



ANNUAL REPORT | 2025-2026





the Caring
and Sharing
Exchange

People helping people since 1915

Échange
cœur
et partage

L'aide et l'entraide depuis 1915

OUR MISSION

To provide our neighbours in need with relief and dignity during difficult times of the year in the most fair and efficient way possible.

OUR VISION

A caring and sharing community where individuals and families receive the coordinated support they need at Christmas and other times of the year.

OUR PROGRAMS

- The Christmas Exchange
- Sharing in Student Success
- Coordination Service

Board of Directors 2025-2026

Executive Committee

Megan O'Meara, President

Lily Grudzien, Vice-President

Kurt Anderson, Treasurer

Keith Archer, Secretary

Cindy Smith, Executive Director

(ex-officio, until April 2025)

Heather Fraser, Interim Executive Director

(ex-officio, April - June 2025, January - February 2026)

Zuzanna Kucharski, Executive Director

(ex-officio, June - December 2025)

Board of Directors

Kelly Adkin (until July 2025)

Erin Dowe

Neil Dzuba (from July 2025)

Jennifer Imerson

Jayden Kim (from July 2025)

Ryan Saunders

Hazem Shayah

Kellie Shrimpton (from July 2025)

Bianca Vodden (until July 2025)



Staff 2025-2026

Cindy Smith, Executive Director (Until April 2025)

Zuzanna Kucharski, Executive Director (June - December)

Heather Fraser, Director of Resource Development

Rebecca Nagrodski, Program Manager

Mehreen Ahmed, Program Assistant (October - December)

Jessica Stashick, Program Assistant (October - December)

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Megan O'Meara, President of the Board

The past year was one of significant growth, change, and community support for the Caring and Sharing Exchange. As more individuals and families across Ottawa faced rising financial pressures, the demand for our programs continued to increase. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, volunteers, community partners, and supporters, we were able to continue providing relief, dignity, and hope to thousands of people in need.

In 2025, the Sharing in Student Success Program supported a record 6,519 children with backpacks and grade-appropriate school supplies, helping students begin the school year prepared to succeed. At the same time, the Christmas Exchange Program assisted 29,533 individuals during the holiday season, the highest ever in our organization's history.

While these numbers reflect the incredible compassion of our community, they also highlight the growing challenges many Ottawa families are facing. For the first time in recent years, the Christmas Exchange Program ended the season with a waiting list, underscoring the increasing need for support across our city.

Behind the scenes, our Coordination Service continued to ensure community resources were distributed fairly and effectively. Across both programs, 2,716 duplicate applications were identified and eliminated, allowing approximately \$237,143 in support to be redirected to additional families and individuals in need.

This year also marked a period of transition and renewal within the organization. After 13 years of dedicated service, Heather Fraser departed the Caring and Sharing Exchange, leaving behind a lasting legacy of compassion, commitment, and community impact. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I extend sincere thanks and appreciation for her many contributions over the years.

At the same time, we are pleased to welcome Matthew Mitchell as Executive Director. Matthew joins the organization at an important moment in our history, bringing fresh energy and a strong commitment to strengthening and growing the Caring and Sharing Exchange for the future.

To our staff, volunteers, donors, sponsors, agency partners, and supporters: thank you. Your generosity and dedication continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of thousands of people across Ottawa each year. It is an honour to serve as President of the Board, and I remain continually inspired by what our community can accomplish when we come together to care and share with one another.

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Matthew Mitchell, Executive Director

It is a privilege to step into the role of Executive Director at the Caring and Sharing Exchange during a period of both organizational transition and profound community need. This past year, in response to a sharp increase in demand across our city, our Christmas Exchange and Sharing in Student Success Programs collectively reached 36,052 individuals across Ottawa, delivering critical relief when it was needed most.

Looking ahead, the Caring and Sharing Exchange is embarking on a strategic chapter focused on deeper community collaboration and sustainable growth. To proactively address the complex cost-of-living challenges facing Ottawa families, our forward-looking strategy centers on expanding and strengthening our network of local businesses, corporate partners, and neighborhood agencies. By cultivating these essential connections, we will broaden our collective reach, develop new pathways for community giving, and ensure our programs remain a resilient source of support, dignity, and hope.

