

# Annual Impact Report

2020/2021



 Project  
**SHARE**  
Our Community At Work

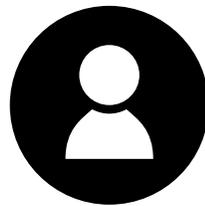
**OUR VISION IS TO END THE STRUGGLE AGAINST POVERTY AND EMPOWER THOSE IN NEED.**

**OUR MISSION IS TO PROVIDE ESSENTIAL SUPPORT SERVICES THAT IMPROVE THE LIVES OF NIAGARA FALLS INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES IN NEED.**

## OUR IMPACT



**3,248**  
Total households served



**5,912**  
Unique individuals served

**36,262**  
Total visits

**30%** of households have 1 or more children

**25%** indicated special dietary needs like diabetes, gluten-free, vegetarian, halal, etc.

**32%** were 18 years and under

**20%** were **NEW** households and individuals accessing Project SHARE services

**26%** required specific items like baby food or formula, diapers, Ensure and hygiene products.

**14%** were seniors

# MESSAGE FROM BOARD CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This past year was certainly an unprecedented one, as we experienced our first, full fiscal year during the COVID-19 pandemic. We faced many challenges along with our community, including operating with few or no volunteers during provincial lockdowns. Our heartfelt thanks are extended to our volunteers for showing us patience and understanding during this time, and willingly returning to help us again when it was safe to do so.

Many new families came to us for emergency assistance for the very first time due to the pandemic, and we continually adapted to provide consistent, client-centred service to our neighbours who were struggling. We tried many new things this year, such as an online registration process for our Christmas Program which was run completely off site. We participated in several free grocery giveaways partnering with the City of Niagara Falls to bring emergency food to more families who were experiencing food insecurity. We are very proud of how our staff continued to adapt to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring our essential services were always available to those who rely on us.

We are continually grateful for the incredible generosity we received from our community this year. This support enabled us to purchase a new, refrigerated van and make necessary improvements to our building to ensure our capacity to meet the significant increased need for our services. Community donations allowed us to distribute a record amount of emergency food to help ensure none of our neighbours went hungry.

Collaboration with our fellow Niagara, Feed Ontario and Food Banks Canada member agencies was exceptionally strong this year as we worked together to share resources and ideas to better serve our clients. We worked as a member of the Niagara Consortium for Housing Stability to align and strengthen our homelessness prevention services. Through formal groups such as the Niagara Food Security Network, The Niagara Poverty Reduction Network and the Niagara Community Garden Network we collaborated with other service providers to increase our community impact.

Our community truly is at work. We can't do this alone and are continually grateful for our community partners, donors, staff, board of directors and volunteers who enable us to provide emergency support services to those who are less fortunate in Niagara Falls.

Together we can lead the fight against hunger and empower those in need.

Irma Sebastiano, Chair

Pam Sharp, Executive Director



**Irma Sebastiano**  
Board Chair



**Pam Sharp**  
Executive Director

## 2020/2021 board of directors

*Chair:*  
Irma Sebastiano

*Vice Chair:*  
Anna Luciano

*Past Chair:*  
Brian Pellow

*Treasurer:*  
Mick Wolfe

*Secretary:*  
Trent Dark

*City Council Rep:*  
Lori Lococo

*Directors:*  
Julia Fabiano, Jim Ferraro, Italia Gilberti, and Tom Snodgrass

# Ensuring the needs of those who rely on us are met

## WHY WE DO THIS

Housing, social services and education are some of the most common social determinants of health because they have a significant impact on the current healthcare landscape in our community. Project SHARE's programs focus on delivering services that influence people's health and have a positive impact in Niagara Falls.

During this fiscal year, our agency has overcome barriers and adapted our service to ensure the needs of our community are being met to the best of our ability. We've added new partnerships and modified implementation to ensure the safety of everyone in our community during the pandemic.

Our emergency food program is our most recognized service and often serves as our first point of contact and introduction to additional ways we can help those in need.

## WHAT WE DO - FIVE TO THRIVE

Project SHARE offers 17 programs and services that help us meet our mission of improving the lives of Niagara Falls families and individuals in need.

