Lionhearts INC.

# 2024 Impact Report

LIONHEARTS.CA

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# ABOUT LIONHEARTS

## OUR IDENTITY

With the unstoppable force of lionhearted partners and volunteers, we eradicate hunger and homelessness, restoring dignity and hope in the communities we serve.

Since our founding in 2014, we have committed to serving our communities through acts of practical love that restore human dignity – from rescuing food and household goods, to operating warming shelters and transitional housing, retraining people to help rebuild their lives, and much more.

## OUR VALUES

- Love
- Courage
- Empowerment
- Innovation
- Accountability
- Humility

# FOUNDER AND CEO'S MESSAGE

2024 was a year of growth for Lionhearts, which is a good and a challenging thing.
It's a good thing because it means we were able to redistribute more, shelter more, help more, and serve more.

And it's a challenging thing because it means more people needed our help.
As you'll see in this year's report, in 2024 we expanded to a brand new city – London, Ontario – where our team and local partners already recovered a quarter of a million in food and household goods, redistributing them to frontline agencies in the area.

We also saw new records for food and household goods recovery, expanded our transitional housing program, and formed exciting new partnerships.

These developments were necessary, as we worked to respond to growing food insecurity, housing challenges, and a growing list of partners seeking help.

To our long-time volunteers, donors, and partners: thank you for your continued support in 2024 as we celebrated 10 years since our founding. This report is a lasting tribute to your dedication and your contributions.

It has been said that volunteering is an act of heroism on a grand scale. It does more than help people beat the odds; it changes the odds.

At a time when as many as one in three families say they are experiencing food insecurity, thank you for helping to change the odds for our vulnerable neighbours in 2024.

**TRAVIS BLACKMORE**
**FOUNDER AND CEO**

# CHAIR'S LETTER

While we often take it for granted that food banks are fixtures in our communities, did you know the first Canadian food bank opened in 1980? That food bank, located in Edmonton, was originally intended as a temporary measure. Forty-five years later, there are now over 5,000 food banks nationwide, including the one in Edmonton.

The work of these organizations is especially important during these challenging times. While Lionhearts is not a food bank, we work with numerous community food cupboards, meal programs, shelters (including our own), and many other frontline organizations. We come alongside them and help these organizations access large quantities of still-useable food and household goods, supply low-cost meals from our professional kitchen team, and assist each of these valued agencies in stretching their dollar even further.

But it's not just other charities we support. This year, we're proud to highlight how much waste we've diverted from landfills, helping to save local businesses money and reducing our environmental impact.

Every charity aspires to put itself out of business – by solving the very problem it was created to address. We're proud of what we've accomplished in 2024, yet we know there is still much more to do: more food to rescue, more waste to divert, and more people in need of compassion and care.

As we look ahead to 2025, we invite you to continue this journey with us. Help us help even more people and agencies in the year to come.

Thank you for standing with us.

**CORRIE ABRAMS**
BOARD CHAIR

# Our Programs

- Food and Household Goods Rescue
- Fresh Food Market Pop-Ups
- The Embassy Live Music Café
- Student Food Box
- FAST 101
- Supportive Housing and Shelters
- Kingston Street Mission
- Community Nutrition and Catering
- Vocational Training

# $10.3M

Approximate dollar value of food and goods recovered in 2024.

# 925 METRIC TONS

Estimated amount of carbon dioxide avoided, equivalent to 3,781,958 kilometres driven by an average vehicle

# 340,934

Approximate pounds of bread recovered in Kingston and Ottawa

# 22

First response bags passed to Victim Services Kingston, OPP, and Kingston Police

# 147,000 MEALS

Created and served in Ottawa and Kingston.

# 659,017

Pounds of waste diverted from Kingston landfill.