An impact of this scale is only possible through the collective strength of our supporters. We extend our sincere gratitude to the 235 volunteers who contributed 915 hours of vital service this year, demonstrating the deeply collaborative spirit of our city.

We also acknowledge the pivotal support of our key community partners, including the Kiwanis Club of Ottawa, Community Navigation of Eastern Ontario and Christmas Cheer, alongside our dedicated network of non-profit and social service agencies. Furthermore, we are immensely grateful to our corporate champions whose generosity directly translates into tangible relief and dignity for those we support.

This year has also brought a transition to our staff team. I want to extend my sincere appreciation to Heather Fraser, our recently retired Director of Resource Development. Heather's warmth, dedication, and decades of service have left an enduring legacy, and we wish her the very best in her retirement. I am also deeply grateful to our Program Manager, Rebecca Nagrodski. Finally, we are pleased to welcome Desiree Rapoch as our new Director of Resource Development.

In closing, I offer my sincere thanks to the Board of Directors. Together with our staff, volunteers, and partners, I look forward to building on our strong foundation to meet the challenges and opportunities of the year ahead.

THE CHRISTMAS EXCHANGE PROGRAM



Once again, thanks to our incredible donors, sponsors, and volunteers, the Caring and Sharing Exchange was able to provide holiday cheer and alleviate financial strain during the holiday season – a time of year that can be particularly challenging for many Ottawa individuals and families in need. This past year, we assisted a record number of people. We were able to support 29,533 individuals with a warm festive meal through the delivery of a food hamper or a redeemable gift voucher. However, despite this remarkable effort, demand still exceeded our available resources, leaving 2,136 households – representing 6,868 individuals – on the waiting list at Christmas.

We are deeply grateful to our community for helping ensure that thousands of neighbours in need experienced the joy and warmth of the holiday season, even as the growing need reminds us that more work remains to be done.

2025 Christmas Exchange By The Numbers	# Of Families	# Of Individuals
Assisted Through The Sponsor-A-Hamper Program	1,430	5,862
Assisted Through A Redeemable Gift Voucher	8,230	23,671
Total Assisted Through The Caring And Sharing Exchange	9,660	29,533

This past year has been one of the hardest for our family. With my husband living with a disability and caring for three children, the holidays often feel overwhelming. I wanted to share a warm holiday meal together, but between medical needs and daily expenses, it's hard to make that happen.

The Christmas Exchange Program gave us that gift, a beautiful holiday meal we could enjoy as a family. Sitting together, sharing food, and feeling the joy of the season reminded us that we're not alone. It brought comfort and togetherness when we needed it most.

Thank you for making our Christmas truly special and filling our home with warmth and hope.



– 2025 Christmas Exchange Program Recipient

THE SHARING IN STUDENT SUCCESS PROGRAM



Through the Sharing in Student Success Program, the Caring and Sharing Exchange was able to provide 6,519 students with a backpack full of all the grade-appropriate school supplies necessary to thrive in school, regardless of their financial circumstances. This represents approximately \$419,367 worth of school supplies going into our community.

We are so grateful to our generous donors and volunteers who directly impacted the lives of students by reducing barriers to education and allowing children from families in need to return to school on an equal footing with their peers.



As newcomers to Canada, my family faced many challenges—financial strain, uncertainty, and the daunting task of preparing our children for a new school year in a new country. The Sharing in Student Success program was a lifeline. Thanks to the Caring and Sharing Exchange and its generous donors, our children received backpacks filled with school supplies that brought not only relief, but joy, pride, and confidence.

This initiative does more than provide supplies. It brings smiles, restores dignity, and reminds families like ours that we are not alone. It's a gesture of community, compassion, and commitment to education. We are deeply grateful and hope one day to give back, just as you have given to us.

—Parent of a 2025 Sharing in Student Success Recipient

THE COORDINATION SERVICE



Overall, the coordination service of the Caring and Sharing Exchange plays a crucial role in ensuring that our programs run smoothly, efficiently, and effectively, ultimately making a positive impact on the lives of those it serves. Through this service, the Caring and Sharing Exchange works with almost **200 community partners** to eliminate any duplications in assistance at back-to-school and Christmas time, saving the community \$237,143 in 2025 which was reinvested to help even more people in need!