Food security, homelessness prevention, healthy living, training and education and seasonal support are the categories of programs and services offered at Project SHARE. These five categories are part of the social determinants of health that are recognized by all levels of government in Canada as well as internationally by the World Health Organization. They are social and economic factors that influence people's health through the living and working conditions that people experience every day. Social determinants of health impact our community in positive and negative ways with extreme differences in income and wealth, for example, having negative health consequences for those who are living in poverty.



Please visit our website to learn more about the programs and services offered at Project SHARE.

Our emergency food program is often the first point of contact we have with individuals in need of support in our community. The emergency food program is easy to access, well known and provides much needed relief to those in need. It is at this point in time we are able to learn more about the depth of the impact that poverty is having on those who reach out for help. A recent study by Feed Ontario showed that 1 in 2 food bank clients across Ontario are worried about facing eviction or defaulting on their mortgage in the next 2 - 6 months.



# Seasonal Support

Each year Project SHARE offers programs to support Niagara Falls families at Christmas and back to school.

Our Christmas program helps ensure families have a holiday meal to enjoy and gifts under the tree for children.

Our back to school program provides children ages 4 - 17 with sneakers, a backpack, school supplies and healthy school snacks as they head back to school.

**3,661** individuals accessed our 2020 Christmas program

**1,625**

families enjoyed a holiday meal

**1,400**

children received Christmas gifts

**320** children received sneakers, a backpack, school supplies and healthy snacks to begin the 2020 school year.

Christmas at Project SHARE is a joyful time. It is very busy and our days are filled with uplifting moments of gratitude and displays of generosity. The families we help are so grateful for the kindness shown to them by our community. It is common to hear that Christmas would not be possible without the support they receive from this program.

We are grateful for the incredible partnership and support we received from St. Andrew's United Church. Their flexible and generous giving provided us with the facility we needed to ensure our program was offered in a safe way for volunteers, clients, donors and our staff.

Individuals, companies and churches all came together to support our program by sponsoring families or participating in our Stuff the Bus event.

Thank you to support from partners including Canadian Tire Bank's Snacks n' Sneakers program along with Niagara Nutrition Partners, Food Banks Canada After the Bell, and numerous individual, corporate and community event supporters, each child who registered for the program received sneakers, a backpack with school supplies and healthy snacks. Parents tell us that the expense of back to school can be just as stressful as Christmas. Thanks to the support of our program sponsors, local churches, businesses and donors, Niagara Falls kids returned with new sneakers and supplies, just like their peers at school.





# Food Security

Families living below the poverty line are provided with perishable and non-perishable food items. We strive to provide healthy and nutritious foods by including fresh fruits and vegetables and healthy proteins. 160 garden plots are available in three community garden locations in Niagara Falls. This program empowers those participating by providing them with education on how to tend a garden and allows the opportunity to provide food security and healthy foods for their loved ones.

**88.2%**

of Project SHARE clients access our emergency food program

**917,500**

pounds of food were distributed

Local grocery stores host barrels and make food donations throughout the year. Our drivers visit more than 8 grocers and retailers, daily. Local church congregations, schools and businesses host regular collections along with community event partners. Our warehouse is open Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. to receive donations of food and hygiene items.



In September, a walk in refrigerator and walk in freezer were installed in our warehouse, allowing us to take advantage of bulk donations and reduce priced purchases of perishable foods, thanks to a gift from the McCall MacBain Family Foundation.

Thank you to the **Rotary Club of Niagara Falls Sunrise** for their donation towards our new van. In it's first year, this van travelled over 18,000 kilometers, making over 3,300 stops throughout Niagara Falls as well as trips to pick up bulk donations and purchases outside the Niagara Region. This refrigerated truck allows us to ensure the safe pick up and delivery of food items. Additional funding was also received from Food Banks Canada's Capacity Boost Grant and the Government of Canada Local Food Infrastructure Fund.



DeVries Fruit Farms donates fruit that is used to prepare fresh treats that are sold by Project SHARE volunteers and staff at the Niagara Falls Farmers Market. The proceeds from our sales are then used to purchase much needed fresh produce from market vendors to be distributed to clients through our emergency food program.



