

food4kids

WATERLOO REGION



2024

Annual Report

**FOOD4KIDS WATERLOO REGION
ANNUAL REPORT TO OUR COMMUNITY
September 2024**

Update of the Board Chair and Interim Executive Director

Our History

Food4Kids Waterloo Region came from humble beginnings. It was established by our founder, Kelly-Sue Oberle, in 2016 to be a complementary program to Nutrition for Learning. Food4Kids focused its efforts on feeding severely food insecure children during school breaks and weekends, totaling 170 days each year, while Nutrition for Learning focused on providing nutritious food to all students during the school day.

Over the years, Kelly-Sue, and her dedicated group of volunteers (see photo below) developed a program of delivering healthy food packages to children living with chronic hunger. Since 2016, our program has grown to now serving 1,300 children and youth in 100 local elementary schools, representing about 475 family units. We continue to provide healthy food to children during Winter, March, and summer breaks, totaling 170 days of the year, when they cannot access the in-school nutrition programs.

Our Recent Activities

As we know, Food4Kids Waterloo Region does not receive any government funds. We depend entirely on donations and grants to carry out our work. That is why we are so grateful to our faithful donors - companies, service clubs, and individuals - who provide financial support every year to enable our work to be carried out. Without these annual financial donations Food4Kids Waterloo Region would no longer exist.

In addition to donors, we rely on several hundred volunteers who assemble the weekly food packages as well as dozens of volunteer drivers who deliver the food. We are part of the local ecosystem of food security providers, led by the Food Bank, Nutrition for Learning, and dozens of organizations involved in the Waterloo Region food distribution network.

This past year we have been working collaboratively with the Food Bank and Nutrition for learning. In fact, we just completed our first joint project together. Our purpose is to coordinate our efforts and reduce food costs to serve more children. We see chronic student hunger up close and personal. That is why we intend to work even harder to integrate our program into a broader system of food supports and services throughout Waterloo Region. In addition to our local efforts, we have been working with other Food4Kids programs in Hamilton, Oakville, Guelph, Mississauga, Niagara, Muskoka, and Toronto as well as summer programs in Ottawa, Toronto, and Orangeville.



While the past year has been one of change and transition, we have taken advantage of this to make several adjustments and improvements to our organization, as follows:

1. Governance

- We updated and approved our corporate Bylaws in compliance with the new Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act (ONCA)
- We developed and approved a new Governance Manual to provide ongoing, best practices guidance to the work of our Board of Directors
- We updated and simplified our committee structure

2. Leadership

- We instituted a new leadership approach, resulting in the development of a small but mighty staff team
- We introduced a new employee policy manual to comply with the Ontario Employment Standards Act
- We altered our offices to rejuvenate them with paint and provide more space for food and materials to support the children we serve.

3. Volunteers

- We identified a single point of contact for all volunteers and worked to improve our communications with volunteers
- We updated our Volunteer Handbook, which included a new abuse prevention policy along with a training video for volunteers in support of that policy, and
- We adopted a new electronic method of communicating with volunteers.



4. Community and Collaboration

- We worked to re-build relationships with our key partners including the Food Bank of Waterloo Region and Nutrition for Learning Waterloo Region
- We surveyed our partners, volunteers, and school personnel to solicit their views on our performance and our future; we received excellent advice and have already incorporated many of the suggestions given, particularly focused on improving support for our volunteers
- Board members held their first Thank-A-Thon to show appreciation to our donors
- We planned our first joint project with the Food Bank and Nutrition for Learning, called “Food for All Youth Pop-up,” a project that will be available to hand out about 530 kits

What's Next

During the past year of transition, we have spent considerable time reflecting on our organizational environment. The surveys we conducted this Spring gave us excellent feedback. People were highly supportive of our food program, our delivery system, and our staff and volunteer teams. We were also advised to consider greater collaboration with our partners, advice we intend to take. Our assessment of the external factors that influence our work is deeply concerning. Within Waterloo Region (and across the country), charitable donations are decreasing, and volunteers are less engaged with charitable organizations. Sadly, food insecurity continues to grow driven by inflation, immigration, homelessness, and similar factors. All these factors contribute to a high degree of risk and uncertainty for Food4Kids Waterloo Region.

Our challenge in the coming months will be to navigate the risks and uncertainty facing us and to course-correct towards a more positive, sustainable future for Food4Kids. To that end, we pledge our best efforts to sustain and enhance this wonderful organization.



Cameron Redmond
Board Chair



Stephen Swatridge
Interim Executive
Director

Program Report

Volunteers are truly the backbone of Food4Kids Waterloo Region, and we are lucky they chose our organization to continue their volunteer efforts each week. None of what we have accomplished during the past year could have been done without the dedication of our volunteers. To that end, here are the highlights of our service to the children of our communities:

- Food4Kids Waterloo Region started the school year in September 2023 by serving nutritious weekend food packages to 888 children in 81 schools across the Region.
- In December 2023 we had increased such that we were serving 1,066 children in 95 schools.
- We ended the school year in June 2024 by serving 1,300 children in 102 schools.