2025 COORDINATION SERVICE RESULTS

PROGRAM	DUPLICATES	SAVINGS
CHRISTMAS EXCHANGE PROGRAM	1,750	\$175,000
SHARING IN STUDENT SUCCESS PROGRAM	966	\$62,143
TOTAL DUPLICATES ELIMINATED	2,716	\$237,143



Thank You To Our Agency Partners

OUR VOLUNTEERS ARE:

OUR HEART AND SOUL

Your commitment to making a difference in our community is what drives the Caring and Sharing Exchange forward!

OUR SUPPORT

Your hands-on involvement ensures that we can efficiently carry out our programs.

OUR RESOURCE MULTIPLIERS

Your contribution extends our reach and effectiveness, enabling us to help even more individuals and families in need.

OUR INSPIRATION AND EMPOWERMENT

You are role models of compassion and generosity. You inspire others to get involved and make a difference.

**WE ARE SO GRATEFUL TO THE
235 VOLUNTEERS WHO CONTRIBUTED
915 HOURS TO THE CARING AND
SHARING EXCHANGE THIS YEAR!**

Thank You!



EVENTS

38th ANNUAL RUNNING ON EMPTIES FUNDRAISER

Since 1987, the Caring and Sharing Exchange has been deeply grateful to partner with The Beer Store to support the Christmas Exchange program through a city-wide bottle drive. This year's event took place across multiple locations on Saturday, December 20, 2025, and throughout the month, Beer Store staff warmly encouraged customers at checkout to donate their empties in support of our program.

We are sincerely thankful to the many community champions and Caring and Sharing Exchange supporters who helped share our message and inspire participation. Thanks to these collective efforts, we were thrilled to raise an incredible \$12,406.

Over the past 38 years, Running on Empties has raised more than \$466,000, making a meaningful difference for thousands of individuals and families in need during the holiday season. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Beer Store, their dedicated employees, and every supporter who contributed to the success of this truly impactful initiative.



CHRISTMAS CHEER 2025

The annual Christmas Cheer Breakfast was held on Friday, December 5, 2025, at the beautiful Infinity Convention Centre, filling the room with festive spirit and a strong sense of community. This cherished event raises vital funds for Ottawa-based charities during the holiday season, and we are deeply thankful for the generous support shown to our Christmas Exchange program.

Guests were treated to inspiring musical performances, engaging speakers, and delightful surprises that made for a memorable morning. It was a wonderful and uplifting way to welcome the holiday season.

We sincerely thank the Christmas Cheer Foundation, its dedicated partners and supporters, and every attendee whose generosity made such a meaningful impact.



FUNDRAISING

As we look back on the past year, we are deeply grateful for the steadfast support and generosity of our donors. Their dedication to our mission has been essential to our impact, allowing us to make a real difference in the lives of those we serve.

Their compassion makes everything we do possible. Through their generosity, we are able to bring hope, comfort, and joy to individuals and families facing hardship. From providing festive meals to neighbours in need to helping children return to school ready to learn and succeed, our donors are opening doors and creating opportunities. Their contributions have touched countless lives and continue to strengthen our community. Thank you!

WHERE DOES THE MONEY COME FROM?

The Caring and Sharing Exchange is not government or United Way funded. We rely on the generosity of individuals, businesses, foundations, service clubs, churches and schools to operate.



Churches & Service Clubs
3.4%

Events
2.8%

Foundations
12.8%

Businesses
17.4%

Individuals
63.6%

IN-KIND GIVING

Our sincerest thanks to all our Christmas Exchange Program Hamper Sponsors and to those who have donated school supplies and backpacks for our Sharing in Student Success Program. By taking the time to drop off your school supply donations, and/or by delivering hampers to families in need, you played a vital role in helping us meet the growing need. Your ongoing support fuels our passion and strengthens our resolve to continue making a difference.