# Homelessness Prevention

Homelessness prevention workers assist with the individualized search for housing to help clients find and retain affordable housing. We help keep clients housed by providing gas vouchers or bus tickets, clothing vouchers, a trustee program and laundromat vouchers and laundry soap for families without laundry facilities and emergency food so families can put their limited resources towards housing. Emergency funding is facilitated to prevent utility disconnection for gas or hydro and we assist with hydro deposit waiver letters and referrals.

**322**

households received support with utility payments (that's 10.3%)

**598**

households received homelessness prevention assistance

In the spring of 2020 Project SHARE joined fellow Niagara food banks Community Care St. Catharines and Thorold, The Hope Centre, and Community Care West Niagara to form the Niagara Consortium for Housing Stability funded by the Niagara Region Homelessness Services. Through this consortium we strive to elevate our people-centred and outcome focused services to help residents of Niagara find and sustain affordable housing. In addition to this formal partnership we work closely with community partners including the Niagara Legal Clinic, Niagara Assertive Street Outreach team, and shelter providers.

Ontario Electric Support Program (OESP) helps low income individuals with a monthly credit towards their hydro bills. Partnerships with Goodwill Industries and St. Andrew's United Church's Shoulder2Shoulder program provide clothing necessities and when available, shoes are provided through the Cold Feet program in memory of Carmen Elefante. We refer clients to the Winter Warmth Program that allows them to obtain warm winter boots and jackets from Goodwill.



# Training & Education

In addition to offering 160 garden plots for clients to grow their own food, the program focuses on education and training by teaching gardeners how to tend to a garden and offers opportunities that educate and promote growing, cooking and preserving organic products.

**160**

garden plots at 3 locations  
15 of these were added this year

**2,385**

pounds of fresh produce grown in our gardens  
and donated to our emergency food program

This program empowers people by providing the resources, space and education to grow food. Each garden plot produces approximately 200 pounds of food that feeds the gardeners family and some of which is donated back to the emergency food program at Project SHARE.

This year, our community garden received a grant from United Way Niagara special projects funding, allowing us to add 15 new garden plots and an irrigation system at The Gate Alliance Church site.



# Healthy Living

As a Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities ambassador, we supported families applying for organized sports grants for their children and facilitate applications to a variety of other programs. We offer programs that help with dental, eyeglass needs and emergency prescriptions and make referrals to other health services.

**25**

clients receiving dental, eye or prescription support

Project SHARE administered a number of programs including a child and youth support grant that provided diapers and formula, and the Brushed Aside Program that supported dental care, both funded in part by the Niagara Region through the Niagara Prosperity Initiative. We also administered the United Way Dental Loan program. Our partnership with Streetworks ensure the availability of harm reduction supplies and ensures our staff is trained to inject Naloxone.

# Adapting to meet the needs of our community

This year provided us with the opportunity to look at the work we do in the community and find new ways to ensure our services are available and accessible to those who need them most.

## Grocery giveaways

Thanks to a generous anonymous donor, Project SHARE partnered with the City of Niagara Falls to bring grocery giveaways to locations throughout the city. Five giveaways took place with an estimated distribution of 54,000 pounds of food to 1,100 people.

## Creativity in program delivery

In order to adhere to pandemic safety measures, our building operation experienced significant changes. Usually bursting at the seams with staff, clients, donors and volunteers moving throughout the building, we were forced to look at new ways of doing business. Our seasonal support programs at Christmas and for back to school were redeployed and relocated to operate out of St. Andrew's United Church. We learned that forced change can lead to effective change including better accessibility, more suitable provisions and increased efficiency in processes. A great example of this learning is that 90% of clients liked the online registration process and that 85% preferred gift cards for the holiday meal portion of the gift because not all families choose a traditional turkey dinner for their meal. A gift card allowed them to purchase the foods their family most enjoys.

