



Mid-Year Impact

September 2023-
February 2024

Earlscourt Garden

11,520

volunteer hours donated
across The Stop's programs



136kg

of produce grown and shared
with our community

30

sessions run through our
Community Kitchens program

Wychwood Open Door

37,233

nutritious and culturally appropriate
meals shared across our locations



1884 Davenport Rd.

53

new participants in
our Healthy Beginnings
program

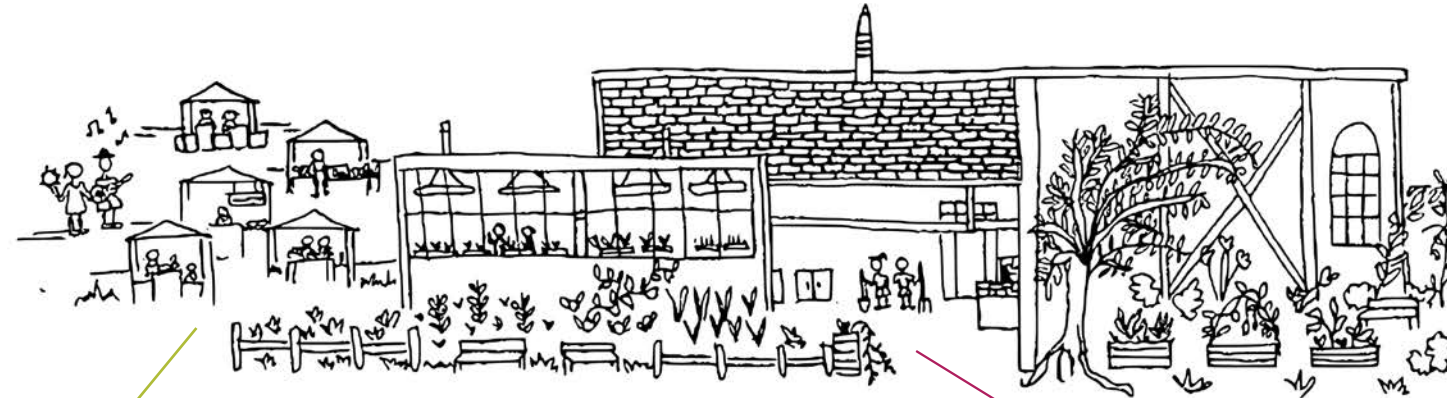


14,031

individuals reached through
our food bank

12

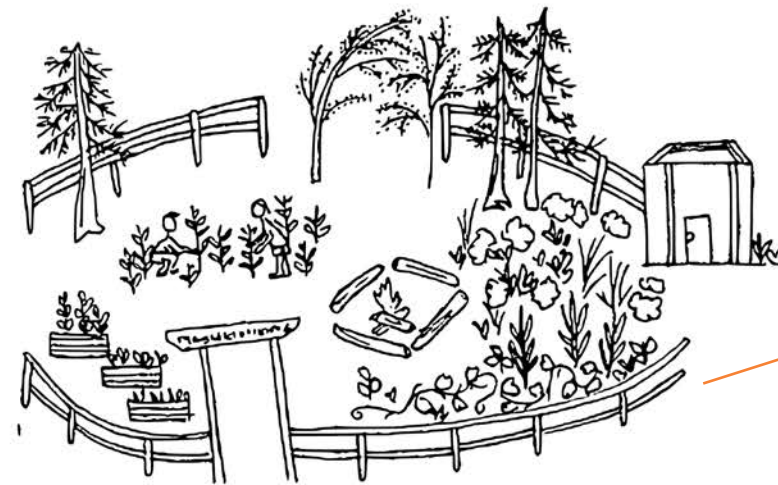
new vendors at our
Farmers' Market



Green Barn

600+

heads of lettuce and greens grown
for our Drop-in program



333

meals shared with
participants of Na-Me-Res'
Sagatay program

Mashkikii;aki'ing Garden

Welcome to The Stop

Illustrations by Hilda Nouri



A Message From Our Executive Director

The winter of 2023 will be one I remember for some time. The mildness, the grey skies, the lack of snow—it all felt unsettling, and not the Toronto weather I grew up with. At The Stop, our drop-in spaces double as warming centres in the winter and cooling centres in the summer for members of our community; but those seasons feel increasingly blurred.