# 213,251

Kilometres driven by our fleet

# 22,131

People served by our Kingston shelter

# 1,630

Embassy guests across 41 shows, with 22 unique artists

# BY THE NUMBERS

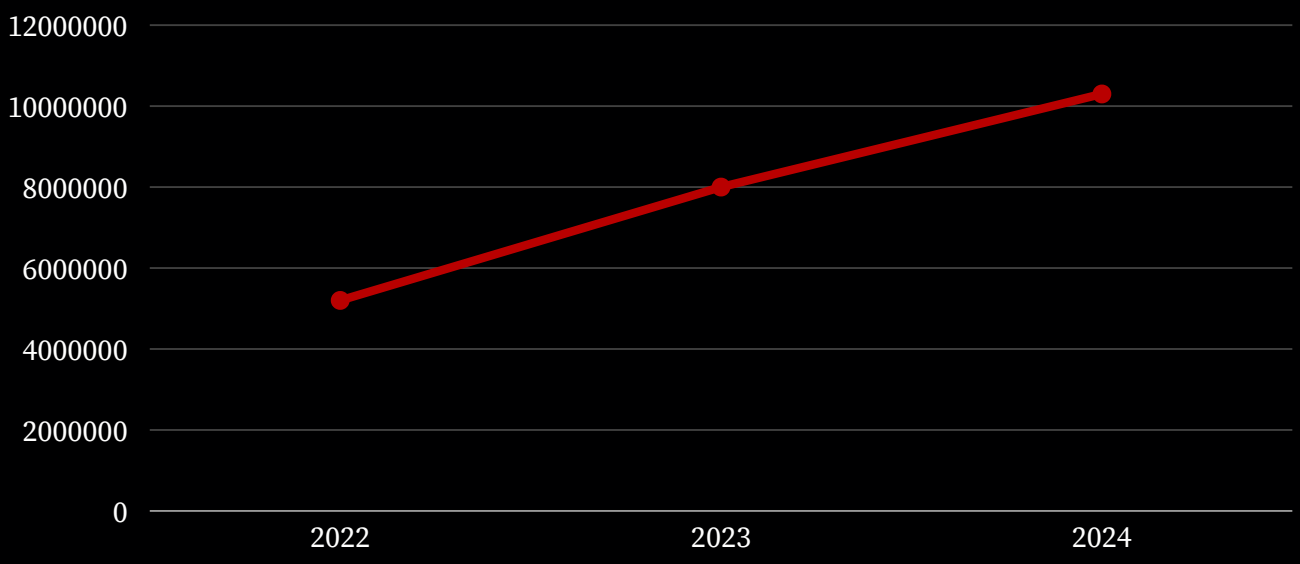
*Food and Household Goods Recovery*

# BY THE NUMBERS

**130**

*agency partners*

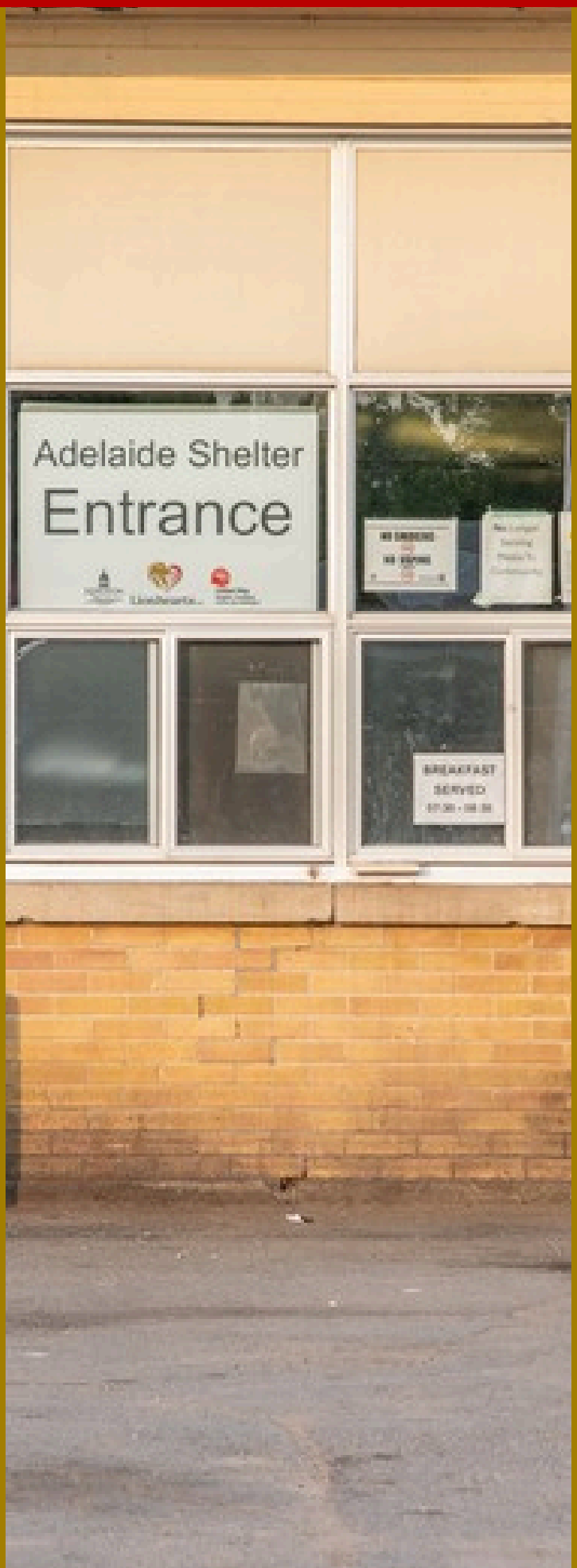
*Dollar Value of Goods and Services Recovered*