***We are thankful for our partners throughout the community. The work we do is that much more successful because of our close work with organizations like Food Banks Canada, Feed Ontario, City of Niagara Falls, Niagara Region, Niagara Poverty Reduction Network, Niagara Garden Network and Niagara Food Security Network.***

***“The garden is wonderful. I have no way to grow fresh produce as I live in an apartment and there is no outdoor space. I lost my job of 21 years recently and I'm getting back on my feet with a new career. The ability to grow so many vegetables in the garden has been a great help. I have spoken with other gardeners and learned a lot. Next year, I hope to be even better at gardening and able to donate some of my harvest back to Project SHARE.”***

*Anonymous Client*

# Spreading awareness and gaining support

Food banks are working hard towards a future where no one goes hungry. Food banks, although not a solution, act as a temporary measure, an opportunity to fill the gap to ensure individuals and families remain fed, housed and healthy. The long term solution, however, requires a strong social safety net, quality employment opportunities, and an affordable cost of living to move the needle on poverty

The primary employment sector in Niagara Falls is hospitality. The halt and limitations the COVID-19 pandemic had placed on travel had a detrimental effect on the residents of our community who earn their living in the hospitality industry.

Our community rallied in support, providing funding and opportunities that increased our ability to adapt quickly to changing needs and meet the increased demand that was expected as government supports ended. Feed Ontario and Food Banks Canada were instrumental in delivering additional funding and programs.

A new partnership with Red Cross was formed to help us ensure emergency food deliveries were available to more families which was an identified need following outreach with clients.

The year ended with Project SHARE helping 643 new families who had never accessed our services before.

Project SHARE receives funding from various levels of government, foundation grants, corporate and individual donors. Each year Project SHARE fundraises to ensure the need in our community can be met. In 2021, Five to Thrive was launched as a means to raise awareness of all the support programs available to residents of Niagara Falls who are living below the poverty line. Five to Thrive also helps current and prospective donors understand the needs in our community and how donations are used to ensure all of our neighbours remain healthy, housed and fed.

# #OurCommunityAtWork

## Raising awareness

### THE 12-HOUR CHALLENGE

Matt Cuthbert raised the bar on awareness this year by accepting a challenge from Marty Misener of Open Arms Mission in Welland, to spend 12 hours in the cold, simply experiencing what it might be like to be homeless. Community leaders including Pam Sharp, Executive Director of Project SHARE and Executive Directors from YWCA Niagara and Start Me Up Niagara and local dignitaries, joined Matt at scheduled times throughout the day to sit with him, joining the experience and using the time to discuss the importance of the work being done across our community to support those less fortunate. Matt used his experience to start a conversation about how warming centres can best help those who are homeless in our community. As the Executive Director of the Niagara Furniture Bank and part of the Toolbox Niagara team, Matt sees the effects of homelessness first hand. Matt issued a challenge on his social media. It was a simple challenge - go outside and sit, for 30 minutes, with no phone and nothing to do.



# GOOD NEWS BREAKFAST

**Amount raised:** \$122,929 in food, toys and monetary gifts.

We celebrated and spread the GOOD NEWS at our annual BCM Insurance Good News Breakfast on December 4, 2020. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, over 30 businesses and a dozen schools would participate in our Stuff the Bus challenge and more than 350 community members would attend the breakfast event. To keep our community safe, we made the decision to modify every element of the annual holiday campaign to be completely virtual. Our community stepped up and we were thrilled to have 50% of our businesses and 60% of our schools return for the Stuff the Virtual Bus challenges, despite many employees working from home and schools in modified operations. The giving spirit and collaboration we experienced from our community was so inspiring. The grand total collected through this campaign was valued at \$122,929.



## COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR



**Amount raised:** Over \$55,000.

The Coldest Night of the Year is a family-friendly walk that raises money for charities serving hungry, homeless, and hurting people in our community. This year, due to the pandemic, our Meridian Credit Union Coldest Night of the Year went completely virtual where walkers walked in their own neighbourhoods. With the help of 158 walkers on 31 teams and 800 donors, we smashed previous fundraising records!

# COMMUNITY EVENTS

Third party or community event fundraisers are events or initiatives organized by an individual, company or organization that is not an official Project SHARE event but benefits the work we do, the people we support and the programs we offer. Third party fundraisers are an important resource for connecting to our community, raising funds and increasing the awareness of Project SHARE. It is an opportunity for you to engage your creative resources and encourage your team to think big and have fun!



