

# ANNUAL REPORT



Lionhearts INC.

# 2023



# TABLE OF CONTENTS



|                                           |              |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>TERRITORY<br/>ACKNOWLEDGMENT</b>       | <b>3</b>     |
| <b>ABOUT<br/>US</b>                       | <b>4</b>     |
| <b>LETTER FROM<br/>OUR CEO</b>            | <b>5</b>     |
| <b>LETTER FROM<br/>OUR BOARD CHAIR</b>    | <b>6</b>     |
| <b>BY THE<br/>NUMBERS</b>                 | <b>7</b>     |
| <b>PROGRAM<br/>UPDATES</b>                | <b>8-13</b>  |
| <b>KINGSTON STREET<br/>MISSION REPORT</b> | <b>14-15</b> |
| <b>FAST 101<br/>REPORT</b>                | <b>16</b>    |
| <b>OUR IMPACT,<br/>IN WORDS</b>           | <b>17-18</b> |
| <b>OUR<br/>SUPPORTERS</b>                 | <b>19</b>    |

# TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With utmost respect and awe, we recognize the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples and their traditional territory on which we work, play, and share. We recognize that we are recent additions to culture and nations that have existed here since time immemorial. This place is a small part of the vast and breathtaking expanse of Turtle Island, where the interconnected lands and waters have sustained abundant life for countless generations. This territory is encompassed by the Upper Canada Treaties, specifically the Crawford Purchase of 1783.

We thank those that have gone before us stewarding the land while considering the next seven generations. We acknowledge and honour the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island, who have lived in harmonious balance with the Earth's ecosystems for thousands of years, fostering profound insights and wisdom about the intricate relationships within the natural world.

We, as a charity, commit to the Dish with One Spoon and the Two Row wampum. We commit ourselves to the difficult process of learning, unlearning, and cooperating in reconciliation. We are devoted to understanding the painful history and the intergenerational trauma brought by our settler ancestors, as well as the past and current systems of oppression and marginalization that extend these injustices.

Through continuous education and understanding, we seek to listen and forge new relationships of reciprocity for healing and justice. Our journey towards a just, beautiful, and regenerated world involves respect for and commitment to the rights, histories, languages, knowledge, and cultures of Indigenous Peoples. We aspire to contribute to the healing and regeneration that is urgently needed for all beings who inhabit these lands and waters.

In making this acknowledgement, we re-affirm our collective responsibility and commitment to making the promise and the challenge of Truth and Reconciliation a reality in our communities. We understand that this is just one step towards honouring the unceded land we inhabit.

Akwé:kon éhnska't entitewawenon:ni ne  
onkwa'nikonhra táhnon  
tetshitewanonhwera:tons ne  
Shonkwaya'tishon tsi niyoyaneres  
nahoten'shon:'a rosa'anyon ne sken:nen  
aetewatonnyonhseke. Etho niyohtónha'k ne  
onkwa'nikón:ra.

**MIIGWECH. NYA:WEN.  
THANK YOU.**



# ABOUT US

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

Since 2014, we have been driven by a deep desire to see all people living with human dignity. We serve our neighbours with acts of practical love through programs like our food and household goods recovery, meals programs, shelters and supportive housing, food boxes, vocational training, street outreach, and affordable market pop-ups.

Thank you to those who have been journeying with us since our founding and as we prepare for our tenth anniversary in 2024.



# LETTER FROM OUR CEO

As we prepare to mark a decade of love and service to our communities in 2024, it's a bittersweet thrill to see how far we have come in yet another trip around the sun.

Nine years ago, we were a small group of volunteers armed with passion, a few personal vehicles, and 800 pounds of overripe strawberries courtesy of our local Costco. A few phone calls later, and we were down to about 794 pounds of strawberries – but, as our report for 2023 shows, we remained undeterred.

A few short years later, and our food and household goods rescue continues to hit new heights. Thanks to partnerships with Amazon warehouses in Ottawa, along with new food rescue partners and supported by hundreds of volunteers and financial partners, we were able to redistribute over \$8 million in food and household goods to more than 50 non-profits in the greater Ottawa and Kingston areas. Those operations run 364 days a year redistributing bread from our supportive COBS Bread franchisees, meals from our Community Nutrition program, and all manner of goods directly to non-profits, allowing them to better serve their clients and reduce their expenses.