When I look back at the work we've done in the last 6 months, I'm immensely proud of the team's accomplishments, but thinking about the longer-term impacts of climate change, there's cause for concern. Food inflation has forced more people to need us while increasing our costs, and as unseasonable weather wreaks havoc on our environment and ability to grow food, it's easy to see how this might impact access and affordability in the future.

In light of this, the recent work we've been doing to innovate in our Greenhouse grow space excites me. The fact that we're supplementing our food hampers and meals with fresh produce and herbs we've grown ourselves feels like a win for reducing costs. And above this, we're giving our community the tools to develop self-reliance through education, skills training, and the giveaway of seedlings and produce. It's a special ecosystem we've fostered here at The Stop, with everything feeding into each other to build a more resilient community.

When reading this mid-year update, I hope you see the same seeds of hope that I do. Thank you for being on this journey with us.

— *Shae London*



Food Bank

Our food bank continues to offer nutritious and culturally appropriate food through our dignified choice model, where service users can choose from a variety of options that best suit their needs and preferences. However, as of September 2023, the cost of one single hamper has **skyrocketed to \$85**—compared to \$60 in February 2023—with most price increases being seen in fresh produce. This surge in costs makes accessing fruit and vegetables, a staple in a balanced diet, even more unaffordable for our community.

Between Sept 2023 + Feb 2024

- **14,031** individuals reached
- On average, our food bank served **2,330** individuals per month
- January 2024 was our busiest month of the year so far, with **2,256** individuals reached
- **39% increase** in individuals needing support from our food bank for the same period year on year



Drop-in Program

We offer healthy and nourishing meals through our Drop-in program as well as a variety of activities for our community members to take part in. We continue to see firsthand the positive impact of this program: the opportunity to converse over a meal, connect with each other over a game of chess or at an art table, and get support from our knowledgeable staff.

We've been supporting the local food movement too, with all our root vegetables and seasonal produce being sourced locally. Plus, this year marks the return of our yoga sessions, with a 15% increase in participation. Together, we're fostering a healthier, more connected community.

Between Sept 2023 + Feb 2024

- **37,233** nutritious and culturally appropriate meals shared across our locations
- **50% increase** at our 1884 Davenport Rd. location and **30% increase** at our Wychwood Open Door location in participation of program activities (bingo, art, chess, and computer access)
- **10** participants joined our Adult Seniors Digital literacy program

The respectful staff at The Stop serving wholesome food have made a difference in my life.

- Community Member



Good Food Market

Our Good Food Market (GFM) continues to deliver its delightful blend of fresh, local, and delicious produce and prepared food to our community at affordable prices. Since September 2023, we've hosted two pop-up events, including a Black History Month celebration exploring cultural ingredients and recipes (Jamaican stew being a favorite!).

19 market days
1,353 patrons



Taste is very important, and we make food that is delicious, interesting and unfamiliar. [The recipes are] the catalyst for working together with strangers, people of varying backgrounds, cultures, ages, and experiences. The end result is strong community building. This is a way of creating society at its most important level – human to human, neighbour to neighbour, stranger to friend.

- Participant, Community Kitchens



Community Kitchens

Community Kitchens provide access to flavourful and nutritious food for individuals and families who have limited or no access to suitable resources to prepare healthy meals on their own. Three programs, Men's Cooking Group, Sabor Latino and Cozy Kitchen, are run out of our two locations: 1884 Davenport Rd. and Wychwood Open Door. The programs promote the health benefits of eating seasonal food and foster community engagement and cultural exchanges, while also teaching participants new cooking skills.



30 sessions run **507** meals shared **221** unique participants

Emotional Wellness Program

Between Sept 2023 + Feb 2024

- **1,871** personal care items distributed
- **11** support group sessions
- **575** visits to our art tables

Our Emotional Wellness program provides resources and opportunities for people to connect through three different ways: our peer engagement group, art tables, and personal care item distribution. Each program area is guided by feedback from our community members. Throughout the year so far, we've engaged with our community members on a variety of topics, including tips for coping with change, budgeting, and creating personalized wellness toolboxes.

