



turning points

IMPACT
REPORT

TACKLING FOOD INSECURITY IN OUR CITY



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OCTOBER 2024

PHOTO: kuarmungadd on Adobe Stock Images.



A NOTE FROM OUR CEO

Lately, the cost of food has been weighing heavily on my mind. We have seen grocery prices rise at a frightening rate, and news stories about greater demand on food bank services are becoming more frequent. For those who were already struggling to put food on the table, the increased cost of groceries has been devastating. Did you know that 23% of Canadians, 8.7 million people, were food insecure last year?

In Toronto, this crisis has come to a head. Food bank usage has grown enormously with 3 million recorded visits in 2023 alone—a 200% increase since 2020. This statistic is even more shocking when you consider that prior to this spike, it took 38 years for food banks in the city to reach 1 million visits per year.

I find these numbers deeply unsettling. Food security is foundational. Without it, underserved individuals, like the

women, girls and gender diverse people who seek support at YWCA Toronto, not only feel the immediate pain of hunger, but they also lack the nourishment and sense of stability needed to heal from trauma and rebuild their lives. It is so much harder to succeed in life when you are forced to go without one of the most basic needs—food.

This is why in this issue of *Turning Points*, I am proud to share with you our substantial food programming that improves the food security of thousands of YWCA Toronto's participants. From meals to educational community kitchens to food banks, we strive to ensure every program participant has access to the filling, nutritious food they need to thrive.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light green rectangular background. The signature reads "Heather M. McGregor".

Heather M. McGregor

TURNING POINTS NEWSLETTER

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PHOTOS: By Davenport Frontline Team. Current Page Bannock Baloney Heartberries; Opposite Page Pride Pizzas (right) and Ugali and Greens (left) .

TACKLING FOOD INSECURITY IN OUR CITY

While food programming might not be the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about YWCA Toronto, we provide between 260,000 and 350,000 meals and other individual food supports to women, girls and gender diverse people each year. Approximately 300,000 Torontonians accessed food banks in 2023 and this rising food insecurity across our city has meant that these food supports, while always fundamental, have reached a new level of importance in the work we do.

Whether its ensuring participants fleeing violence and homelessness have the nutrition they need to recover or fueling children for a day of learning and play at our Bergamot Early Learning Centre, meals represent the most robust component of our food programming. Last year alone, our shelters served over 250,000

healthy, filling meals to participants in need, and our Girl's Centre supported the food security of participants living in Scarborough's designated Neighbourhood Improvement Areas by making incredible dishes with only a cooktop and some small appliances. Notably, YWCA Toronto's food programming goes well beyond providing healthy meals. At both our 1st Stop Woodlawn emergency shelter and Pape Apartments, a permanent housing site, regular food banks supplement participants' groceries with cupboard staples and fresh produce, and many of our other sites house community pantries stocked with non-perishables for when participants need a little extra support. During the summer and fall, some of our shelter and permanent housing locations even offer fresh produce and herbs grown in their very own community gardens.

Furthermore, community kitchen cooking classes at 1st Stop Woodlawn permanent housing and our Davenport Shelter create space for participants to learn to cook healthy, low-cost, culturally diverse meals together, which they then share as a group. Community kitchen tutorials are often resident-led, allowing participants to build their leadership skills and share meaningful dishes with their peers.

As we move forward, YWCA Toronto looks to explore further ways to ensure food security for women, girls and gender diverse individuals in need. We see inspiring work in areas such as food rescue and advocacy being done across the sector and hope

to bring our own innovation to this pressing crisis. Everyone deserves to be able to put food on the table.



WHO INSPIRES YOU?

WE WANT TO CELEBRATE THEM

Every year, YWCA Toronto honours remarkable changemakers who are creating a difference in the lives of women, girls and gender diverse people across a range of areas such as business, education, social justice, advocacy, arts, health, philanthropy and more.

NOMINATE the next
YWCA Toronto Women of Distinction today!

Nomination deadline
Friday, November 1, 2024

For more information contact
Anna Borges, Manager of Events & Volunteers
aborges@ywcatoronto.org
416.961.8101 x365



JOIN THE MOVEMENT

Become a member of YWCA Toronto in 2024.

Membership is so much more than the \$20 membership fee – it is about being part of a worldwide feminist movement, sharing your voice, and supporting women, girls and gender diverse people.