Our food and household goods recovery activities continued to grow in 2024 with recovery starting in London and new supplier partners coming onboard.

We're grateful to long-time supporters and new partners who work with us to supply prepared goods, raw ingredients, cleaning supplies, and a variety of other household items which are redistributed at no cost to local non-profits and frontline agencies. Some items are also redistributed via our Kingston Student Food Box, and some food items are used in our commercial kitchen as part of our Community Nutrition program.

Organizations receiving goods from us either pass what they receive to their clients or use it to defray costs in their own operations.




# TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

In 2024, our Transitional Housing and Wellness program added three new properties in the Kingston area. As a result, these properties provide housing opportunities for up to 20 participants as of December 31, 2024.

This program provides much more than housing; it is designed as a tool to give participants the resources and support needed to help them overcome personal challenges, with the goal of a return to independent living.

As this program continues to expand, we will add additional case management supports, thanks in part to generous donations from the Hockey Helps the Homeless fundraiser that took place in November 2024.

# SHELTER

In 2024, there was a significant increase in homeless individuals in the Kingston region.

Lionhearts operated (in partnership with the City of Kingston) the largest shelter in the Kingston region, providing beds for as many as 63 individuals overnight on an emergency basis.

This shelter provides safe accommodations, secure storage for guest belongings, and quality meals and snacks.

Additionally, a weekend daytime program operated on Saturdays, Sundays and statutory holidays such as Christmas, with additional activities and services targeted at providing dignity and caring support for guests.

# FRESH FOOD MARKET POP-UPS

Thanks to funding from Ontario Trillium Foundation, Loyalist Township, and the Community Foundation of Kingston & Area, we expanded our markets from five to eight locations. Our wonderful host site partners and invaluable volunteers make this happen.

We have also expanded our options of chef-created soups, preserves and sauces. The soups are very popular!

We want to thank Tony Deodato and Sons for supporting this program by providing high-quality produce. A customer response confirmed our shoppers, the majority of whom visit a few times a month, feel the quality of the produce is good or very good, and usually say it is otherwise currently difficult for them to find affordable fruit and vegetables in their area.

# EMBASSY LIVE MUSIC CAFE

The Embassy marked its first full year of operation since its pause during the COVID pandemic. We hosted 41 shows and welcomed 1,630 guests.

We continue to benefit from a great relationship with our partner, The Spire, and the support of a dedicated group of volunteers.

# COMMUNITY NUTRITION

This year, the Community Nutrition Program has continued to make a significant impact in addressing food insecurity while prioritizing sustainability.

Through our kitchen, we produced over 75,000 nutritious meals, utilizing donated goods and food sourced from our Reimagine Food Program–an initiative dedicated to reducing food waste and maximizing the use of surplus food.

Our recent move to the Ongwanada Resource Centre kitchen has allowed us to expand our capacity, strengthening our ability to provide consistent, high-quality meals to agencies serving some of our most vulnerable.

Additionally, the Reimagined Food Program has partnered with Tourism Kingston to streamline food procurement from local restaurants, hotels, and banquet halls, ensuring an efficient and seamless process for recovering surplus food.

Beyond meal production, we have continued to expand our products offered at the fresh food pop-up markets, offering more accessible, healthy food options to the community.

Our catering services have also grown, particularly since launching our dedicated catering menu, providing an additional revenue stream that supports our food security initiatives. By integrating sustainable food practices, fostering partnerships, and enhancing food recovery efforts, the Community Nutrition Program remains committed to building a more resilient and food-secure future for all.