Acting independently and with Project SHARE's approval and support, third party events help us extend, enhance and sustain our emergency services to empower those living below the poverty line in Niagara Falls. We rely on the financial support of those who believe in our work and recognize the importance of ensuring that emergency food along with 16 other emergency services are available to everyone living on a low income in our community.

A third party event planning guide is available on our website at [www.projectshare.ca/planning-an-event](http://www.projectshare.ca/planning-an-event) that offers lots of ideas and tips for planning an event to benefit Project SHARE.

## Chippawa Volunteer Firefighters Association

**Amount raised:** Over \$17,000 in monetary and food donations with over 10 years of ongoing support.

The Chippawa Volunteer Firefighters Association members have hosted numerous events in support of Project SHARE over the past 10 years. Some of their most successful events have been bottle drives, pub crawls and back-to-school drives.



## Pick a pumpkin

**Amount raised:** Over \$5,000 in monetary and food donations.

Project SHARE is grateful to be a part of the Realty Executives Pick-a-Pumpkin event for the 11th year. Niagara residents come together annually to exchange non-perishable food items and monetary donations for pumpkins in support of Project SHARE programs. Over the past ten years this event has provided Project SHARE with over \$11,000 worth of food and monetary donations.



# #ourcommunityatwork

# STAYING CONNECTED

In order to ensure we are meeting the needs of our community and those who rely on our services, we have implemented client surveys following participation in our seasonal support programs and send a newsletter out to share information and gather feedback on a continual basis. We ensure our community is aware of our services and how we can help by maintaining a website, working with traditional media and promoting our services regularly on social media.

We joined the WillPower Campaign with the Canadian Association of Gift Planners - an effort to encourage more Canadians to give gifts in their will. We hope to encourage more planned gifts by educating donors of the impact just 1% of their estate can have in improving our community.

## IT TAKES VOLUNTEERS AT WORK

Volunteers are the heart of Project SHARE. Their participation has provided almost 13,000 hours of service to our agency this year. In an effort to reduce the spread of infection, the number of people in our building was reduced and only a handful of volunteers were able to continue working at Project SHARE during high transmission time periods. There is no doubt that volunteer service helps us ensure more donated dollars are focused on client support programs as you can see below from the monetary impact their service hours have on our organization.

**6,841**

volunteer hours  
(almost 4 full-time positions)

**\$129,295**

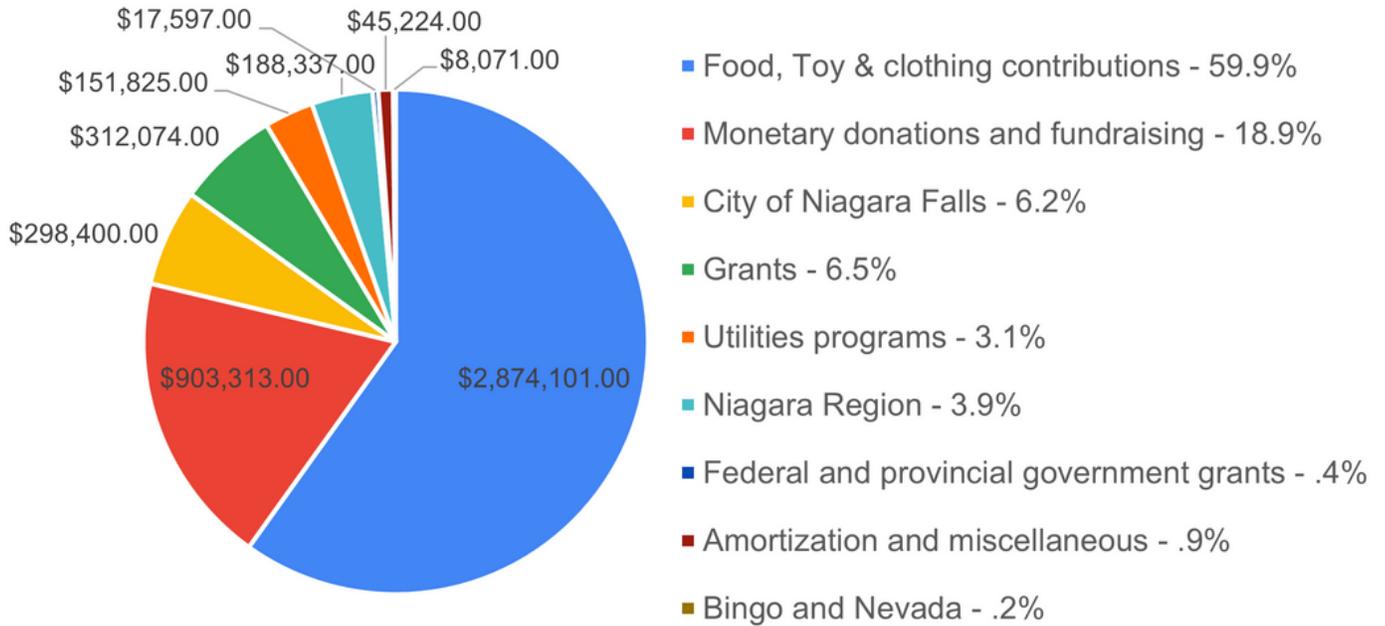
value at Niagara's  
Living Wage of \$18.90.

