

# 2024/2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Highlighting Neighbour to Neighbour's  
recent impact in the community.

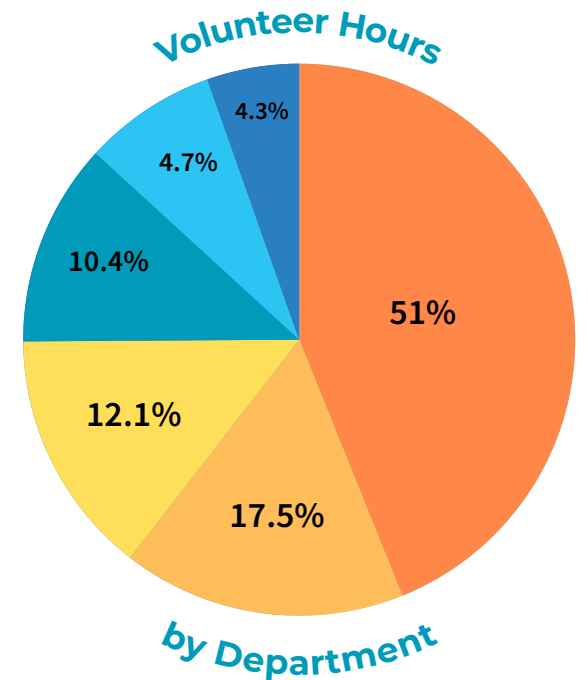






## Volunteer Engagement

In 2024, Neighbour to Neighbour Centre continued to thrive thanks to the unwavering dedication of our volunteers. **455 individuals generously contributed their time, skills, and compassion across our programs**—from packing, sorting and serving at our food bank to tutoring children to preparing and serving meals at our Community Food Centre to managing our used bookstore and community outreach and special events. Their collective efforts not only enhanced the delivery of our services but also fostered a deeper sense of connection and belonging within our community. We are especially proud of the growing involvement of youth and newcomer volunteers, whose fresh perspectives and energy have enriched our work. Our volunteers are the heart of our mission, and we are deeply grateful for their commitment to building a stronger, more inclusive Hamilton.



- 51% Emergency Food Programs
- 17.5% Education Programs
- 12.1% N2N Books
- 10.4% Hamilton Community Food Centre
- 4.7% Family Services
- 4.3% Development & Administrative Support

### President & Executive Director's Message

This past year has been one of the most difficult in recent memory for many in our community. The rising cost of living, soaring food prices, and deepening housing insecurity have placed immense strain on families and individuals across Hamilton. At Neighbour to Neighbour we have witnessed firsthand the toll this economic pressure has taken—on parents stressed to provide for children, on seniors choosing between rent and groceries, and on newcomers struggling to find stability in an unfamiliar system.

**In the face of these hardships, our community has shown extraordinary resilience.** Thanks to the dedication of our staff, volunteers, donors, and partners, we were able to respond with compassion and urgency. Our food bank saw record demand, and we met it with dignity and care—serving over 1,700 households each month through in person visits and home deliveries.

Our Family Services team supported over 5,000 households, offering not just resources, but a listening ear and a steady hand. We know that behind every statistic is a story of perseverance, and we are honoured to walk alongside our neighbours through these challenging times.

Education, supporting learning and development of children remains a key pillar of our work. From tutoring

programs and book clubs that helped students regain confidence in reading to math tutoring so that students can enter high-school meeting math requirements and feeling confident in their abilities.

The Hamilton Community Food Centre (CFC) continues to be a vital hub for food access, education, and community connection. Through inclusive programs that promote cooking, growing, and sharing nutritious food and meals, the CFC fosters dignity and empowerment. It was a safe and welcoming place for thousands of people this year seeking community and connection.

This year, we also took meaningful steps to reflect our values internally. We became a certified Living Wage Employer, affirming our commitment to fair compensation and the well-being of our dedicated staff. And in February, our community came together for the Coldest Night of the Year walk, raising vital funds and awareness for those experiencing hurt, hunger, and homelessness in our community. The warmth and solidarity shown that night was a powerful reminder of what we can achieve together.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who stood with us this year. Your support has been a lifeline for so many. The work is far from over, but as we look ahead, we remain committed to advocating for systemic change while meeting urgent needs—because justice can't wait.

With heartfelt thanks,

**STEPHANIE JOHNSTON** & **BARRINGTON C. HECTOR**  
President of the Board Executive Director

**137** new volunteers in 2024

**110** volunteers at fundraisers & food drives

**455** volunteers involved in programs & services

**24,311** total volunteer hours



“...I fill my shift at N2N with wonderful social time while working very hard to meet the requirements of my shift responsibilities, it's great exercise and I feel good helping out in our community.” – N2N Volunteer





# Hamilton Community Food Centre

This year we connected with **over 400 new households** engaging in various program offerings—from children & youth food skills activities to senior satellite kitchens. Summer adventures included intergenerational cooking field trips at Dundurn Castle’s garden & kitchen. We also forged a new partnership with the City of Hamilton’s Child & Adolescent team hosting weekly no-cost therapy for youth, children and their caregivers.