*Kingston Street Mission*

# YEAR IN REVIEW

January 2024 brought the usual cold, blizzardy weather and lots of colds, flu and other viruses. Home Base Housing continued to manage the sleeping pods and many nights the shelter was at capacity with a waiting list. Guests were referred to the Adelaide shelter if beds were available.

In the past, as the month moves along, we would see a decrease in people i.e. when cheques were available the numbers would decrease. Our numbers would vary from 39 – 60 depending on their financial situation. January numbers were high throughout the month as the end of December cheque was given on the 20th so most people use it before the end of the month.

The next cheque is January 31st which is a long stretch. We continued to have a small number of dedicated volunteers and are grateful for each one. Guests were asked to be seated and their orders taken after volunteers shared the available food and beverages. Coffee and hot chocolate are always a hit along with the desserts. Lionhearts provides everything we require to make it a success.

Kingston Street Mission (KSM) volunteers also offer guests a variety of items from our clothing room including new socks, undergarments, hats, mitts, scarves, coats, blankets/sleeping bags, toiletries, hand and foot warmers, and more. Most items are donated which requires our volunteers to collect, sort, and share. Items that are not useful to our clientele are shared with other agencies in the city.

2024 saw an increase in violence, overdoses and sadly deaths. The emotions were often running high and volunteers and staff diffused situations with a compassionate approach. It is very emotional work and volunteers are supported by David (assistant) and myself.

During the months when the evening meal portion was closed, we continued to be very busy helping on the streets, reaching out to people who were referred for help. Referrals come in from other agencies, individuals, churches, and Lionhearts.

Time is spent helping people who were once heavy in addiction but are now clean and are staying out of the justice system. Many of these individuals have families and are struggling to make ends meet. Picking up food bank orders, working with CAS, attending Circle support meetings were some other ways we helped. We also continue to support some of the guests who are incarcerated by going to court with them, keeping records, speaking to lawyers, corresponding and sharing information, keeping connected with other agencies, phone calls, and more. The list goes on as there is always great need.

2024 saw an increase in numbers of individuals living on the streets, in shelters, wherever they can find a spot. The cost of living, including rent, has made life very difficult for those struggling to keep a roof over their heads and especially for those on the street. The cost of groceries has caused many to reach out for help. $25 grocery cards were handed out however they do not provide as much food as in the past.

People were needing assistance more often to get through the months. Food banks were struggling and often orders were less than the usual. Gas cards were handed out to people struggling to keep gas in their vehicles to get to work/appointments. and those living in their vehicles. Requests came in daily for a place to stay and people were referred to Lionhearts transitional housing which is a great resource. The price of rent, even for a small room is unattainable for many.

*Kingston Street Mission*

# YEAR IN REVIEW

We continued to close on Saturday nights so guests could attend the Embassy Live Music Café. The cost is $10 however KSM and other organizations hand out free tickets so no one is turned away. People enjoyed time out of the cold with live music, pizza, hotdogs, a variety of pops, hot chocolate, coffee, and desserts from Cobbs. A break is taken at 8:20 to allow those needing to leave for a shelter to do so without others knowing therefore, preserving their dignity. Relationships are built and guests are vocal about how much they enjoy this venue.

In 2023 I reported it had been one of the most challenging years since I started with KSM. Unfortunately, this has continued throughout 2024. The excessive drugs, especially fentanyl, have contributed to increased number of overdoses. This also leads to difficult/violent behaviours. This is an emotional and sobering part of working with those who are in addiction. Volunteers and staff have to be extremely observant at all times.

Tim Sheffield, local musician and KSM supporter, held his annual fundraiser. It took place in a new venue and the donations were rolling in, so many useful items of clothing, mitts, etc. Your Team Real Estate held their annual fundraiser. They returned to their previous location and the donations went above and beyond. This year the cash donated was all designated to KSM, $4,000!

We continue to receive donations of all types from individuals, church groups, thrift stores, schools, businesses and from Lionhearts and partners.