- From September 2023 through June 2024, Food4Kids Waterloo Region had delivered a total of 42,926 weekend bags of food to children in need of food support.
- During the school break programs (Summer, Winter and March Break), we provided over 4,000 food hampers to families.

The educators in the schools that we serve volunteer their time and their expertise. They assess children in need, speaking with families about the delicate subject of food support, fill out forms, and keep us updated with the ongoing changes of need for our support in their schools. Educators see the difference Food4Kids Waterloo Region makes in their students' lives and this keeps them giving their time and energy to the program.

Food4Kids Waterloo Region relies on the time and energy of volunteers in just about every aspect of what we do each week – from printing labels, organizing the food room, portioning and bagging food, setting up the food line, packing food and delivering the food packages to children's schools each week during the school year and to families' homes during the school breaks.

As noted above, volunteers are truly the backbone of Food4Kids Waterloo Region, and we are lucky they choose our organization to continue their volunteer efforts each week.

With thanks and appreciation,



Cali Dubois
Program Coordinator



42,926

Nutritious food packages delivered to children and youth



1,300

Children and youth benefited from our program



4,000+

Food hampers were delivered to the doorsteps of children during our school break program (Summer, Winter, March Break)

Volunteer Report

Volunteers are essential to our program delivery. Dedicated volunteers give their time and energy to ensure that school children living with chronic food insecurity receive food packages over weekends and school breaks. Food4Kids Waterloo Region relies on our large community of volunteers to keep our programs running. Our volunteer community consists of parents, grandparents, teachers, service club members, corporate volunteers, and youth.

All of our volunteers' contributions are deeply valued. We are so fortunate to have individuals like you who embody the essence of compassion for children and service to our community of Waterloo Region. Thank you for everything you do for us here at Food4Kids Waterloo Region and helping us fight childhood hunger for a better future for the vulnerable children in our community.



During the 2023/2024 fiscal year, changes were implemented to improve the overall experience for volunteers including the volunteer application, scheduling and service process. The specific steps taken to improve our volunteer experience included:

- In April 2024, a volunteer survey form was distributed, allowing all volunteers to provide feedback and allow Food4Kids to introduce several improvements. We intend to make this an annual survey to ensure continuous quality improvement measures
- In May 2024, a new volunteer management system was introduced, improving scheduling, communication and tracking of all volunteer activities. This change was well received by our team of volunteers
- In July 2024, an updated Volunteer Handbook was created to better outline volunteer responsibilities, expectations and an understanding of duties. Again, we intend to formally review this Handbook annually to ensure we are maintaining progress as volunteers' needs change.

As we looked back on our success of the past year, we noted several interesting statistics, as follows:

1. Volunteer drivers drove 34,341 kilometres while delivering food packages to schools during the school year and to family homes during the Summer, Winter, and March breaks. This is the equivalent of driving from Food4Kids to Vancouver, British Columbia and return...4 times!
2. A total of 831 volunteers entered our modest warehouse and participated in food portioning, packing, setup, and driving. All of these activities occurred on a weekly basis throughout the year.
3. In total, our team of volunteers logged 8,606 volunteer hours. This is equivalent to providing the services of 4 ½ full-time staff for a year! As noted earlier in our report, volunteers are truly the backbone of Food4Kids Waterloo Region, and we are lucky they choose our organization to continue their volunteer efforts each week.

With thanks and appreciation,



Emily Loro
Volunteer Coordinator

I am pleased to report that fiscal 2024 was another successful year for Food4Kids Waterloo Region, with a total of \$1.6 million raised – a 16% increase over the previous year. This impressive growth is a testament to the generosity of our community and the ongoing commitment to supporting children in need. Thanks to these funds, the average number of children served by our programs increased from 1100 to 1300, ensuring that more kids have access to healthy meals and snacks when school is out.

We remain dedicated to operating efficiently and responsibly, with over 85% of all funds going directly to program costs. This allows us to maximize the impact of every donation, ensuring that we can provide vital nutrition to the children who need it most. As we continue to grow, we are committed to maintaining this level of financial stewardship, helping more children thrive each year.

Thank you to everyone who has supported us this year as a donor, volunteer, employee, or in any other way. Your support makes a world of difference to these children.