The Hamilton Community Food Centre (HCFC) is part of a national movement committed to well-being, belonging and social justice. We create welcoming spaces where people gather to grow, cook, share, and advocate for good food.



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- The Advocacy Office saw **274 participant visits** and worked on **342 issues and referrals** for people seeking assistance.
- Total of **11,629 meals** were served and sent home in all programs
- **15,990** total participant contacts
- **226 special educational & wellness sessions** were held throughout the year offering connections to tax clinics, employment supports, art-based activities & newcomer supports
- Garden skills program led **92 community sessions** this past season

## PROGRAM LIST

Community Food Centres offer a special mix of programming that includes opportunities to build cooking and food-growing skills, improve healthy food access, and engage with community members. **Here’s what was served up in 2024:**

- Affordable Produce Market & Morning Café
- Community Meals (Thurs dinner, Friday lunch, Saturdays)
- Intercultural Community Kitchen
- Kid’s Club (6-12 year olds)
- Youth Kitchen (13-18 year olds)
- Advocacy Office Drop-In
- Community Action Training
- Learning Nest - Land Based Education
- Community Gardens - garden skills
- Hamilton Community Garden Network
- Wellness - Fitness mornings & Tai Chi (YWCA)
- Child & Adolescent Drop-In Counselling (Public Health - City)
- Welcome Baby - Prenatal Education & Support (Public Health - City)



*“This place is very important to my mental health and keeps me social.”*

NEIGHBOUR  
— 2 —  
NEIGHBOUR

 **HAMILTON**  
community food centre

Hamilton CFC remains committed to supporting our community. This means providing a place where people can connect and access good food—food that nourishes the body and spirit. And it means advocating for equitable policy change that addresses food insecurity and poverty in the long term.

\*\*This Impact Summary provides a snapshot of our 2024 program data.

## OUR IMPACT IN 2024



**INCREASED SENSE OF BELONGING & SUPPORT**

**93%**

of community members surveyed feel they belong to a community at the Hamilton Community Food Centre.



**IMPROVED HEALTH & WELL-BEING**

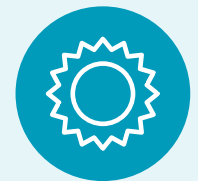
**76%**

of community members surveyed report that their mental health has improved as a result of participation in programs



**9,007**

meals shared and sent home through community meal programs.



**4,106**

visits to the Saturday morning Produce Market & Café



*“My daughter is more confident in the kitchen. It’s helped her... building friendships and making connections with kids her age. She is doing great, thanks for the staff and kids who make her feel comfortable.” – HCFC Program Participant*







# Education Services



Providing literacy and numeracy support to students is a service with the potential to change the trajectory of a child's life. Our programs aim to close a critical educational gap: access to supplemental academic support. While many students benefit from extra academic help, these services are often costly, time-consuming, and inaccessible to many families. **By offering free, low-barrier support, we are working to level the academic playing field.**

Our educational programs are designed to target key learning objectives at pivotal ages, while also helping students build confidence and develop more positive attitudes toward learning and school.

The Educational Programs department is made up of dedicated staff and volunteers who believe deeply in the importance of supporting youth. We are privileged to support, and witness, our students as they grow into more confident and capable lifelong learners.

*"My daughter is now more confident with her reading skills. She now loves to go to the library and choose books!"*

– Parent



## Literacy

280 students participated in N2N literacy programs in 2024

Since 2003, the Deban Brunette Literacy Program (DBLP) has worked to address low literacy rates in Canada. Adults with low literacy face a range of challenges compared to their peers, including being twice as likely to be unemployed, earning lower incomes when employed, and experiencing poorer health outcomes. While it is adults who face the most significant consequences of low literacy, childhood is the most effective time to build these critical skills.

**The DBLP works in partnership with schools to support students from under-resourced families** who are reading below grade level and are not receiving other literacy interventions. This program is unique in that it takes place during the school day, within schools. Each student in grades 1-4 reads twice per week during the school year.

We recently launched the N2N Book Club, an extension of the DBLP's core program, for students in grades 5-6. These students read together in small groups once per week, sharing the same book. Year after year, we see that students in both programs improve their reading skills, self-confidence, and their outlook on reading and learning.

