



ANNUAL REPORT 2003/2004



The Year in Review

**Message from Celia Harte, Board President,
& Nick Saul, Executive Director**

THE STOP has always put food first. In the early days, our focus was squarely on the relationship between hunger and income: people need more money in their pockets (jobs, better wages, increased social assistance rates, affordable housing) to avoid a food bank and to live healthy and productive lives. While this focus remains at the heart of our work, in recent years we've found reason to broaden our relationship to food.

Our garden and greenhouse, for example, force us to think about where our food comes from and how it's grown. This year more than 750 local school-children learned that tomatoes don't require harmful pesticides to grow and can even thrive in a city park

close to the homes and community centre where they will be eaten. Our experience is that kids who understand this journey from field to table ultimately make healthier food choices and take an interest in protecting the environment.

We are also focussing greater attention on the issue of *healthy* food. People on low incomes obviously need more food, but what often gets overlooked is how important it is that this food is healthy and nutritious. The link between poverty and diet-related illnesses such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease is irrefutable, and it's why we're speaking out about access to discount supermarkets (more affordable fruits and vegetables), and promoting the idea of a

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OUR NEW MISSION STATEMENT: **The Stop Community Food Centre strives to increase access to healthy food in a manner that maintains dignity, builds community and challenges inequality.**



The Year in Review (cont.)

government-funded nutrition supplement, and it's also why we're working at improving the quality and cultural diversity of the food in all our programs.

Our new mission statement—*The Stop strives to increase access to healthy food in a manner that maintains dignity, builds community and challenges inequality*—and the development of new organizational goals are helping us clarify what we mean by this broader “food systems” approach. As we head toward another round of strategic planning, this recognition that hunger cannot be viewed in isolation will guide us in our ongoing work of building an organization that is relevant, flexible and responsive to the needs of our community.

Over the last year, the breadth of The Stop's work has attracted much attention. Trips to Boston, Montreal and Brazil, and delegations visiting from near and far (Scarborough and Michigan to Brazil and Mozambique) gave us an opportunity to share our expertise and advance our belief that community food

centres like The Stop should be the rule rather than the exception.

The backdrop to all of this activity was, as it always is, relentless and grinding poverty. The median after-rent income of food bank users hovered between \$4–\$5 per day while food prices rose yet again (14% since 1999), and inflation continued to eat away at people's stagnant incomes. It came as no surprise to our staff that the number of people using our food bank increased by 20% in the last year.

In an effort to respond to this food and hunger crisis, The Stop has expanded significantly over the past five years; budget and staffing have more than tripled. Accordingly, the board has focussed its efforts on providing leadership to build the infrastructure needed for a growing and innovative organization, making what we have called the transition from an oral to a written culture.

This year, the board adopted its first formal board governance policy, reviewed our reserve fund policy, and established The Capacity Building Fund, which will be used to strategically

strengthen The Stop's ability to deliver on its mission. Recognizing the importance of attracting and retaining highly skilled and motivated staff, the board reviewed and revised the organization's employment policy and adopted a new anti-discrimination policy. The Stop also invested in new computer and telephone equipment, demonstrating its understanding that adequate technological support is essential to enhancing the work of the agency and addressing workload pressures.

This annual report allows us to take a moment to reflect on yet another exciting and challenging year at The Stop Community Food Centre, as well as look toward the future (renovations to the food bank, progress with the Green Barn, expanded community kitchens, more staff resources for advocacy and a new strategic plan). We sincerely thank the many people—funders, volunteers, participants, staff and partner organizations—that help make us a strong, enabling force in the Davenport West neighbourhood.