Healthy Beginnings

Healthy Beginnings is our perinatal program for pregnant individuals and their families. The program involves in-person workshops on pregnancy, nutrition, parenting, and wellness. Participants also receive weekly food hampers, food vouchers, and community building activities like sharing a meal together. In December, we hosted a holiday celebration for our participants, which included a food hamper that they could share with their families. We provide live language interpretation in Spanish and Portuguese during our workshops, which is crucial for some participants to benefit from the educational piece, and we aim to add other languages in the future.

Between Sept 2023 + Feb 2024

- **165** recurring participants
- **20** sessions run
- **689** food hampers distributed
- **1,055** meals shared on site
- **53** new participants



Volunteer Program

Volunteers are an essential part of The Stop's community and are involved across many of our programs. These opportunities allow volunteers to give back to their community, learn new skills, and make connections.

In November 2023, six volunteers from The Stop were recognized and honoured at the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards. They have collectively provided 100 years of service and tenure at The Stop.

196
active volunteers

11,520
volunteer hours
donated



≡ Volunteer Spotlight ≡

Maria started volunteering with The Stop in March of 2020—one week before the Covid-19 lockdown. She was beginning her recovery process after treatment for mental health and addiction issues and knew that giving back through volunteering would play a huge role—in fact, she shares, "it has been life changing."

Maria volunteers with The Stop's Drop-in program. On Mondays, you'll find her at 1884 Davenport Rd. helping with the lunch service and bingo, and on Wednesdays, setting up breakfast based on the menu that Chef Bronwyn has prepared at Wychwood Open Door alongside two other amazing volunteers. "Together with passion, fun, and creativity we prepare the menu and then organize what's needed on the plates so we're ready to go by 9am," she adds.

Seeing the possibilities through someone else's experiences, and the power of human connection, is what really stands out for Maria as she reflects on her experience as a volunteer.

"Volunteering has brought out qualities within me that I would have never realized existed. I never imagined the friendships, sense of belonging, support, and self-confidence would lay out the foundation to inspire me to go back to work part-time using exactly the skills I learned. Recovery brought me back to the world, but volunteering showed it to me," shares Maria.

Maria knows the power of community support and the importance of having a place to go where you are safe and cared for, although she also believes that food banks are not a solution to food insecurity and poverty. "The government needs to step up and address the root of food insecurity. Only good policies that ensure access to income and affordability are going to make real changes," she adds.

We're grateful to have Maria's warmth, kindness, and sense of humour in our spaces. Without her, and our hundreds of incredible volunteers, we couldn't do what we do.

“
**My hope is that every
plate shared is a symbol of
hope, nourishing both the
body and soul.**

- Maria, Volunteer

Community Advocacy Program

The Advocacy Office provides peer-to-peer support to our community members in two of our office locations on issues such as housing, employment, immigration, and health. We have seen an increase in the number of complex cases, which require contacting multiple agencies to solve a single issue, in turn putting more pressure on our program advocates. One example of how the Advocacy Office supported a community member during this period was by helping her recover almost all her lost IDs and assisting her contest and win an eviction notice.

Between Sept 2023 + Feb 2024

- 818 referrals and information sessions
- 1,060 visits to the Advocacy Office
- 480 service hours provided by peers and advocates
- 42% of the Advocacy Office's referrals during this period were for housing and income support, issues that are closely interlinked.



Urban Agriculture

Mashkikii;aki'ing Garden

The Mashkikii;aki'ing (Medicine Earth) Garden is a special place set within Hillcrest Gardens. The Stop works in partnership with Native Men's Residence (Na-Me-Res) to create a program infused with garden work, cooking, and cultural traditions and ceremony for Indigenous men in the city.

In October, we hosted an open house, where participants came together to celebrate the successes from the growing season and educate the surrounding community about the healing space that we foster in the garden. Later, in November, we had a closing ceremony to signify the end of the growing season. We held a sacred fire and circle where we gave thanks to the medicines and plants that sustained us through the year and would continue to sustain us in the winter.

