locations in the city hosting the free City of Hamilton Dental Health Bus, which serves 24-36 persons per month. We are so grateful for the ongoing support from VPI employment services, Goodwill, Mohawk College and Interval House housing and outreach supports who all continue to receive referrals despite their inability to serve onsite at N2N during the pandemic.

MIDDLE EAST OUTREACH

Our Middle East Outreach Worker provides settlement support to Newcomers and persons with persistent barriers to settlement. This worker provides translation of critical personal health, legal and travel documents, service navigation to medical, educational, financial and employment programs as well as social and emotional crisis support. In a typical year, this worker has ~1,000 meetings with individuals, which includes 100-150 new households who had never been to N2N before. **2020 demonstrated how profoundly COVID-19 is impacting settling households. The MEO worker had 3,145 individual meetings, serving 102 new households.**

UTILITIES SUPPORT

The Family Services department hosts both the Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP) monthly rebate and the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) annual grant. **We delivered \$537,336 in OESP monthly rebates (that will be distributed over 24 months) to 419 households and \$22,260 in LEAP grants to 55 households.** Utilities costs are a critical factor in housing affordability and so this work has a direct impact on the 767 individual persons to remain affordably housed.

CLIENT STORY

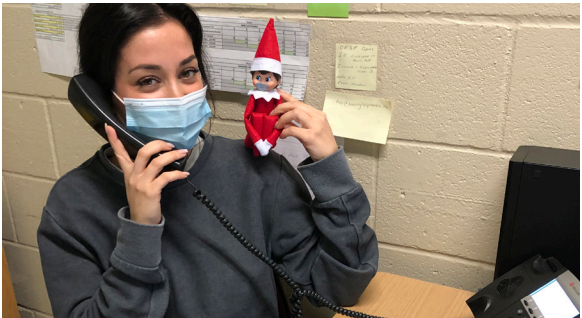
Karis is a longtime participant in N2N programs. They support their aging parents by shopping and providing personal care. COVID-19 has been particularly challenging for them. It saw them experiencing intimate partner violence while navigating the health care system for their own mental health needs, as well as seeking a bankruptcy proposal to address unmanageable consumer debt. Although they typically have a caring relationship with their parents, their relationship was at a breaking point because of the stress from the debt and fear for their safety amid the violence from their partner.

They receive a modest monthly pension and unfortunately have accrued debts on credit cards, predatory loans, cash advances, overdraft, telephone, and other bill payments. This debt brought an endless onslaught of creditors calling for repayment. We were here to support Karis through the bankruptcy process, offering a safe location to send and receive personal documents, as well as access to video conferencing with the bankruptcy trustee. We also assisted with a referral to counselling as they processed the ongoing abuse from their partner. They are back in control of their life. They reported that they are so grateful for our support, that they feel better, their relationship with their parents is joyful and nurturing again, and even their parents call out thank-you's through the phone when Karis calls N2N.

- Karis, Financial Counselling Participant

MONEY MATTERS FINANCIAL COUNSELLING

Our financial counselling program provides both education and advocacy for individuals. 2020 brought persons experiencing complex issues including fraud, bankruptcy, estate and tax issues, predatory loans, exploitative service contracts, pension and CERB payment issues.





EMERGENCY FOOD

Our Emergency Food department has seen the most change through the COVID-19 crisis. Our volunteers were asked to stay safe at home from March to October and the Neighbour to Neighbour staff took to the frontlines, creating a new, socially-distant service model with pre-packaged food boxes and limited contact. While not without its challenges, we are thankful to have remained open during this uncertain time to serve those who need us.

FOOD BANK

Our food bank provides 7 days of essential food – fruits and vegetables, meat, dairy, bread and vital non-perishables to 1,200 families on Hamilton mountain each month.

- 2,790 households per year and 8,235 clients
- 12,429 community visits to the food bank
- 40% of all food distributed consisted of fresh produce, meat, and dairy
- 76% of food bank clients shop 5 times or less per year
- Over 40% of our food bank clients are children under 18
- Over 18% of our clients are older adults (50+)
- 1,241 families participated in our Christmas program

HOME DELIVERIES

Our home delivery program is a crucial lifeline for households on a low income who are housebound due to a chronic or critical illness.

- 39% of our home delivery clients experience long term limited mobility
- 18% of our home delivery clients face mental health challenges
- 13% of our home deliveries were COVID-19 related requests

FOOD HIGHLIGHTS

179,877

Meals Worth of Food Distributed

856,556

Pounds of Food Collected and Distributed

1,428

Home Deliveries Provided in 2020-21

\$264,000+

Value of Food Delivered to Homes



EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

LITERACY

For 15 years, skillful Neighbour to Neighbour volunteers were in Hamilton schools, working one-on-one with students in grades 1-3 who were reading below grade level. Literacy skills were improving, self-confidence was building, and volunteers were thriving through these important interactions. Then COVID-19 hit, and the Jack Parent Reading Program came to an abrupt halt. For the duration of 2020, staff at Neighbour to Neighbour worked diligently to bring this vital program back to life in a new and exciting way.

Now, thanks to the resiliency of our tutors and students, and with a great deal of innovation and determination, the Jack Parent Reading Program is resuming. N2N is now offering a 12-week after-school pilot program, with tutors working one-on-one with students virtually.

A very special thanks to the Mischa Weisz Foundation for providing the funding for this pilot program. Presently there are 21 students and 15 volunteers participating in the program from the following schools:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| • Holbrook Elementary | • St. Marguerite d'Youville |
| • Our Lady of Lourdes | • St. Margaret Mary |
| • Westwood Elementary | • Helen Detwiler Junior Elementary |

MATH PROGRAM

The Math Success Program, an after-school program for students in grades 7 & 8 started four years ago. We tutor students from Westview Middle School and Annunciation of Our Lord through funding from the Hamilton Community Foundation's ABACUS Grant.