Colin Woodworth, Treasurer



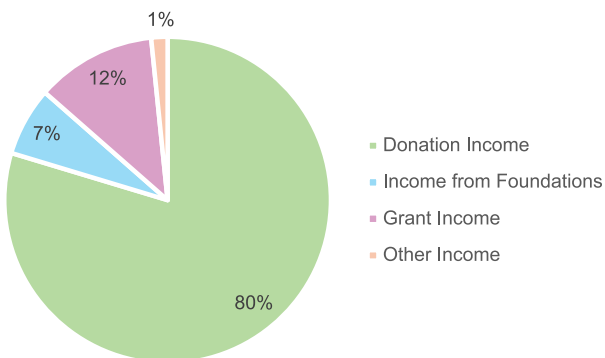
Colin Woodworth
Treasurer



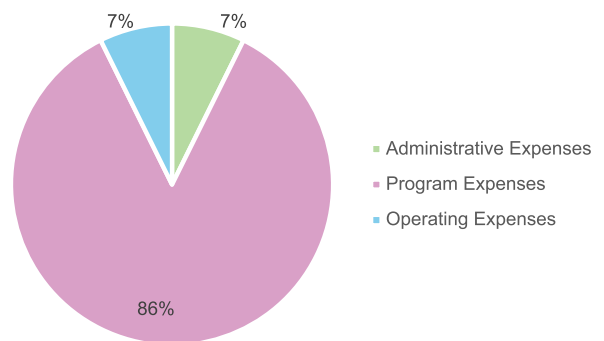
Jess Brunski
Bookkeeper

Income Source	Total
Donation Income	\$ 1,323,495
Income from Foundations	\$ 113,006
Grant Income	\$ 198,100
Other Income	\$ 26,782
Total Income	\$ 1,661,382
Expense Type	Total
Administrative Expenses	\$ 115,850
Program Expenses	\$ 1,349,934
Operating Expenses	\$ 115,654
Total	\$ 1,581,437
Surplus	\$ 79,945

Total Income



Total Expenses



Board Members



Jessica Nurse
Vice Chair



Cameron Redmond
Board Chair



Colin Woodworth
Treasurer



Corina Chang
Secretary



Martin Mahlstedt



Rebecca George



Michelle Newlands



Faaez Al-hendi



Josh Bruce



Arden White



Anthony Oladele

How your donations impact children

Your impact is direct and life changing. You are a part of the solution in delivering more than just food. Without Food4Kids Waterloo Region, 1,300 children and youth would not have support in place to sustain them for the 170 days a year when they cannot access the in-school nutrition programs.

We know that 24% of people in Ontario experience food insecurity, and 25% of those are children and youth. That is why we are currently providing nutritious food packages weekly to 1,300 children and youth from severely food-insecure homes in the Waterloo Region. The average food cost to support one child in our program is \$1,200 per year, which includes dairy, proteins, grains, vegetables, and fruits. Funds raised through our generous community will help us support our current needs and add more children to our program.

Since we do not receive any government funding, we rely solely on generous donors like yourselves. This includes corporations, individuals, grants, foundations, fundraising, and volunteers in our essential service delivery. We are a small but mighty team of 4 and you can be assured your donation is used intentionally. We pride ourselves on filling the hunger gap for the most vulnerable.

Food insecurity in our backyard

The unfortunate reality is that 1 in 5 children in Ontario are living in food-insecure homes. To that end, we are committed to showing up for children and youth while also educating staff, volunteers, and community partners about our program. Since most families living with food insecurity have a limited income, this places a heavier strain on our community support system, causes depression and anxiety, precarious housing, and similar related problems.

The hard facts have been presented in the Canada Helps 2024 Giving Report. For the eleventh consecutive year, charitable giving has declined. 2024 has been a particularly challenging year, representing the highest annual decline in Canadian charitable giving donations to date. This is at a time when poverty levels have hit an all-time high.

Food insecurity is prevalent throughout Waterloo Region. Since we deliver weekly food packages to 1,300 children at 100 elementary schools in our region, we see this need for food up close and personal. Here is a snapshot of what is happening across the region and how we supporting schools with the greatest need for assistance:

- We deliver food to 8 Kitchener schools with an average of 36 students in each school
- We deliver food to 4 Waterloo schools with an average of 33 students in each school
- We deliver food to 3 Cambridge schools with an average of 23 students in each school

What is next?

As a community, we need to come together to solve the food insecurity crisis in our region. We know that to sustain recurring donations to support the most vulnerable in the Waterloo Region, we need to change our mindset and how we give. Getting into healthy habits of exercising our philanthropy through volunteering, food donations, and monetary donations all year long creates a stable environment that these children need and deserve.

Our economic situation has not made it easy for donors to continue giving in the way they historically have. By making changes such as electing to make monthly donations, you can feel good about providing recurring stability and staying budget conscious. Hosting third-party events and fundraisers is also a terrific way to contribute to a worthwhile cause while giving of your time, and in turn, will raise much-needed funds for hungry children. Tapping into your company's charitable giving in the form of grants is also a wonderful way to make a significant impact as a team. I encourage each of you to give in a capacity that is right for you and/or your organization. Together we are strong, and our future depends on it.



Faune Lang
Director of Philanthropy

Thank you to our July 2023 – June 2024 Cornerstone, Champions of Hope & Future Builder Sponsors

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