Some of our other programming also took big steps forward in 2023. Our supportive housing program supported 16 individuals in Kingston last year, and we seek to continue growing those efforts in the years to come. We continued to shelter and feed nearly 600 people a week at two sites in Kingston. Our student food box program and our new fresh produce markets were a valuable lifeline for hundreds of families, and we received strong community support to sustain these programs during a difficult year.

None of this would be possible without our dedicated staff, our amazing volunteers, and our generous supplier partners and financial partners. While our daily efforts are a love letter to those we serve, this report is a letter to you, showing the impact of your choice to support and partner with us. On behalf of our vulnerable neighbours, thank you for your generosity and your care.

And thank you for taking the time to celebrate another amazing year.



**TRAVIS BLACKMORE**

**CEO  
Lionhearts Inc.**

# LETTER FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

2023 marks nine years for Lionhearts, and it is remarkable to see how much we have grown since inception. From our humble beginnings with a few dedicated volunteers, we have transformed into an organization with hundreds of volunteers making a profound impact across multiple communities and expanding into many new areas, all centered around helping people in need. What was once small-scale food and clothing rescues has evolved into extensive partnerships with national retailers, resulting in the annual recovery of many millions of dollars' worth of food and donated products. Our programs now encompass food distribution, shelters, transitional housing, vocational training, and anti-human trafficking initiatives and we continue to see exponential growth in these areas.

In 2023, as we diligently pursued these programs, the challenges of food insecurity, homelessness, addictions and financial insecurity increased dramatically across Canada. A rapidly growing number of Canadians relied on social services for essential needs such as food and housing. This underscores the ongoing necessity of our work, particularly in food recovery and redistribution, as well as shelters and transitional housing.

In response to these growing needs, we opened a second warehouse in Ottawa (we already operate the Community Food Redistribution Warehouse in Kingston in partnership with several agencies) and brought on some new major donor partners who have had a transformational impact on the resources we can provide in both Kingston and Ottawa. These facilities are a vital community resource but also a testament to the Lionhearts ethos. It exemplifies our commitment to collaboration and strategic partnerships with like-minded organizations, our focus on critical community issues, and our dedication to delivering efficient, well-conceived solutions that benefit the communities we serve.

As we celebrate our tenth anniversary in 2024, we are excited to further leverage our robust community connections, our passionate volunteers and generous donors to address both existing and emerging needs within our communities. We seek to create a scalable model to bring Lionhearts services to additional communities in the years to come. In all of this work, your support is the cornerstone of our success.

Thank you for being an essential part of our journey and for partnering with us to help the less fortunate and transform our communities for the better.



**JEFF BABCOCK**

**Board Chair  
Lionhearts Inc.**

# BY THE NUMBERS



**\$8 million** in food and household goods rescued



Supporting over **50 local agencies** and their clients



**337,000** kilometres travelled by our fleet



Sheltered and housed **595** individuals per week



**Six** Embassy shows with **203** attendees

# PROGRAM UPDATES

## FOOD AND HOUSEHOLD GOODS RECOVERY



Our teams of volunteers gathered to redistribute food and household goods to and from Lionhearts' partners almost daily. In 2023, we recovered nearly \$8 million worth of food and household goods, distributing them at no cost to local non-profits, community homes, and similar organizations. Not only did this support our agency partners, but in addition, we saved them money and helped reduce waste.

## OTTAWA

Throughout Ottawa, our team supported dozens of partner agencies who redistributed the donations of goods we provided for them. From our Stittsville warehouse, we supported over 375,000 individuals and approximately 290 pets in 2023 with the help of our partner agencies. Our rescued food and goods were allocated to agencies that sheltered women and individuals experiencing poverty, fed hungry families, supported single moms and moms-to-be, furnished homes for refugees and newcomers, and helped care for rescued dogs and cats.

Lionhearts received donations from five Ottawa COBS Bread franchisees, including Kanata South, Barrhaven, Bells Corners, Orleans, and Westboro, alongside donations from the Ottawa Farmers' Market, and Amazon's YOW1 and YOW3 warehouses to support our operations.

