

# The Edge

Mission Services of Hamilton

Spring 2018

Since 1956



## USING FOOD TO BUILD NEW SKILLS

How your gifts help feed and teach people like Bill how to cook healthy food

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## The Right Support



Cortney, a Housing Support Worker at Mission Services of Hamilton, helped Don find affordable housing while he was going through Drug Treatment Court Hamilton to leave homelessness behind.

Thanks to your gifts, Don - whose name has been changed to protect his identity - became the fifth person to graduate from Drug Treatment Court Hamilton. After struggling with an addiction to pills and cocaine for almost three decades, he is now in recovery, working, and hoping to rebuild his relationships with his family.

### IN HIS WORDS:

“WHEN I FIRST learned about Drug Treatment Court (DTC) Hamilton, I was very unsure about it. I had tried going through treatment twice before, but both times I went right back to using and being out on the streets. I think I returned to using substances because I wasn’t ready to quit. I also didn’t feel like I had the support I needed in order to succeed.

I had been using pills - opiates like Dilaudid and Hydromorphone - for over 30 years. I also started using crack-cocaine back in the 90s. Whenever I had money, that’s what I would spend it on.

As a result of my substance use I’ve been in jail many times. I was facing going back to jail when my court-appointed attorney told me about the DTC program. He explained that it was designed for

people who kept coming through the court system as a result of an addiction. He invited me to watch the court and meet some of the people involved with the addiction treatment support. I realized then that I didn’t want to go back to the way my life was. I knew I had to make some changes, so I decided to give the program a try.

The hardest thing about the program was having a curfew. I wasn’t used to having rules about when I could and couldn’t go out. Another difficult part was feeling comfortable around the other people in the group treatment. As part of the program you have to attend group sessions every day and go away for treatment. Hamilton is a small place and I had a history with some of the people in my group. That could make it difficult to open up. And even if I didn’t know them, that could make it difficult too. But my counsellors supported me through it.

Today, I’m convinced that Drug Treatment Court Hamilton works. The daily group sessions, the support from counsellors, and the expectation to get involved with more activities in your life and make positive changes - all of these create a supportive environment that allowed me to make the changes I wanted to. I’ve returned to work and, one day, hope to work as a heavy equipment operator. I’m also looking forward to rebuilding my relationship with my brother.” ■

# USING FOOD TO BUILD NEW SKILLS

◀ Bill learning to bake squash in FoodFit.

**Your support means that folks like Bill who live on a low income can eat healthy food and learn new skills to improve their well-being.**

**BILL STILL FEELS LUCKY** that he saw a pamphlet about Mission Services' newest program, FoodFit, when he was picking up a food hamper at the Mission's Good Food Centre on Wentworth Street North. Bill had never taken a cooking class before. The pamphlet explained that the class taught participants how to make great-tasting, healthy meals at home and was designed for cooking on a tight budget—something that Bill was also looking for.

Bill is a hard worker. He has a full-time job as a security officer and often works nights at locations all over Toronto and commutes by public transit. His job requires him to be flexible, but it pays a modest wage. Rising heat, hydro, and food costs also make it difficult living on a low income. At the Mission's Good Food Centre, however, folks like Bill can get a three-to-four day supply of groceries.

Sometimes, Bill would take vegetables in his hamper that he wasn't quite sure how to use. When he saw the pamphlet for FoodFit, he decided to spice things up and see if he could learn some new cooking skills.

As Bill can tell you, he learned many things in FoodFit: how legumes and black beans are tasty yet low in sugar; how to bake a casserole from



**After taking FoodFit, Bill enrolled in computer literacy course run by the Hamilton Literacy Council at Mission Services to improve his employable skills.**

scratch; and how to be thrifty by buying fruits and vegetables in season.

But the most important thing Bill learned was how much he enjoyed socializing and feeling connected to this community. "FoodFit was a nice place to meet and talk to people," he explains. "That can be difficult to do when you live on your own and spend so much of your time commuting."

Inspired by his positive experience with FoodFit, Bill is now taking a computer course at Mission Services run by the Hamilton Literacy Council to work on upgrading his skills. "I haven't used computers very often," says Bill, "but I know these skills will help me to continue working." 🍊

# Giving: A Family Tradition

**For 20 years Laurie, Jackie, and Doug have hosted a tea party on American Thanksgiving weekend where they invite their family and friends to bring a donation for a local charity. It's a way to keep the memory of their parents alive while also giving back to the community they love.**

“OVER THE CHRISTMAS holidays our father would always give a fifty-dollar bill to anyone collecting donations outside Barton Centre Mall,” Jackie reminisces along with her sister, Laurie, and brother, Doug, at a coffee shop near Barton Street. “He was a truck driver and didn’t have extra money very often, so he never told our mother about his donations,” Jackie says with a laugh. “Our father was very generous,” Laurie chimes in. “One time he hired a man who was homeless and invited him to live with us. Our grandmother, his mother, was the same way.”

