

The Edge

Mission Services of Hamilton

Christmas 2022

Since 1956

'Tis the Season

How do you choose to give at Christmas? Do you track down the perfect gift for someone special and stow it under the tree? Do you give to your church or to charity, perhaps sending a donation to support Mission Services of Hamilton (MSH)? What about the gift of time? How can you give in 2023?

Volunteers, both at Mission Services and in our community, give their time all year round to support our neighbours in need. Some work on-site, along side our staff, while others dedicate time to organizing food/hygiene drives or holding events in support of MSH in the community.

In this issue you'll read why Hank, and other volunteers and community partners are vital resources to our programs. But you'll also see how rising inflation is having a devastating affect on Hamiltonians and now more than ever we need volunteers in our community to help collect food and keep our shelves stocked at the Good Food Centre.

Although this can be a particularly difficult time of year for many people accessing our services, your support, year-round, is invaluable. Whether that's your time, your money, or your influence. Every volunteer, every donation, every food drive planned, or fundraiser organized, impacts the lives of our most vulnerable neighbours.

Without you, Christmas would not shine as brightly at Mission Services. Thank you!

Wishing you and your loved ones good health and happiness this Christmas.

Carol Cowan-Morneau



Carol Cowan-Morneau
Executive Director

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The Gift of Time

Christmas is the season of giving, but volunteers give the gift of time all year round.

Hank started volunteering with Mission Services' Food Services program in 2019 working in the Good Food Centre. He was one of hundreds of volunteers who supported staff and clients at that time.

Hank was looking for a way to help his community through volunteering and a friend suggested Mission Services.

"I feel very fortunate and I figure this is a really good way to give back, with time."

In March of 2020, Mission Services had to pause the volunteer program. With a global pandemic on the rise and so much uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 virus, it was the safest option for the volunteers, staff and clients.

Hank understood this decision but felt helpless. He knew staff would be under pressure as more people turned to Mission Services for support. "I think the people who needed the help, needed it ten times more, and I couldn't do anything."

But finally, the wait is over. Hank is returning to Food Services, now supporting the team at our Men's Kitchen, as many other volunteers are also being reintroduced into our programs.

"Though we had a few volunteers working during the [height of the pandemic], the Volunteer Program resumed once again in April," said Victor, Director of Staff Wellness and Volunteer Resources at Mission Services.

Mission Services has had 75 volunteers return to help in eight different programs so far and this number will keep increasing based on the needs of the programs.

A few ways volunteers give their time is by packing food boxes in the Good Food Centre, helping prepare meals in the three kitchens, or working with youth in the after-school 196 Program.

"[Volunteers] play such a vital role in our program, I really don't think we could run without them," shared Adalia, The 196 Program Coordinator.

The 196 Program was able to utilize volunteers remotely during the pandemic, using a Facebook group and video communication to engage with the children stuck at home. But the majority of programs need support on-site.

"With the demand for our services increasing everyday due to the rise in inflation, homelessness,

mental health and addictions, having volunteers onboard with us gives us that much needed assistance,” explained Victor.

However, during COVID, Mission Services was able to find different, off-site and safe, ways for people to volunteer their time, by running fundraisers on behalf of MSH. Hosting a food drive, hygiene drive or financial drive, or running an event in support of Mission Services, all require time and energy, and are equally beneficial.

Whether someone is sorting food at the GFC or collecting non-perishable food items at their business, church or community group, they’re all making a difference to those accessing services at MSH.

“I feel very blessed, but who knows, I can see myself on the other end one day. Volunteering gives me a sense of purpose and I think more people should try it,” said Hank.

If you’re interested in learning more about volunteering opportunities at MSH you can visit mission-services.com/volunteering or contact Victor at [905 528-5100-ext.1104](tel:9055285100) or vcyr@mission-services.com

Anyone wishing to volunteer with Mission Services must be fully vaccinated and willing to wear a required face mask to protect themselves and lower the risk of transmission of the COVID-19 virus to others.

Support for the *Holidays*

Christmas is one of the busiest times of the year at Mission Services. It can also be a lonely and isolating time for many individuals. That’s why our staff work tirelessly over the holidays to bring some warmth, cheer and much needed support to our neighbours in need.

Our Good Food Centre will be focusing on distributing Holiday Hampers in the month of December. The hampers will include our client’s regular groceries, along with festive ingredients to prepare a holiday meal. Community members will be able to pick up their hampers with food and hygiene items throughout the month, while families with children will set up an appointment to pick-up toys through the Christmas Care program.

The 196 youth and their families will also be receiving Christmas Care packages, and a holiday dinner hosted by staff.





