



Mission: POSSIBLE

Meeting the growing need with hope and services – thanks to you!

For over two years, we faced restrictions, safety protocols, and fear as the COVID-19 pandemic raged on. Now we face a new crisis: high inflation and sky-rocketing prices are bringing more people to the Mission, many for the first time. Thanks to our supporters, we're not facing this crisis alone.

Everywhere Brittany Lavin, Programs and Services Manager at the Downtown Mission, looks the number of people struggling in Windsor-Essex is increasing.

"It's tough," Brittany admits. "There's an increase in the drug culture. More people are dealing with mental health issues and homelessness. The cost of living has gone up, but not income levels. We're seeing more people – including families and newcomers – in need of our services."



The statistics confirm what Brittany is seeing on the frontlines. From **January 1 to June 30, 2022, the number of households using our Food Bank each month has increased by over 55% compared to the same period in 2021.**

It's a challenging time to be sure. But the Downtown Mission has faced challenging times before – most recently during the COVID-19 pandemic. As inflation continues to take a toll, we're working together with our partner agencies to meet the growing need for food, shelter, and hope in our community.

"We're referring some clients to mental health programs. For many others, we're focused on finding them affordable housing. Making sure homeless individuals have a warm and safe place to live is our biggest goal before the winter," says Brittany.

Thankfully, the hard work and dedication of our staff is paying off and there continues to be inspiring success stories at the Mission. Recently a young woman, who



Brittany Lavin, Programs and Services Manager

spent years relying on the Mission for food and shelter, has found a home to call her own.

"She started coming to us when she was in her early 20s. Addiction and trauma was all she knew," Brittany explains. "For a long time, she was okay with the way things were – lacking the self-esteem to improve her life."

And yet, our staff never gave up. They worked closely with the woman, gradually convincing her she deserves better. Ultimately, they found housing for her – an





As many of us prepare to celebrate this time of Thanksgiving with family and friends, I want to thank you for “doing good.” Your support has been a blessing, especially now, as more people are experiencing homelessness and poverty.

As I write this message of gratitude, there’s a line-up of people waiting to access our Food Bank. Many are first-time users. Others are new to our country.

Meanwhile, with kids back in the classroom, we’re seeing an increase of schools turning to our FRESH Program. Sadly, poverty doesn’t

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

— Galatians 6:9

just impact adults. Entire families are struggling with soaring prices, forced to choose between rent and food.

And yet, our neighbours in need are not alone. Your support lets them know how much you care. It gives them hope for tomorrow, in spite of what’s happening today. Together with you, we’re helping people move forward with their lives.

At the Mission, we’re working hard to meet the urgent need in our community. We’re appealing for grants from all levels of government. We’re talking to the city about opening a warming centre again this winter. And we’re looking at streamlining our services to improve efficiency. We’re doing everything in our power to be there for the men, women, youth, and children who

need our help this Fall.

It means a lot to know you stand with us at this challenging time. Your continued generosity lets us know you’re not becoming weary of doing good. You’re not giving up, choosing instead to support our important work, so our neighbours can ultimately reap a harvest.

Thank you for trusting us to take care of the most vulnerable in our community and for helping us provide food, shelter, and hope.

With my heartfelt thanks,

Rukshini Ponniah-Goulin
Executive Director

continue from page 1

apartment far away from the drug culture. “Something clicked and she realized there is a different life for herself,” Brittany says. “She’s adapted so well to her new lifestyle.”

The young woman recently visited the Mission to show her appreciation, telling the staff they were her family. “She looked healthy and happy,” says Brittany. “It brought us to tears. **Moments like**

these are why we come to work every day.”

Your support helps make these stories possible and we are so very grateful. Your generosity means we can continue to provide 300 meals a day to hungry neighbours. It means we can keep our doors open to people struggling with poverty, addiction, mental health issues, and homelessness. Most

of all, your support means we can continue to be a beacon of hope even in the toughest of times.

“Everyone needs a safe place to go,” says Brittany. “There are people who couldn’t survive without the Mission. With your support, you’re making a difference – directly helping someone have a better quality of life.” ■

It's back to work for Sue and she couldn't be happier

The Downtown Mission's Enterprise Program does more than offer vocational support to employment-challenged individuals, it helps neighbours like Sue build back their confidence.

It was a memorable day for 58-year-old Sue. After six weeks of skills training and learning new job search strategies, she graduated from the Downtown Mission's Enterprise Program. On that day, to Sue's own surprise, she stood up and gave a speech.

"I'm not one for public speaking, but my heart was bursting with gratitude," says Sue. "I just had to say something."

Sue turned to our Enterprise Program after a long struggle with unemployment. "I moved to Windsor four years ago with the

promise of full-time work. That never happened," Sue explains. "I worked a temporary job for a while but it didn't last. Then the pandemic hit."

By the time Sue started the Enterprise Program she was depressed and her self-confidence was suffering. She needed help to turn her life around. "I wanted to get out among people, network, and learn some new skills," Sue explains. "Enterprise gave me the opportunity. **It helped me get my life back.**"

Sue spent mornings in class,



Sue, Enterprise Program Graduate

benefitting from valuable employment skills training. In the afternoons, she volunteered with our Chari-Tees social enterprise program – imprinting decals on t-shirts. "The opportunity helped me get job-ready while I explored my creative side," says Sue.

After graduation, Sue continued to volunteer with Chari-Tees and was ultimately offered a part-time job. A short time later, armed with new skills and renewed confidence, Sue found a second part-time job with Windsor Career College in office administration.

"I've never felt so comfortable in an interview," Sue recalls. "Enterprise gave me my confidence back. It got me out of my depression and into a routine. I'm so thankful they were there for me." ■



Sue completed the training to become job-ready and received a certificate of completion for the Mission's Enterprise Program

Michele McGregor: Decades of Service to the Community



Michele McGregor, longtime Mission Volunteer

Michele McGregor began volunteering at the Mission 15 years ago through her church. Once a month, she helped prepare and serve meals to our hungry and hurting neighbours.

"I really enjoyed working with the

Mission staff and other volunteers. "When you like the people, it's easy," Michele says. "Most of all, I could see how we were helping the guests. They were so thankful."

Six years later, Michele took her commitment to the Mission's important work to the next level. She began volunteering on our Board and continues to be an active member. And, as if that isn't enough, Michele still serves dinner once a week and sorts food donations in our warehouse with her husband, Bill, three times a week.

"It keeps me active," Michele explains. "It's rewarding to know my volunteer work makes a difference in someone's life."

As a board member and a volunteer on the frontlines, Michele is deeply grateful for the support of our donors. **"Thanks to your**

generosity, we can give people nourishing food, a warm bed, and the skills they need to improve their lives."

We're grateful too — to Michele and all of our wonderful volunteers who work so hard and care so deeply for the hungry, homeless, and hurting in our community. Thank you for your gift of time and your commitment to making a difference. ■

"Being on the frontlines, I see how your donations are being spent — I see the very real difference it's making in the lives of people."
– Michele McGregor



Photo credits: Alexandra Dietrich