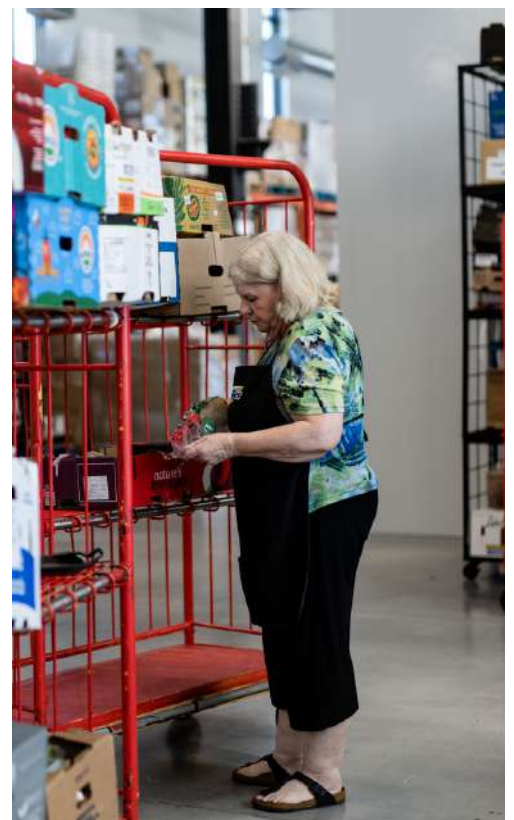
## KINGSTON

In Kingston, we continued to enjoy strong support from Costco, Tulips and Maple, COBS Bread, Little Caesars, local farms like Salt of the Earth, and many other new and long-standing partners. We continued to share these goods with local agencies and partners, supporting a wide array of people in Kingston, Loyalist Township, Napanee, and surrounding areas.

## COMMUNITY NUTRITION

In 2023, our Kingston kitchen produced approximately 65,000 meals, all made possible by donations from our local partners. With the assistance of our vocational interns, staff members, and volunteers, we were able to consistently provide meals to the agencies that serve our most vulnerable populations.

Additionally, our kitchen embraced a new challenge by creating and producing products for the mobile market. Our talented and passionate team of chefs developed a variety of soups, which were sold at different pop-up markets around the city. These products were made available in areas of Kingston where food is scarce, ensuring that delicious and affordable food is accessible to everyone.



## FOOD BOX

We continued to support 250 local families in the greater Kingston area with deliveries up to two times a month of boxes containing rescued, donated, and purchased food and household goods. This program continued to be popular, and escalating food costs continued to hamper our ability to expand to meet demand.

Special thanks go to our volunteer partners at Kingston's Rotary Clubs, and donors including the United Way of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington, as well as COBS Bread Kingston.



## VOCATIONAL TRAINING

We continued to offer retraining opportunities to persons recovering from substance issues within our kitchen, property management, and laundry training programs. We were pleased to support multiple vocational interns as they transitioned to more stable housing and return to more independent living situations.

During 2023, the Lionhearts kitchen actively participated in the vocational training program, hosting six dedicated interns who were eager to learn, further develop their skills, and contribute to our mission at Lionhearts. Throughout the year, these interns engaged in all aspects of our kitchen operations. They were involved in everything from meal preparation and creation to delivering meals to our local agencies. Immersed in the world of large-batch cooking, our interns gained invaluable experience and skills along the way.

While many of our interns have since moved on, one exceptional intern has continued to work with our kitchen team and another in our facilities team.

## FRESH FOOD MARKET POP UPS



In fall 2023, in partnership with Kingston Community Health Centres and with support from Ontario Trillium Foundation, we launched a series of affordable pop-up produce markets in Kingston and the surrounding area.

These markets were well received both by customers and by our host partners at YMCA of Eastern Ontario, the City of Kingston, and Loyalist Township.

Special thanks goes to our produce supplier Tony Deodato and Sons, ACFOMI, and the volunteers supporting the ongoing success of these markets.



## SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

In 2023, Lionhearts reached a significant milestone in our goal of holistic help to vulnerable communities by initiating a new Supportive Housing program in partnership with the City of Kingston.

This pioneering venture aims to provide transitional housing to our community's most vulnerable, offering a beacon of hope for currently unhoused individuals. But this program goes beyond simply housing people - it is thoughtfully complemented by a suite of services including vocational training opportunities, counselling, and support for those recovering from addictions, major health concerns, and mental health challenges. We have a fantastic network of partner organizations assisting and offering services in this space.