*We all know that this has been a tough year. Every single individual in our community has had to change, pivot, adapt and reset. With that in mind, our board of directors and management team endeavoured to implement new opportunities to support our team. This year, staff were invited to participate in Psychological First Aid - Caring for Others and Self Care courses that were offered by Food Banks Canada in partnership with The Canadian Red Cross.*

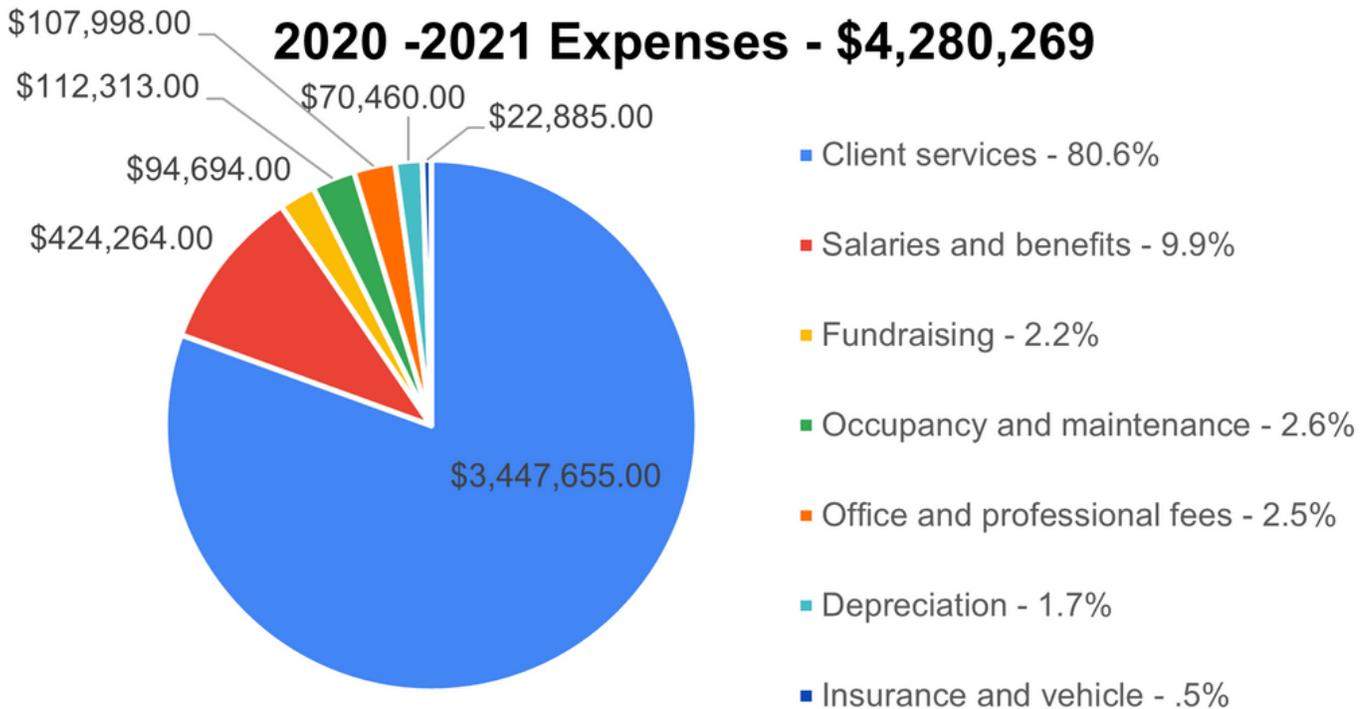


# FINANCIALS

## 2020 - 2021 Revenue - \$4,798,942



## 2020 -2021 Expenses - \$4,280,269



# HOW YOU CAN HELP

## WHAT CAN I DONATE TO YOUR FOOD BANK? WHAT ARE MOST NEEDED ITEMS?

Project SHARE strives to provide healthy and nutritious foods that meet dietary and cultural needs of our community. Foods with high nutritional value are particularly welcomed. These include protein items like peanut butter, beans, canned fish and meat; fruits and vegetables including canned, fresh and frozen; baby formula and food; dairy products and healthy grains.

There is always a need for personal care items including diapers, personal hygiene products including period and incontinence products, shampoo, deodorant, dental products, laundry detergent and pet food.

## HOW ELSE CAN I HELP PROJECT SHARE HELP MY COMMUNITY?

Project SHARE offers programs that will positively impact the health and social wellbeing of our community. Our programs work to provide food security, homelessness prevention, healthy living, training and education and seasonal support at Christmas and back to school.

While some funding is provided by the City of Niagara Falls and Regional Municipality of Niagara, in order to cover all the costs of operating more than 5,000 square feet of warehouse space and the 17 programs our community relies on, we fundraise in our community each year to raise the additional funds required to provide these much needed services.

If you are debating whether it is better to donate money or food to Project SHARE, take a look at the chart below for the benefits of each.

If you choose to provide monetary support, you can visit our website at [www.projectshare.ca/donate](http://www.projectshare.ca/donate) to donate online by credit card or you can mail a cheque or visit us in person at 4129 Stanley Avenue in Niagara Falls. Look for the administration entrance. E-transfers can be arranged by contacting [cathy.r@projectshare.ca](mailto:cathy.r@projectshare.ca).