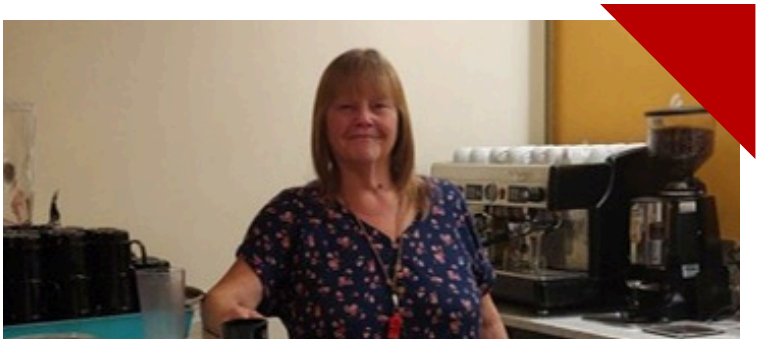
KSM executive director continued to prepare the breakfast bags for the overnight guests. 25 per day, approximately 750 per month. One of our faithful volunteers, Tony would fill in on occasion.

The fall season had a rocky start as KSM was slated leave as the building was being vacated. However, the City extended the time frame for Homebase housing to Jan 5th, 2025. Lionhearts on behalf of KSM was able to arrange for the meal program to continue until the 5th as well.

A local school, Arch Bishop O'Sullivan, had children make cards and taped a full size Hershey chocolate bar inside each card. There were 100 cards. Many of the guests were very grateful and several were very emotional. One lady was crying and wrote on the card and asked to have it shown to the student. She felt cared about and wrote that she was so touched in her heart she wants to stay clean and change her life. One young fellow asked if he could write them back as he wanted them to know how the kind words affected him in a positive way.

With the task of moving ahead and trying to find a new location the year ended with an uncertain future. Volunteers are concerned for our guests who may now be sleeping outside in the bitter cold. They are going to miss their volunteering night, the guests and the other volunteers. Many people are praying with us that a better solution will be found in the near future.

Being under the Lionhearts umbrella continues to be such a tremendous blessing to KSM which in turn blesses our guests, the reason we do what we do!



**MARILYN MCLEAN**
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KSM

*FAST 101*

# YEAR IN REVIEW

This past year has been an encouraging one, as we have seen community partners, service providers, and agencies make Anti-Human Trafficking a real priority. FAST 101, (Fighting Against Sex Trafficking 101), has continued to keep their finger on the pulse around new initiatives, sharing training opportunities available to the public, and welcoming opportunities to assist those who have questions and/or concerns around this topic. Even though the sad reality still exists that so many people don't believe Sex Trafficking is happening in Kingston and the surrounding area, the awareness has steadily increased over time and community people like yourself are making a difference.

FAST101 continues to support victims of Human Trafficking through our First Response Bags. These bags remain a staple of what we offer our community partners, OPP, Kingston Police and Victim Services. These bags are put together on the most part, by community churches, businesses, Schools, Agencies, and people like you. A big shout out to ALL those who have sacrificed their time and financial support in this effort! FAST 101 appreciated the many beautiful blankets that were hand made by members of the "New Beginnings Furniture Program". These blankets were a great addition to the bags.

Several presentations were done throughout the year in various settings, Elementary Schools, High Schools, Queen's University, Youth Correctional Facility, Churches, and via Zoom. We will always take advantage of invitations to speak on this topic. If you'd like to inquire about hosting a presentation, reach out to Doug van der Horden at doug.vdh@lionhearts.ca.

Looking ahead to 2025, FAST 101 will continue doing what we do, raising awareness, supporting community partners, and raising funds. I want to take this moment to say "Thank you" to our small but passionate FAST 101 team for their ongoing desire to make a difference (Alyssa Langlois, Rachel Dutcher, Paola Gongora, Alicia Howell, Logan Webb, Samantha Orr, and Kim Graham). You are all so deeply appreciated, and your unwavering support doesn't go unnoticed!

All the best in 2025 and thanks again to all those who contributed to the support of victims in so many ways.

Doug van der Horden
Director FAST 101

**DOUG VAN DER HORDEN**
DIRECTOR, FAST 101

# YOUR WORDS

"Lionhearts has a special place in my heart for bridging this gap for families like mine. My children and I love receiving this healthy food box–not only does it help us financially, but it also provides a chance to bond while learning essential cooking skills. Thank you again for making this possible!"

*-Student Food Box recipient*

“I buy groceries here for my housemates. It’s affordable compared to grocery stores. I come every time now!”

*-Fresh Food Market shopper*

“Lionhearts has been an incredible support to First Place Options Pregnancy Centre, and we are deeply grateful for our partnership and their ongoing generosity.