100%

of teachers and tutors saw notable improvements in reading levels

100%

of teachers saw improvements in students' self-confidence

96%

of teachers reported positive changes in student's attitudes towards learning



## Math Success

90 students participated in N2N math programs in 2024

The Math Success Program (MSP) primarily supports students in grades 6-8 but has expanded in recent years to include students in grades 4-8. This change came in direct response to community feedback; our families expressed a need for math support that they could not find elsewhere. Research has shown that a major barrier to graduating high school is poor performance in middle school, and yet there are very few programs aimed at this age group. The MSP is designed specifically in response to this understanding, and **we aim to send our students on to high school meeting math requirements and feeling confident in their abilities.**

The MSP's ability to be flexible and responsive is due in large part to the skill and expertise of our math educators. **This year, 90 students enrolled and actively participated in the program.** MSP provides a supportive environment where under-resourced students can strengthen their core math skills and receive curriculum-aligned instruction designed to prepare them for a successful transition to high school.

We offer programming twice a week after school at four locations across Hamilton, with 3 locations on the mountain and one in the lower-city thanks to the generous donation of space by the Hamilton Public Library. At each site, students receive support from qualified math educators and dedicated volunteers from the community.

98%

of students reported a better understanding of math concepts

94%

of parents, staff, and volunteers reported improved teamwork and resiliency

98%

of parents reported improvements in their student confidence

*"It felt safe because there were different students that learned together and the group activities brought us together. It was a lot of fun."*

– MSP Student

\*This data reflects a portion of teachers, tutors, parents, and students that were surveyed to gather program data.





# Emergency Food

With food insecurity hitting crisis levels in our community the Neighbour to Neighbour Food Bank assisted 1,700 households each month and over 5,100 individuals. This is an increase of 6% from the previous year.

**The need for food banks continues to escalate as families reliant on social assistance and limited employment are unable to afford the cost of food, housing and other basic needs.** According to the Ontario Nutritious Food Basket it costs \$1,299 per month for a family of 4 to eat a relatively economical and basic nutritious diet. Neighbour to Neighbour continues to offer produce, meat, dairy and essential non-perishable basics every month with commitment and compassion.



## Food Bank By the Numbers



Raised and distributed over 1.2 million lbs. of food



1,655 households served for December celebrations



53% of food distributed is fresh produce, meats, & dairy



Total food raised increased 9.4% over the previous year



Over 35% of food bank clients are children under 18 years of age



*“I continue to struggle to put food on the table...”*

– Food Bank Client

*“Thank you for listening to me and providing me with food...”*

– Food Bank Client

## Home Delivery



57% of clients experience mobility limitations



15% of clients experience mental health challenges



23% of clients experience various medical conditions

Our home delivery program strives to alleviate barriers for people with medical limitations by providing them with monthly access to healthy food. Our weekly calls and our home delivery drivers provide a social connection for those who are isolated and in need of fresh food.

**Each month, we make 105 deliveries for a total of 1,255 deliveries per year.**

*“The volunteer drivers are the nicest people. I am so fortunate to receive the help. From the bottom of my heart. They are so wonderful – I can joke with them and without Neighbour to Neighbour I wouldn’t make it.”* – Home Delivery Recipient

## Volunteers

The work of distributing over 1.2 million lbs. of food only happens through the generosity of time donated by our emergency food volunteers. **In 2024, 172 volunteers contributed 12,099 hours of their time with compassion and kindness.**

The volunteers help receive, sort, serve, stock, pack and navigate without hesitation to make a difference for families on Hamilton Mountain. We recognize and appreciate the collective effort of our volunteers who help nourish our community.



*“I enjoy the people, the staff, the clients and other volunteers. I have learned so much about food insecurity and the different needs in the community.”* – Emergency Food Volunteer

*No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted. — Aesop*



# Family Services

## Family Services & Community Counselling

In 2024, the Family Services department at Neighbour to Neighbour continued to be a cornerstone of support for families in our community. Through the dedication of our staff and volunteers, we provided essential emotional, social, and financial guidance to people navigating complex life challenges.

Our **Community Counselling program**—comprised of volunteers, student interns, and a program manager—facilitated approximately **2,150 points of contact** this year. These interactions offered critical emotional support and helped individuals access both internal services and external community resources.

This team, alongside our **Settlement Worker**, also played a key role in welcoming 3,310 new participant households to our emergency food services. They ensured that each household was not only introduced to our food programs but also connected to the broader suite of supports available at Neighbour to Neighbour.

## Community Partnerships

We continued to strengthen and expand our partnerships in 2024, working closely with:

- Interval House
- VPI Employment Services
- Xperience Annex
- Daycare Fee Subsidy Program
- Hamilton Community Legal Clinic (HCLC)
- LensCrafters OneSight Free Eyeglasses Program
- Compass Community Health's Two-Spirit LGBTQIA+ Community Development Worker

## New Collaborations

A significant addition to our efforts in 2024 was the introduction of a **Patient Care Coordinator** from the **Hamilton Family Health Teams**. This role has provided weekly, on-site support to help unattached patients connect with primary care providers—an important step toward improving long-term health outcomes in our community.