IN-KIND DONORS

This list contains the following types of In-Kind donors:

Sharing in Student Success Program: Companies that made an in-kind donation

Christmas Exchange Program: Companies that sponsored 15+ hampers

Other: Companies that donate their skills/systems to the Caring and Sharing Exchange

2783237 Ontario Inc
Carlingwood Shopping Centre
Ed Stevens, RPM Creative
Fluf
Giant Tiger
Kiwanis Club of Ottawa
Ladies Who Hamper
Lighthouse Church Ottawa
Ottawa Community Housing Foundation
Ottawa Marriott Bonvoy Group
Riverstone Retirement Communities
St. Elias Antiochian Orthodox Church
St. Timothy's Presbyterian Church
TD Bank Group
Telus Ambassadors
Twice Upon A Time (Free Books For Ottawa Kids)
Westboro Mortgage Investment Corp.
Winners/Marshalls/HomeSense (Ottawa District 3137)
Zebra Pen Canada

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

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The following individuals and organizations made contributions of \$500 and above to the Caring and Sharing Exchange during the fiscal period of March 1, 2025 to February 29, 2026. To all of our supporters, we express our sincere gratitude.

\$10,000+

Christmas Cheer Foundation
Community Foundation of Ottawa
Dan and Penny Dodge

The Beer Store
The Estate of Catherine Swimmings
Landscape Ontario (Ottawa Branch)

\$5,000 to \$9,999

Charitable Impact Foundation
Danbe Foundation Inc.
Erdelyi Karpari Memorial Fund
Garth Jones
Hallmark Giving

St. John The Apostle Parish
Strategic Charitable Foundation
Riverstone Retirement Communities
TD Bank Group
Plus 3 Anonymous Donors

\$2,500 to \$4,999

Benefaction Foundation
Donna Cona Inc.
Harry P. Ward Foundation
Heather and Andrew Fraser
K.M. Morrison

Miller Waste Systems Inc.
The Sharbot Group
Waste Connections of Canada Inc.
WCPD Foundation
Woodroffe United Church

\$1,000 to \$2,499

A & M Shaw Foundation

Asten Johnson

Ruth Bailey

Niki Beamish

Thomas Bonner

Tony and Carol Brigandi

Tom Burns

Andrea Clarke

Patricia Cocker

Malcolm Collins

Conlin Bedard LLP

Karen Comber

Geraldine Cooney

Nancy Corbett

Graham Dattels

District Realty Corporation

Larry Dobson

Karen Doherty

Brendan and Catherine Dunne

Colleen Edwards

Gary Falle

Mary Gowan

Jake Harding

Porter Heffernan

Josee Helie

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Peter and Shirley Holt

Gift Funds Canada

George Ireland

Katie Black Professional Corporation

Kiwanis Club of Nepean

Audrey Kenny

Maureen Kidd

Emond Harnden

Leah Lepage

Steve Levecque

Monika Lunan

Allan MacKay

Scott MacKinnon

Melanie Mallet

Christine McClary-Wright

Kenneth Medland

Barry and Debbie Mersereau

Marilyn Mersereau

Rebecca Nagrodski

Outwitly Inc.

Valerie Parker

John Phillips

Claire Pike

Peter Ploegman

Nancy Porter-Cathcart

Deborah Prescott

Iola Price

Stephen Quick

Elaine Rainboth

Dean Shaikh

Linda Shugart

Laurie and Greg Singleton

Cindy Smith

St. Andrew's Church Women's Guild

Lori Streefkerk

The George and Sylvia Aikins

Foundation

Margaret Thomas

Stacey Tzavelas

Patricia Ulch

Martin and Mary Anne Van Gaal

Jennifer Weare

David Wood

Carole Workman

Plus 6 Anonymous Donors



\$500 to \$999 (continued)

Margaret Ahearn
 Kim Barnhardt
 Wayne Beaton
 Chris Borowiecki
 Vivian Brazeau
 D. Beverley Brock
 Jean Brunton
 Kim Cabana
 Harold Campbell
 Janet Campbell
 Robert Cassidy
 Bruce and Heather Caswell
 Garry Chase
 Anne Churchill
 John Comba
 Jean Cooper
 David Crawford
 Helen Creighton
 Wayne Crutchlow
 Catherine D'Amico
 Margaret Davies
 Davis Agency, Hallmark Stores
 Meris Dervisevic
 Dennis and Eva Devine
 James DeWolf
 Derrick Dixon
 Robin Doner
 Douglas Fire Safety Systems LTD.
 Rosemary Dunne
 Elizabeth J. Elliott
 Diane Forestell
 Betty Gauthier
 Andrea Gibson
 Victoria Godfrey
 Elizabeth Herweyer
 Thomas A. Houston
 Heather Husby-Wall
 Bonnie Huskins
 IODE - Laurentian Chapter