Consider hosting an event to benefit our food bank, collecting memorial or honorary donations or leaving a gift in your will. For more information, contact our fundraising team at (905) 357-5121, Ext. 248 or send an email to [info@projectshare.ca](mailto:info@projectshare.ca).

## CASH VS CANS

We often get asked which is better, cash or cans? Let us tell you that we love both! Monetary and food donations are equally important to providing essential support services that improve the lives of Niagara Falls individuals and families in need.

### CASH DONATIONS



allow us to purchase foods when donated food supplies run low or demand spikes

let us buy fresh foods and our most needed staples through bulk purchasing at a fraction of the retail cost

cover the additional costs of getting food into the hands of those that need it most (transportation, space, support)

### FOOD DONATIONS



allow us to respond immediately to the needs of our community

collection events help us share important information about hunger in our community and give lots of people a chance to help

rally entire communities together to take action against hunger in an easy to understand way

Project SHARE relies on the support of donors, volunteers, third party event organizers and program funders. Thank you for the community support received throughout the year. This support helps us realize our vision to end the struggle against poverty and empower those in need.

# THANK YOU!



*The Branscombe Family Foundation*



*Project SHARE is the only food bank serving Niagara Falls residents that is a direct member of Feed Ontario and affiliate member of Food Banks Canada.*



As we start our next fiscal year (2021 - 2022), Carrie Zeffiro sets off for her retirement and passes the barrel on to Jo Low who begins her new role as Operations Manager at Project SHARE.

*July 2021*



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 Website: [www.projectshare.ca](http://www.projectshare.ca)

Charitable Registration Number: 107861338 RR0001

Learn more about how you can help ensure none of our neighbours go hungry.

[www.projectshare.ca/donate](http://www.projectshare.ca/donate)



@projectsharenf



@projectSHARE\_NF



projectshare\_nf



Project SHARE  
of Niagara Falls