For twenty years Jackie, Laurie, and Doug have continued their family’s tradition of giving back over the holidays. They’ve also put their own spin on it. Every American Thanksgiving weekend - Laurie, a truck-driver following in her father’s footsteps, always has this weekend off - they host a tea party and invite all of their friends and family to bring a donation for a local charity. Beforehand, they call the charities they plan to donate to and ask what they need most. Usually it’s new socks,



Laurie and Jackie (front and back, on right) prepare for their tea party over American Thanksgiving weekend to raise donations for four local charities including Mission Services of Hamilton’s emergency men’s shelter.

shampoo, gloves, and deodorant. In recent years, they’ve started to get more strategic and start buying items throughout the year whenever they go on sale. One time, Jackie found a bin of winter toques at a swimsuit store for eighty-percent off. “I cleared them out!” she says laughing.

This November they collected enough donations and money to put together over 100 care packages. They donated them to Mission Services’ emergency shelter as well as a local youth shelter, a shelter in St. Catharines, and a veteran’s centre. “The thing is,

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“small acts of *kindness* can make a difference.”

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you don’t have to be rich to start something good,” Jackie explains. “We started small and it’s grown over time. That’s why we do it: because small acts of kindness can make a difference. And it’s fun!”

Over forty people came to their last tea party. “Some people only know each other from the tea party,” says Laurie. “They’re neighbours, colleagues, old friends from school. And now even my grandchildren join in. It’s nice to see it all come full circle.” 

# Finding Meaning in Volunteering

Vince, a former police officer, volunteers every week at the Good Food Centre.



➦ YOU TOO CAN USE YOUR GIFTS TO GIVE BACK. VISIT: [mission-services.com/volunteer](https://mission-services.com/volunteer)

**Vince grew up in a low-income family, which was one reason why he wanted to give back to other families fighting poverty. But as he also says, “volunteering is good for me. It’s good for my soul.”**

“I THINK EVERYONE should have food in their fridge and a warm place to sleep,” Vince says after one of his weekly volunteer shifts at Mission Services’ Good Food Centre. Every Wednesday, Vince comes to the Good Food Centre for a three-hour shift where he helps families who are low-income select an emergency supply of food.

“When I go back to work and tell my employees about how many families we served at the food centre, they are shocked,” explains Vince. “We often find it hard to believe that people are struggling in our own city with problems like homelessness,” he says, “but it’s true.”

Before he started volunteering at the Good Food Centre, Vince knew that poverty was a problem in

his hometown. He came from a low-income family himself and worked as a police officer for twelve years. During that time he saw first-hand how homelessness and poverty could potentially affect anyone.

Today Vince owns an insurance company in Burlington. He encourages his employees to give back by matching their donations for dress-down Fridays. He’s also challenging two nearby insurance companies to a friendly competition to see who can raise more. The winner will get a free lunch for their staff served by the losing team. Vince says the friendly competition gets people engaged.

“I nearly became homeless during my early twenties when my father disappeared and left me on my own,” Vince adds. “Personal circumstances play such a big role in whether a personal crisis turns into an experience with homelessness. I feel like I know what that means, which is why I plan to volunteer with Mission Services for as long as they need my help.” ❤️

# Thank You for Transforming Lives



**Carol Cowan-Morneau**

*Executive Director*

**IN THIS ISSUE** we share several stories of compassion, growth, and healing. Don finds his way from incarceration to recovery. Bill discovers new skills working with food to improve his well-being. A family continues a tradition of giving back in their community over four generations. And Vince, like hundreds of people each year at Mission Services of Hamilton, learns how much volunteering can enrich his life and bring meaning to it.

These stories are all unique to the people whose lives they touch. But they also share one thing in common: you. Your gifts to Mission Services of Hamilton empower all of these people to

*Your gifts empower the people we serve to overcome poverty, addiction, and housing insecurity and achieve incredible things.*

make remarkable transformations in their lives and in the lives of the those around them.

As a former addictions worker, I feel particularly grateful for your support of addictions services like Drug Treatment Court Hamilton, which allow people like Don to finally discover the supportive treatment they need to make positive changes in their lives.

Many people we work with struggle against poverty, addiction, housing insecurity or homelessness, and violence. But with you in their corner, they can achieve incredible things.

Thank you.

*Carol Cowan-Morneau*

# YOUR Gifts at Work

Nov - Jan

 **18,496**

Meals Served

 **2,237**

Food Hampers

 **2,741**

Volunteer Hours

 **325**

Men and Women Sheltered

 **128**

Men and Women in Addiction Treatment

Every child deserves the brightest possible future.

Leave a gift to Mission Services of Hamilton in your will.

To support Mission Services, call 1-877-542-2732, donate online at [mission-services.com](http://mission-services.com), or donate with online banking (RBC, BMO and Central 1 customers)

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