Alison Jette
 Joel and Justyna
 Gordon Paul Johnson
 Pamela Johnston Hornby
 John and Mychele Kitcher
 KnowTech Solutions Inc
 Wally and Gwen Kozar
 Lucy-Ann Kubina
 Graham Ladner
 Richard Lane
 Anne Lawson
 Lynn Lefevre
 Karen Legasy
 Leitrim Montessori Preschool
 Jean Liberty
 Garry Lindberg
 Roland L. Locas
 Jennifer Logie
 Marcel Losier
 Beth MacDonald
 Norman MacDonald
 Carol MacLeod
 Myrna and Robert Mallett
 Wenda Martinho
 Bob and Marliyn McCaw
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 Patricia McKelvie
 Shawn McKnight
 Merry Maids of Ottawa West
 J. David Miller
 Kathleen Mitchell
 Jane P. Morris
 Suzanne Nault
 Barbara Newbegin
 Ken and Christine Newport
 Megan O'Meara
 Tracy O'Meara
 Ottawa Carleton Elementary
 Teachers' Federation of Ontario

Adrienne Pearl
 Brent Percival
 Petrela, Winter & Associates
 Gary Poole
 Daniel Racicot
 David Robertson
 Moira Rushton-Marovac
 Nick Sala
 Melissa Salvatore
 Joanne Scully
 Maggie Selley
 Louise Seveny
 Elizabeth Shea
 Donna Shepherdson
 Claudette Simoneau
 David and Evelyn Smith
 Joseph Stanford
 Lorraine St-Pierre
 Lola Sykes
 Victoria Tunstall
 Vans Pressure Cleaning Ltd.
 John vanderWerf
 Ken and Gail Wagstaff
 Marie Weerasooriya-Epps
 Maxine and Edward Whelan
 L.D. Whillans
 Scott Whittaker
 Alan and Marianne Whitten
 Corry Wink
 Jennifer Winters
 Bill and Ferne Wyman
 John Zarecky
 Robin Zimpelmann
 Alexa Biscaro
 Unravel Systems Inc
 W&W Dispute Resolution Services
 Plus 7 Anonymous Donors

GET INVOLVED

DONATE

Choose to make a monetary donation to help us make a difference in the lives of Ottawa's individuals and families in need. You can donate by calling our office at 343-803-0708 or by visiting our website at www.CaringandSharing.ca.

When donating, you can choose to make your gift to the Christmas Exchange Program, the Sharing in Student Success Program, or to the areas of greatest need. To help even further, please consider becoming a monthly donor.

FUNDRAISE

Why not turn your next event into a Caring and Sharing Exchange fundraiser? We are grateful to the numerous individuals and organizations who host third-party fundraising events for our cause throughout the year. If you are interested in hosting an event, please contact our office at 343-803-0708 to discuss your great ideas with us!

Sponsor-a-Hamper is a great way to support a local family in need during the holidays. Get matched with a family and go shopping for their holiday meal—you put it together and deliver it directly to the family! To learn more, please visit our website at www.CaringandSharing.ca or email info@CaringandSharing.ca.

VOLUNTEER

We have a wide range of volunteer opportunities for those looking to contribute their valuable time to help further our cause.

Some of the opportunities available to motivated and engaged community members include: computer data entry; helping out at special events; making phone calls; and so much more!

Please contact us at 613 226 6434 or email info@caringandsharing.ca to discuss available volunteering opportunities with us.

STAY CONNECTED!

Connect with us on Social Media to stay up-to-date on current events



@CaringSharingExchange



@CS_Exchange



@TheCaringandSharingExchange



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Charitable Registration Number 13097 9172 RR0001