Looking ahead, we are in early discussions with Public Health Services and Ontario Works to bring new programming to our Athens and Limeridge locations. We are excited about the potential these partnerships hold for 2025 and beyond.

## Financial Advocacy: Building Income Security

In 2024, our **Money Matters Financial Advocacy program** continued to be a lifeline for individuals and families striving for financial stability. The program focuses on strengthening income security—whether by reducing household expenses, increasing access to financial benefits, or both.

This year, our financial counsellor worked closely with **48 new households**, representing **107 family members**, providing personalized support to navigate complex financial challenges. From budgeting guidance to benefit applications, each interaction was rooted in helping clients regain control and confidence in their financial futures.

A key development this year was the **deepening collaboration with the Credit Counselling Society of Hamilton** and a **local bankruptcy trustee**. These partnerships have been instrumental in supporting households at risk of insolvency, offering timely interventions that help prevent bankruptcy and preserve long-term financial health.

While the role of financial counselling is not new, the **increased frequency and depth of engagement** this year highlights the growing need for this service—and the powerful impact it can have on a household's stability and dignity.



## Settlement Services: Supporting New Beginnings

Our **Middle East Outreach Settlement Support** remains a cornerstone of our newcomer services, providing essential, culturally responsive assistance to individuals and families navigating the challenges of resettlement. This program continues to be a lifeline for those facing persistent barriers to integration, offering support that addresses both immediate needs and long-term stability.

In 2024, we observed a **notable increase in newcomer families**. While children and seniors were underrepresented among new clients, the majority of individuals accessing services were **adults aged 25 to 64**—a reflection of the demographic most actively seeking to establish roots and rebuild their lives in a new country.

The work of our settlement staff is not only about meeting basic needs—it's about fostering belonging, empowerment, and opportunity for those starting over in unfamiliar surroundings.

	TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS SERVED	REPEAT HOUSEHOLDS SERVED	NEW SINGLE-PERSON HOUSEHOLDS SERVED	NEW FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS SERVED	UNIQUE INTERACTIONS WITH HOUSEHOLDS
Total 2024/2025	6,138 <i>+49% over previous year</i>	6,850 <i>+21%</i>	217 <i>-17%</i>	481 <i>+4%</i>	7,548

## Utilities Support Program

In 2024, our **Utilities Support Program** continued to be a vital pillar in our income security efforts, helping families maintain stability and avoid crisis.

Through the **Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP)**, eligible households received monthly rebates ranging from **\$35 to \$113**, applied directly to their electricity bills for up to 60 months. This long-term support eases the financial burden of rising utility costs and helps families redirect limited income toward other essential needs.

Additionally, the **Low-income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP)** provided emergency grants of **up to \$780** to prevent service disconnections. For many households, this was the difference between maintaining a safe, livable home and facing the risk of losing access to heat and electricity.

Together, these programs are not just about covering bills—they are about **preserving housing stability, protecting health, and reinforcing dignity** for those navigating financial hardship.

2024	JANUARY - DECEMBER
Ontario Energy Support Program Monthly Rebate	
Households	701
Household Members	2278
Rebates (dispersed over 24 mo)	\$957,720
Rebate/household	\$1366
LEAP Disconnection Prevention Grant	
Households	338
Grants dispersed	\$208,544.63
Financial Impact	
Total credits distributed	\$1,166,264.63
Learn more about resources and programs available at Neighbour to Neighbour by visiting <a href="http://www.n2ncentre.com">www.n2ncentre.com</a>	



# Board of Directors

**PRESIDENT** Stephanie Johnston  
**VICE PRESIDENT** Nick Davies  
**SECRETARY** Natalie Shearer  
**PAST PRESIDENT** Dan Holstein  
**TREASURER** Joti Vallabh  
**DIRECTOR** Alicia Au

**DIRECTOR** Andrew Brown  
**DIRECTOR** Lorraine Hoult  
**DIRECTOR** George Kalacherry  
**DIRECTOR** Joan Nelson  
**DIRECTOR** Chris White

## Ways to Give



### DONATE ONLINE

Support monthly or make a donation of securities at [n2ncentre.com/donate](https://n2ncentre.com/donate)



### DONATE BY CHEQUE

Mail or drop a cheque to:  
28 Athens Street  
Hamilton, ON L9C 3K9



### HOST A FUNDRAISER

DIY your own way to support our neighbours!  
[admin@n2ncentre.com](mailto:admin@n2ncentre.com)



### CONTACT

905-574-1334 | 28 Athens Street, Hamilton, ON L9C 3K9

### FOLLOW

 [n2ncentrehamilton](https://www.facebook.com/n2ncentrehamilton)  [@n2ncentre](https://www.instagram.com/n2ncentre)



Scan to visit our website and become a supporter today.  
[www.n2ncentre.com](https://www.n2ncentre.com)