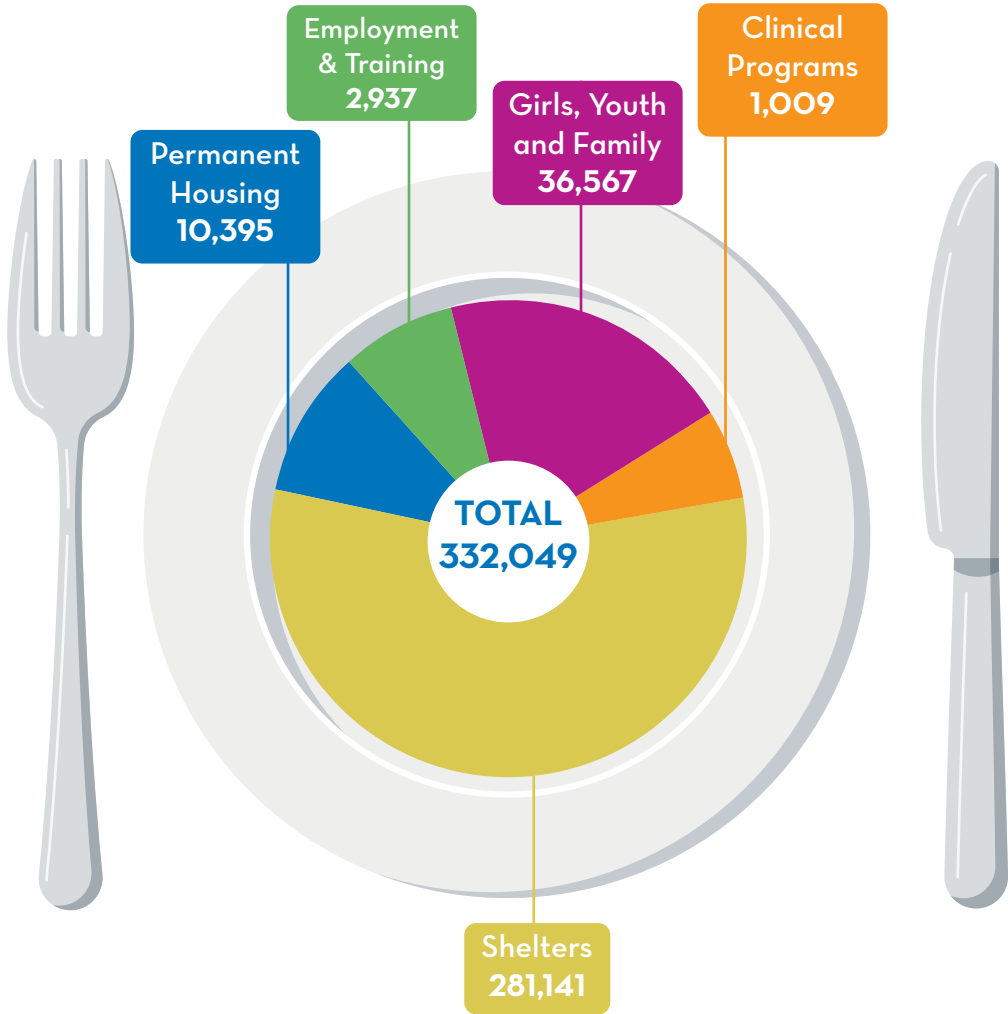
**Together, we can create
lasting change in our community.**

Contact Nalini Singh at
NSingh@ywcatoronto.org
or 416.961.8101 x360.

HOW MUCH FOOD DOES YWCA TORONTO PROVIDE?

Food supports are a fundamental part of YWCA Toronto's programs and services, mitigating the effects of food insecurity for thousands of women, girls and gender diverse people each year in our city. Everyday across our programs, we provide participants with meals, food bank items and fresh produce from onsite community gardens.

NUMBER OF MEALS AND OTHER FOOD SUPPORTS IN 2023



DONOR LOVE



“My mom raised me with the idea that if you can [give], you should,” says Spencer Newlands, Executive Director of The Four Oaks Foundation. Through his family foundation, Spencer has been an incredible supporter of YWCA Toronto’s programming, giving generously to our Teen Mother’s program, Bergamot Apartments and most recently, our broad continuum of programs that support the holistic health and wellbeing of participants.

In discussing the food security theme of this issue of *Turning Points*, Spencer, a professional chef, clearly has a deep understanding of the importance of food. He spoke with passion on the topic, often referencing his professional, philanthropic and volunteer experiences to emphasize how important food is as a foundation for community.

“It is very easy to connect with someone over food,” he shares, “and it doesn’t matter if the person is five or ninety.”

While Spencer is enthusiastic to speak about his philanthropic and volunteer work, he is also immensely humble. He avoids talk of awards and other accolades, preferring to return the praise to community organizations themselves, offering, “I am proud to help out how I can, but the success is 100% yours.”

We are incredibly grateful for Spencer, his family and The Four Oaks Foundation’s dedication to YWCA Toronto’s programs and services. Their generosity has meant that women, children and gender diverse people in need are able to escape violence, find stability, secure housing and build community.



PHOTO: Our 2024 YWCA Toronto Women of Distinction Award Recipients. From left to right: Natasha Ferguson, Gillian Riley, Jaspreet Gill and Nadia Ladak. Photographed by Michael Tenaglia, Michael T Photography

AN EVENING OF CELEBRATION, INSPIRATION AND HOPE

On May 23, over 600 members of YWCA Toronto's community joined us at the Liberty Grand to honour four incredible feminist leaders and their contributions to skilled trades, business, social justice and corporate leadership. It was a fantastic evening full of inspiration and hope.

The wonderful Marcia Young, host of CBC Radio's World Report, emceed the night and auctioneer Frances Fripp revved up the crowd for the Create Change Challenge, the fundraising segment of the evening. Live band Joy 4 Soul closed out the night playing energetic covers of classic R&B, soul and reggae hits as guests enjoyed desserts at the after-party.

Our deepest appreciation goes out to our sponsors, table and ticket purchasers, silent auction and raffle donors and volunteers. Every year, they demonstrate incredible commitment to improving the lives of YWCA Toronto participants. This year was no exception, and we are excited to announce that together we raised more than \$500,000 to help women, girls and gender diverse people find safety, secure housing, enhance skills and grow their confidence.

We hope you will join us for another uplifting evening at the 44th YWCA Toronto Women of Distinction Award Gala on Tuesday, May 27, 2025.

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