

Neighbours are turning to our Food Bank in record numbers

Your gift will give groceries and comfort to those who need them most

“As you can see, the shelves are almost empty. They’re the barest they’ve ever been.”

Laurie Musson, the Director of Food Services at the Downtown Mission, is standing in the middle of the Food Bank. Today, some boxes of crackers along with a few cans of corn, carrots, and soup line the shelves.



Laurie is hoping that a local grocery store will drop off some take-out meals. But she’s worried there still won’t be enough food for everyone who turns to the Food Bank. “We get over 100 visitors here every day. That’s twice as many as last year,” she says.

The Mission’s Food Bank began as a pantry in the 1970s when the need wasn’t so urgent. “A handful of people came in for things like pasta and rice,” Laurie explains. “These days we’re seeing seniors who have lost their homes, students trying to live on hot water and ketchup soup, and working parents having to choose between feeding their kids and paying their bills. The seniors break my heart because they’re living on fixed incomes. There are no financial increases for them or for a single person on social assistance. It’s a scary time.”

Sherri, who’s come to the Food Bank off and on during hard times, agrees. “It’s awful to think of children in Windsor who won’t be eating tonight,” she says. “The Mission was always there



when my kids were growing up. We never went hungry, but now there aren’t as many donations.”

If you have any extra food in your cupboards—like cereal, canned soup and vegetables, canned ham and tuna, or fruit cups—please consider donating them to our Food Bank. Baby formula and diapers are also desperately needed. ➤

“If you pour yourself out for the hungry, and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness, and your gloom be as the noonday.”

— ISAIAH 58:10

There's absolutely no doubt about it. You bring light into the lives of hurting neighbours facing their darkest days.

In 2023, when the number of individuals coming to our Food Bank doubled from 2022, your support provided desperately-needed groceries to people who would have gone hungry without you.

It wasn't just our Food Bank that served record numbers of folks here in Windsor. More than 40 young families—headed by parents 16 to 29 years old with babies, toddlers, and school-aged children—turned to our Gen WYC program at The Windsor Youth Centre. You came through for them by ensuring ongoing emotional support and assistance finding family-friendly housing. And, parents were profoundly grateful for the baby formula and nutritious snacks you made available.

Through our Enterprise Program, you helped hundreds of people receive job training and make a new start in 2023. Graduation day was



joyful for our participants, especially with their children often joining in on the celebration. You could almost see the spark of hope in the air!

You can be proud of the fact that the Downtown Mission was open 365 days, 24 hours a day last year. We couldn't have done it without you. Capacity was at about 90% in the summer, hitting 100% by early fall. With your generosity, we served over 11,000 meals per month and that jumped to 12,000 during December. Not only did you make sure our vulnerable neighbours sat

down to a Christmas turkey dinner with all the trimmings, you helped distribute warm socks, gloves, and toques to the guests in our shelter.

As 2024 begins, our goal is to help more people move from emergency shelter into affordable housing. This is what stabilizes individual lives and strengthens our community. At the same time, we're gearing up to meet the growing need for our Food Bank and to provide better opportunities for everyone accessing our services. I ask that you continue to show your support and love.

Thank you for shining a light through the darkness of poverty, hunger, and homelessness. Together, we'll brighten the days ahead and make our city better for all.

With thanks,

Rukshini Ponniah-Goulin
Executive Director

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Cash donations are always welcome, especially as our Food Bank does not receive any government funding.

Caring friends like you are at the heart of the Mission's work, including our Food Bank. "Thank you for helping your neighbours

who need us most," Laurie says. "We're making a difference in the community because of you!"

At the WYC, you give care and safety to vulnerable youth like Marcus

“I was sleeping in a park,” Marcus says. “My friends told me to go to the WYC (Windsor Youth Centre) to get some help.”

When Marcus walked through the door of the comfortable older home where the WYC is located, he was welcomed by our staff. “Right away, I noticed they were interested in me as a person. They listened and started finding ways to help. I felt the pressure easing off my chest.”

Marcus is a regular at the WYC evening drop-in, the only program of its kind in Windsor for chronically homeless youth and those at risk of becoming homeless—thanks to supporters like you. It’s held in our safe, homey space where young people can enjoy a hot meal and hang out. Staff members—who have now served over 240 unique young people—facilitate the group and link participants with the supports they need.

Marcus now stays with friends, but he’d like a place of his own. “The WYC is helping me find something more stable,” he explains. “They’re



also helping me get a job. I want to go back to school to study early childhood education.”

In addition to the evening drop-in, your donations enable the WYC to offer practical assistance and emotional support to young parents. Other programs include wellness and recovery, alternative conflict resolution, job training, and LGBTQ+ peer support. Staff are also available by appointment to meet one-on-one with youth facing addiction, mental health issues, and homelessness.

“Our goal is to give youth access to the services they need,” says Ashley Marchand, Manager of Youth Services. “Many are either homeless or at risk of homelessness. There are lots of barriers to housing younger people. Not only have rents gone

up, landlords don’t want young adults receiving social assistance in their units.”

Ashley is proud of the rapport her staff have built with the youth who come to the WYC. “They learn to trust us. One youth was homeless and struggling with addiction. Over time, we helped with their sobriety and were there as they went through treatment. That youth recovered and made many friends at WYC. Now they volunteer with us because they want to give back. That’s just one success story.”

Thank you for supporting everyone who turns to the Windsor Youth Centre. As Ashley says, “These kids are our future—and it takes a village of caring donors to help youth in dire need grow into successful, hopeful adults.”



Join us for the Coldest Night of the Year

We're excited and grateful that our community is coming together to walk for people experiencing hurt, hunger, and homelessness.

On the evening of Saturday, February 24th, lace up your winter boots to take a big step toward raising funds to provide much-needed food, shelter, and comfort for our hurting neighbours.

Coldest Night of the Year is a family-friendly, winterrific way to meet fellow members of our community all for a great cause. It's free to participate and every dollar you raise will make a life-changing

difference right here in Windsor.

The Downtown Mission will be walking from 875 Ouellette Ave. We hope you'll join us or walk in your own neighbourhood. But if that's not possible, you can still be part of the team by donating to support our walkers.

To register, make a donation, get fundraising tips, or learn more, visit cnoy.org/location/windsordowntown.



Here's some of the difference you made in 2023

Thank you for your amazing generosity



over 123,000
meals served



over 30,000
shelter nights



over 760
people helped through
Recovery Journeys

Save the Date!
The Downtown Mission 2024
Annual General Meeting
Wednesday, April 24 at 5:30 pm.