“Last year, we sent home turkey dinner to all the families, it was great, but it’ll be lovelier to have time together in-person,” said Adalia, The 196 Coordinator.

Clients at our Men’s Shelter will have the opportunity to help decorate for the holidays and enjoy a Christmas dinner. Each client staying with us will receive a small gift. “Community members donate items like socks, gloves, handwarmers, snacks, hygiene products, that we can hand out to everybody,” said Catherine, Men’s Shelter Manager.

Clients who have secured safe, permanent housing through our Housing UP! program will receive a gift card to help purchase items for their home.

Living in a shelter over the holidays is not easy but we try to make Christmas as special as possible for the women and children staying at Inasmuch House. Staff and residents decorate the shelter and enjoy a festive meal together, while generous community members ensure gifts are under the tree Christmas morning.

Willow’s Place and Emma’s Place will be hosting a Christmas meal, where participants will receive a gift. Staff will also be offering seasonal activities throughout the month of December giving community members the chance to gather and enjoy the holidays together.

Although Addiction Services does not plan any specific holiday activities, they do offer additional group sessions leading up to Christmas, as the holidays can be a difficult time for some. “We try to offer 2-3 groups per day, so anyone who is in need of support can attend and we open that up to all of our clients,” said Greg, Addiction Services Manager.

As we have learned in the past, we will be prepared to pivot our plans for the safety of our staff and clients if necessary, but hopefully we can make this a special time of year for our most vulnerable neighbours.



INFLATION and Hunger in Hamilton



*Inflation has hit many Hamiltonians hard - affecting the affordability of food staples, housing, and other basic needs, like child care. **But for those already struggling, food insecurity and the risk of homelessness is devastatingly their reality.** With 2022 coming to an end, we at Mission Services are wondering "what's 2023 going to look like"?*

The Stats (Ontario - 2018 vs 2022)

26% ↑ - cost of produce | 18% ↑ in the cost of housing
0% ↑ - Social Assistance rates | 18% ↑ in food insecurity

How Inflation Impacts our Good Food Centre

- 278% ↑ (since 2019) in the number of families accessing emergency food more than once per month
- Days worth of food given to families ↓ to 5-7 days, compared to 7-10 days given previously
- 50% reduction in buying power - \$3-5 worth of food for every \$1 donated, compared to \$7-8 prior
- 45% decrease in food donations

Men's Shelter Move Update

In The Edge Fall 2022 newsletter, we announced that our Men's Shelter will be moving to a new location. We hope to be in the new building by early 2023, and **need your help!**

As part of our move, Mission Services' Men's Services will be adding 50 additional beds to the shelter system. This means we will be purchasing an additional 50 beds and will need new linens.

Please **host a drive** to collect **new** twin-sized sheets, comforters, pillows, and towels!
Email communityrelations@mission-services.com to get started.

Or you can donate financially by going to www.mission-services.com/donate and direct your gift to "400 King East supplies".

New Council, Old Challenges



Ontarians hit the polls this fall to decide their municipal governments and in Hamilton that brought a new mayor and several new faces to Council.

We congratulate Mayor Andrea Horwath on her successful campaign, and welcome Cameron Kroetsch to Ward 2 and Councilor Nrinder Nann back to Ward 3, where Mission Services operates. This is a new beginning for our city and we plan to use this opportunity to continue to advocate for positive change that will benefit all Hamiltonians.

Food insecurity continues to rise. Between increasing inflation and unaffordable housing, our neighbours have no choice but to seek emergency food support. They either access a food program or don't eat. Or, worse yet, they pay for groceries and have nowhere to live.

It's also clear that Hamilton is facing a housing and homelessness crisis. Options for safe, affordable housing are severely lacking. Mission Services' housing-focused shelter has been successful, housing 276 clients since the Housing UP! program launched in the spring of 2020. However, we need more focused efforts on finding permanent housing for those experiencing homelessness in our city.

We need the support and advocacy of City Council more than ever to ensure housing for everyone. We've said it before, and we'll say it again, housing is the only way to end homelessness.

Mission Services looks forward to working with City Council towards a better Hamilton for all its residents.

YOUR Gifts at WORK

August - October

 **25,136**
Meals Served

 **2,923**
Food Assistance Packs

 **4,926**
Visits at Willow's Place

 **406**
Men and Women Sheltered

 **1,180**
Men and Women in Addiction Treatment

Host a Winter Drive!

For a list of needed items, and other ways you can help, go to:
www.mission-services.com/how-you-can-help



To support Mission Services, call 1-877-542-2732, donate online at mission-services.com/donate, donate with online banking (RBC, BMO and Central 1 customers), or on site with debit/credit card machine.

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