In January 2020, we started a second program, Math 2 Success for students from Helen Detwiler and St. Marguerite d' Youville funded by Population Health Research Institute.

Unfortunately, both the math programs were side-lined by the pandemic. Partnerships with the Hamilton Public Library, Hillfield Strathallen College, and McMaster University were also put on hold. We are at the mercy of the current health crisis, but know how vital these programs are to the community and intend to resume in-person math tutoring as soon as it is safe to do so.



VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHTS

Hands down and without a doubt, the highlight of our year was re-opening programs to volunteer involvement inside our sites, after a long 6-month suspension of shifts. All departments re-opened within 12 months, with modified programs and volunteer roles.

Involving volunteers inside our sites was made possible only after we developed a plan for safe operations during the pandemic. We implemented over 20 safety measures, with our volunteers ranking the following as enabling them to feel safest:

- Mandatory face masks
- Redesigned and detailed role descriptions
- 100% participation in the Pledge to Keep Everyone Safe
- Developing specific departmental COVID-19 protocols
- Separating entrances and exits
- Smaller teams

To offer services that keep people safe, 3 new roles were developed and added to our programs:

- Delivery Driver
- Food Bank Greeter
- Meal Kit Packager

And one role was dramatically modified:

- Online Reading Tutor



VOLUNTEER OVERVIEW

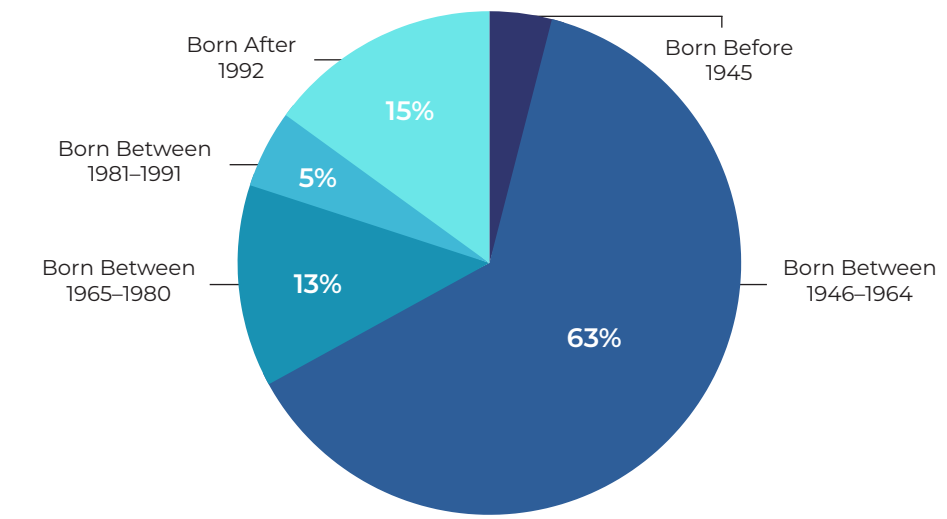
108
Pre-Pandemic
Volunteers Returned

79
New Volunteers
Started

97%
Attendees at the
12 Orientation/Safety
Sessions Continued
as Volunteers

187
Volunteers Contributed
9,069 Hours

In 2020-21, our volunteers ranged from 16 to over 85 years old!



VOLUNTEER FEATURE: WINK FAIRBAIRN



Pre-pandemic, before we suspended all volunteer roles, you could find Wink most places you turned – and that was outside of her weekly tutoring, food bank and warehouse roles. Whenever help was needed, there was Wink, often available on little notice. That’s because people matter to her.

Ever positive, at her weekly food bank and warehouse shifts Wink would recount with sparkling eyes her reading tutor experiences where she saw the light go on for a youngster

who made the connection between a sound and a letter, or group of letters and a word. At other times, you could feel her heart break when she simply couldn’t do more for a food bank shopper without stepping outside the boundaries of her volunteer role.

Wink took the first opportunity to return to volunteering in the fall of 2020. She’s back in our food bank, ensuring Hamilton residents feel welcomed, respected and treated with dignity. A co-volunteer says, “Wink is a super warm and friendly person. On my first shift and training with her, she welcomed me and made me feel part of the team right away. It made my training so much more pleasant. She is such an important part of the team and displays the values of N2N by her actions every day.” Another volunteer agrees, “She’s been a great role model for me as I was getting used to volunteering at N2N. I really admire the kindness and compassion she has towards others when helping them at the food bank. She makes everyone feel welcome and I’m really glad to volunteer with her!” We are so thankful to have Wink on our team.

N2N LEADERSHIP TEAM

Denise Arkell,
Executive Director

Jennifer Gold,
Manager of Administrative
Services

Robyn Knickle,
Director of Development

Valerie Louter,
Manager of Resource
Development

Krista D'Aoust,
Director of Community
Food & Family Services

Amy Angelo,
Manager of Food Access
& Skills

Laura Ryan,
Manager of Family Services

Charlotte Redekop-Young,
Manager of Emergency
Food Services

Deban Brunette,
Director of Educational
Programs

Marija Kupina,
Coordinator of Volunteers

N2N BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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President

Katherine Livingstone,
Past President

Dan Holstein,
Vice President

Nick Davies,
Secretary

Denise Provencher,
Treasurer

Chris White,
Director

Marlene Atlas,
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Ann Higgins,
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