Through the winter, participants moved inside to continue learning together, using ingredients grown in the garden as the core of their work. Activities included a shea body butter making workshop using comfrey medicines and herbs grown in our gardens; a holiday baking program; and a natural dye workshop using marigolds.



35
participants

333
meals shared

Global Roots Garden

The Global Roots program, in partnership with CultureLink, seeks to bring together newcomer youth and seniors to share cultural traditions, knowledge exchange, and steward the environment—all with social connectedness at its heart. Between September and October 2023, a range of fresh, organic, and culturally relevant produce was grown and distributed to participating seniors and volunteers.

During this same period, we hosted two participant-led cook & share sessions, highlighting the different cultural and culinary backgrounds of the participants. These monthly sessions created a space for important cross-cultural relations, as individuals from different backgrounds were able to show pride in their lineages while building connections through similar ingredients and flavours. There was genuine excitement from the groups showing off their delicacies, and open appreciation of the meals from the participants eating.

32 senior participants

6 volunteers

6 youth participants



10 Metre Greens

This year, we pivoted the model of our social enterprise, 10 Metre Greens, to a participant-led program, where our volunteers harvested and packaged the microgreens grown in our greenhouse to sell at The Stop's Farmers' Market and Karma Co-op Grocery Store. We prioritized participants with an interest in urban agriculture and provided skills training to support their education in this area.

The last 6 months have also been a time of experimentation and collaboration, including inviting Mashkikii;aki'ing program participants to lead growing production as well as launching new varieties of microgreens: the Spicy Mix, Hearty Mix, Broccoli Singles. This produce was also available at our Good Food Market, enabling our community to purchase good quality, hyper-local greens at a fair price.

This program has given me access to knowledge that I otherwise wouldn't have had. It has been transformative in building my journey toward growing food.

- Program participant

Earlscourt Community Garden

From September to October 2023, our Earlscourt Community Garden wound down its growing for the winter season, but managed to host two workshops, including a compost building activity led by FoodShare and a natural dye workshop led by local community artists. We also shared a harvest breakfast to celebrate the end of the season and facilitate an evaluation and reflection of the program.



16 sessions

53 participants

136kg produce grown

Greenhouse + Dig-in Program

Hosted at our Green Barn at 601 Christie St., we ran weekly Dig-in Program sessions between September and October 2023 for community members who do not have access to growing space. This is a critical way to connect people to nature and food systems in a supportive and inclusive environment.

In the last 6 months, we've focused on improving processes and experimenting in our Green Barn. We've introduced new crops, such as sunflowers, tea herbs, and tropical fruits; increased our lettuce production for our meal programs; and implemented a new drainage system. We're also using beneficial insects for pest control, releasing hundreds of ladybugs a month to eat any aphids in the Greenhouse.

≡ **Between Sept 2023 + Feb 2024** ≡

- **3** workshops held for the public, engaging **60** participants
- **600+** heads of lettuce and greens for the Drop-in program
- **60** volunteers and visitors to our Green Barn to learn more about urban agriculture and our model



Farmers' Market

The Stop's Farmers' Market runs in the same location as our Greenhouse program, Wychwood Barns, and is open every Saturday of the year. The market is a celebration of community, featuring weekly pop-ups of new vendors, a community table for advocacy groups and community members to share their cause, and musical performances from local artists.

The market has continued to be busy during the last 6 months, attracting 2,000 patrons a week as we moved indoors over the winter. To improve the program, we established a Vendor Advisory Committee to help direct market operations.

≡ **Between Sept 2023 + Feb 2024** ≡

- **12** new vendors
- **4** community groups hosted
- **6** pop-up guest vendors through Black History Month



The Stop Community Food Centre

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Toronto, ON, M6H 4E1

Locations:

1884 Davenport Road
601 Christie Street
729 St. Clair West
416-652-7867

Online:

thestop.org | [@thestopcfc](https://twitter.com/thestopcfc) | general@thestop.org

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