One of the most touching moments we witness is the joy on our clients' faces–especially the moms–as they unpack the diaper bags provided by Lionhearts. They're often overwhelmed by the abundance of baby essentials and even personal hygiene items just for them.

We are truly thankful for the ways Lionhearts has helped us care for our clients. Your generosity makes a real difference.”

*-Agency partner First Place Options*

“We have been donating to Lionhearts since 2018. This was a new endeavour for me as I have worked in the industry for years and was witness to most left-over food being thrown in the garbage as unusable.

Tulips and Maple takes pride in all the food we create for our clients. And the food we’re donating to Lionhearts is no different. We appreciate all the hard work that the Lionhearts team puts into the community, and we are so happy to be a small part of it.”

*-Supplier partner Tulips and Maple Catering*

“ I want to express our deepest gratitude to Lionhearts for their selfless dedication in collecting, sorting, and sharing vital donations with organizations across the city–including ours–which has enabled us to serve over 1,000 meals a day and strengthen connections with both our volunteers and community members. Lionhearts is a faithful and heartful partner whose commitment to building genuine relationships and delivering impactful support in every community they serve makes us proud to collaborate with them as they expand into London.”

*-Agency partner Ark Aid Street Mission*

# THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

## MAJOR FINANCIAL PARTNERS

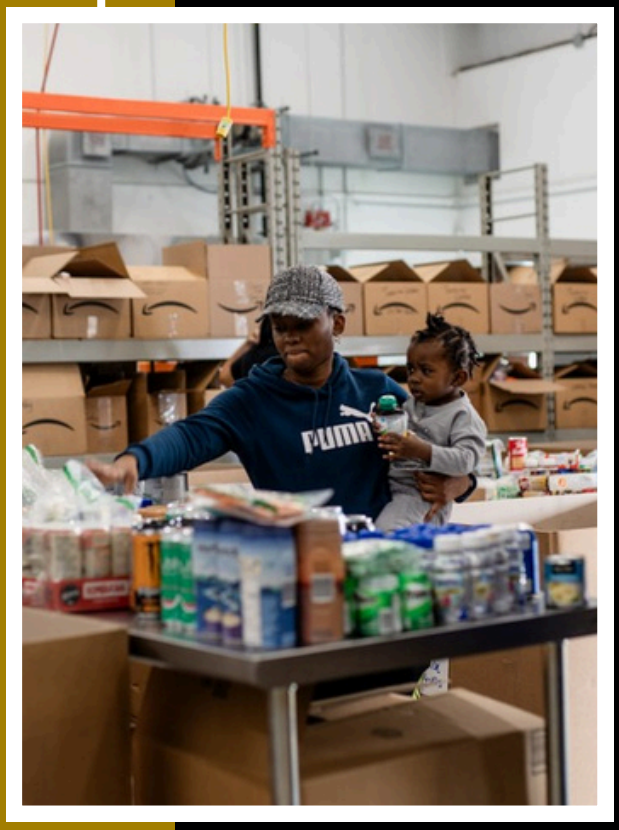
- Anna & Edward C. Churchill Foundation
- Atlantic Foundation Group Ltd
- Blue Sea Foundation
- Britton Smith Foundation
- Bromley Road Baptist Church
- Capital City Church
- Cogeco Connexion
- Community Foundation for Kingston & Area
- Community Foundation for Lennox & Addington
- Evangeline Wiens Veterinary Medicine Professional Corporation
- Finley Foods
- Forage Hyperfoods Inc.
- Gill Ratcliffe Foundation
- Hockey Helps The Homeless
- Homestead Land Holdings
- Loyalist Community Sharing Centre
- Loyalist Township
- Mazon Canada
- Scotia Connect
- The Kinsmen Club of Kingston
- The Rotary Club of Kingston
- The United Way of KFL&A
- Starbucks
- Anonymous and private donors

## MAJOR SUPPLIER PARTNERS

- Amazon Canada
- COBS bread franchisees in Kingston and Ottawa
- Costco Kingston
- Little Caesar's Kingston franchisee
- noFrills franchisees Andrew & Emily Januszkiewicz
- Ontario Produce Marketing Association and Toronto Wholesale Produce Association
- Second Harvest
- Starbucks franchises
- Tony Deodato and Sons
- Wynn Farms

## AND MANY MORE!

Lionhearts INC.



# Thank you for your support

## Help us write next year's report

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