Our overarching goal is to empower participants to transition from homelessness back to successful, independent living. The early successes of this program, which housed 16 people in 2023, showcase the powerful impact of holistic, community-driven support when like minded individuals and organizations come together in unity to tackle this difficult challenge together.



## EMERGENCY SHELTER

Working with partners including the City of Kingston; the United Way of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington; Kingston Street Mission; Home Base Housing; and other supporters, we operated two shelters in Kingston housing nearly 600 people per week and providing them with meals.

Throughout the year, we were able to institute a number of facility improvements and provide referrals and connections to other relevant services for our clients. In one highlight, we were able to reconnect a French-speaking man with family in Montreal and help him connect with a suitable program for seniors in that city.



## THE EMBASSY



The Embassy returned in Kingston in 2023 for the first time post-pandemic, and held six shows at its new venue – The Spire.

Over 200 people enjoyed live music and complimentary refreshments. The Embassy team also used the year to prepare a busy schedule for 2024 and work on exciting new partnerships to continue to grow this important street outreach opportunity.



# KINGSTON STREET MISSION REPORT

January 2023 brought the usual cold, blizzard weather and lots of colds, flu and other viruses. I was very ill with influenza A and was unable to leave the house for three weeks. The volunteers and Lionhearts staff all pulled together to cover for me which was a great relief.

Our partnership with 218 Concession shelter has grown and there is a good rapport between staff and volunteers. Home Base Housing continues to manage the sleeping pods and many nights, especially in the winter, the shelter is at capacity. During the winter months when our evening meal service is open, we saw, on average, more than 50 people per day which is an increase from last year.

Our guests were served by a dedicated group of volunteers. Guests are asked to be seated and we take their orders after sharing 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, 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.

We were pleased to host our annual guest birthday party to celebrate everyone at one time since it is very difficult to celebrate each individual. It was a great night with special refreshments and live music. The guests look forward to this special event and there were many positive comments.

During the months when the evening meal portion closes, we continue to be very busy helping on the streets, reaching out to people who are referred for help, and re-directing to other available resources. 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 is another way we help. 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, and more. The list goes on as there is always great need.

# KINGSTON STREET MISSION REPORT

## PAGE 2

2023 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. Requests come in daily for a place to stay – even a room is \$1,000 per month which is unaffordable for the folks we help.

During the fall season there was a change, we were no longer open seven nights per week as Saturday night guests are invited to join us at the Embassy Live Music Café (this program had been closed due to the COVID pandemic). The cost is \$10 – however, KSM and other organizations hand out free tickets so no one is turned away. People enjoy time out of the cold with live music, pizza, hotdogs, a variety of pops, hot chocolate, coffee, and desserts. A break is taken at 8:30 to allow those needing to leave for a shelter to do so without others knowing. Relationships are built and guests are vocal about how much they enjoy this venue.

This has been one of the most challenging years since I have been directing KSM. The drugs have increased in the city along with several variations that do not respond to Narcan. This leads to difficult behaviours and sadly, overdoses with some being fatal. This is an emotional and sobering part of working with those who are in addiction. Assistant Director David and I make ourselves available to volunteers and guests should they want someone to talk to.

There were several fundraisers on our behalf by local musicians and a real estate company. Monetary donations continue to roll in from local businesses, church groups, individuals, and school children. We continue to receive a variety of items such as socks, toiletries, etc. All much needed and so greatly appreciated.

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



**MARILYN MCLEAN**  
**Executive Director**  
**Kingston Street**  
**Mission**

# FAST 101 REPORT

The focus this year has been on regrouping and re-engagement as a group. FAST 101 has been working to re-establish monthly meetings and begin to strategize initiatives within our community. We continue to provide First Response Bags (FRBs) together for victims exiting their Trafficking experience through the assistance of police and/or Victim Services. Highlights include:

- This past year, I was able to present 11 times including at schools (Grades 6-12), before female detainees at Sundance Youth Detention Centre, at Churches, and at Community Service Providers.
- We have assisted families through phone call support including one family whose minor daughter who was experiencing grooming tactics.
- FRBs were in high demand in 2023, and the community stepped up. We have seen High Schools, Community Agencies, Queen's University, and families take on the challenge to put bags together. These bags are now being sought by Kingston Police (rather than just Kingston Victim Services) and OPP and the East Regional Human Trafficking Task Force. There are discussions with the Kingston Police Association about sponsoring FAST 101 bags.
- FAST 101 is considering the idea of providing another Community Information Night for parents/guardians in the year ahead, in addition to other community events and presentation opportunities.
- I represent FAST 101 around the Kingston Human Trafficking Working Group. The group meets monthly with many other Service Providers/Agencies along with Law Enforcement and other stakeholders. Quarterly, the group hosts a "training" for anyone interested and is free.
- FAST 101 has historically financially helped survivors with things like postsecondary tuition, vehicle impound fees, rent, funeral expenses, furniture, etc. The Idea of using some funds to start a scholarship program, with referrals coming from community supports who identify someone who would benefit, has been talked about recently. We intend to continue these conversations in the years ahead.

Thank you to everyone for your ongoing support.

**DOUG VAN DER  
HORDEN**  
**FAST 101**



# OUR IMPACT, IN WORDS

“For the **amazing prices** and the **great customer service**, I have no complaints about the Fresh Food Market Pop-Ups. The quality seems on par with what you buy at the grocery store. I love that this is available to the community when grocery prices are very high.”

## - Fresh Food Market Pop-Up customer

“We serve over 600 families every month that leave happy carrying food, toys, health-related supplies, clothes, winter supplies, and back-to-school supplies. All clients that we serve are struggling due to food insecurity and don't have much social support to buy decent clothes, medicines, diabetes, blood pressure appliances, vitamins, toothpaste and brushes, feminine hygiene items, etc. just to name a few. The Lionhearts organization has been a **God-send partner** to help us in all these efforts”

## - Sadaqa Food Bank

"Our family has been receiving the Student Food Box for about three years. The program has helped my family big time when we are in a crunch and need extra to last us until the next grocery shopping day. The extra really helps us when we are tight on funds to make ends meet to prepare food for the kids...

And I love that the box comes with a bit "extra for the parents" treat! AKA coffee. It's nice to get it. **You all have helped us so much and I love the heart you all put in the box.** It really means a lot to us. Thank you to all for doing this."

## -Student Food Box recipient



# OUR IMPACT, IN WORDS

"Since the pandemic, we have experienced a dramatic increase in the number of guests utilizing our services – growing from 220 families/month to just over 1,600 families representing six thousand individuals. Families living on low income are making hard choices regarding paying their rent, filling their gas tanks, and feeding their families. **The donations we receive from Lionhearts enable us to provide our guests with consistent access to much needed personal and household items**, in addition to accessing our services. We believe that dignity lies in the details of the care and services we provide; our partnership with Lionhearts has helped us be able to continue to provide dignified support to those in need in our community and we are so grateful for their partnership."

## - Care Centre Ottawa

"When I found out that The Embassy was back, I set it in my calendar and told everybody. The music, the people...it's just such a wonderful opportunity and event, and **the best place I could choose to be on a Saturday night.**"

## - Embassy Patron

"We furnish over 180 homes every month and we serve everyone in the community who's essentially secured housing but doesn't have the funds to furnish their home. We see Lionhearts adding all the items that supplement what we provide in terms of basic furniture and it just **adds a lot of dignity** and that's really where we see the value of the partnership with Lionhearts. It's all that **extra added value to our program.**"

## -Ottawa agency executive director



# OUR SUPPORTERS

## ***STRATEGIC PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS***

United Way  
City of Kingston  
Community Foundation for Kingston & Area  
Rotary Clubs of Kingston  
Starbucks Foundation Charitable Fund  
Trellis HIV and Community Care

## ***FINANCIAL DONORS***

Anna and Edward C. Churchill Foundation  
Blue Sea Foundation  
Capital City Church  
In Recognition of Liam's 60th  
Mazon Canada  
Ontario Trillium Foundation  
Rockwell Commercial Real Estate  
Scotiabank  
Varsity Realty  
Anonymous Donors

## ***IN KIND DONORS***

Amazon YOW1 and YOW3  
COBS Bread franchisees in Ottawa and Kingston  
Costco Kingston  
Findlay Foods  
Little Caesars Kingston  
NuView Properties  
Shikha Tewathia  
TruEarth  
Tulips & Maple Catering

**And many other generous food and goods  
providing partners!**

# BE A PART OF NEXT YEAR'S REPORT



## **LIONHEARTS 2023 REPORT**

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