What we do

The Stop's core programs

Healthy Beginnings: a perinatal nutrition and support program for low-income pregnant women

- 93% of babies born through Healthy Beginnings had healthy birth weights (heavier than 5.5 lbs)
- 91 % of women initiated breastfeeding
- We provided workshops on a variety of topics including pregnancy, childbirth, food and nutrition, and child development

Lee Tsan*, a participant in Healthy Beginnings pregnant with her second child, was encouraged by staff to lead a workshop on childbearing and cultural traditions. She agreed and began her session by giving each woman a candy. She explained that in China candy is a symbol of good

luck for pregnancy. She went on to talk about some of the other traditions in Chinese culture associated with childbearing and childbirth. Although she apologized for her poor English, the more she talked the more excited she became. By the end of the session she was beaming with pride.



THIS YEAR AT THE STOP:

• **9,797 people used our programs and services**



Family Support Program: one-on-one peer support for families with newborns

- Vulnerable families received intensive one-on-one support for six months from peer-support workers who share their cultural and linguistic background
- Families received financial assistance to purchase key items such as strollers and cribs, and support on issues pertaining to nutrition, parenting and child development

After two months **Flavienne*** wanted to stop breastfeeding. She told her peer support worker that she thought she did not have enough milk and that her son was hungry all the time. Her worker discussed the myths and benefits associated with breastfeeding, confirmed that her son was in good health, and encouraged her to keep trying. With this information Flavienne made a choice to continue breastfeeding, and her baby continues to thrive.

Urban Agriculture: year-round food production and environmental education initiative

- 2,200 lbs of fresh organic produce was harvested from our 8,000-square-foot garden and greenhouse
- 750 children from 35 classes, ranging from junior kindergarten to high school, planted seeds and learned about growing healthy food in the city
- Special events created new opportunities for community building: a Harvest Festival celebrating the bountiful produce from the garden; visits to pick-your-own farms; and a Spring Festival that gave the local community a chance to share food, creativity and culture

*Devi is a personal assistant to **Nancy**, a disabled woman who volunteers at The Stop.*

“What makes The Stop so special is its demonstrated ability to both develop and empower its clients and volunteers. Each participant is asked to give their time and unique talents. The blending of backgrounds and skills fosters a welcoming and diverse environment that



has been a precious gift to Nancy. She's been welcomed in the community garden and kitchen, but she's also been encouraged to share her unique worldview as a woman living with a disability. Moreover, she's been encouraged to join in the community and events that make The Stop the thriving agency it is. The Stop has managed to find an excellent balance of working toward food security and social justice while being a fun, friendly and creative environment.”

THIS YEAR AT THE STOP:

- **2,200 lbs of fresh produce was harvested from our garden and greenhouse**



Community Kitchens: communal cooking groups that bring people together to learn, cook, eat and socialize

- three community kitchens ran regularly throughout the year
- 1,281 healthy meals were cooked in our community kitchens
- 84 participants shared recipes, cooking tips, jokes and stories while preparing and eating nutritious meals
- All cooking programs, including our community kitchens, benefitted from our wonderful new commercial kitchen

Sophie has a number of health problems, including being overweight. As a participant in one of The Stop's community kitchens, She learned a lot about nutrition and healthy food. Her peers in the group encouraged and supported her efforts to change her eating habits, and it wasn't long before there was a noticeable difference in Sophie's physical appearance and energy level. She is now much happier about herself, more healthy and a lot more confident.*



Food Bank: members receive a 2-3 day supply of food once a month

- 6,991 people turned to the food bank for help (a 20% increase over last year)
- 192,609 meals went home in food bank hampers
- A new walk-in fridge and freezer enabled us to accept more perishable food and store it safely

Maria* is a single mom who lives in our neighbourhood. "The Stop has really helped me over the years. I use the food bank regularly and come for lunch twice a week. I have two children, ages four and three, and my parents live with me. My mom and dad speak almost no English and depend on me for most of their needs. My income is \$1,362 a month and my rent is \$950. I make sure that my children have enough to eat, but I miss meals sometimes. If I didn't live so close to The Stop I would definitely go hungry more often."

THIS YEAR AT THE STOP:

- **24,858 healthy meals were served through our meal programs**

Drop-in programs: nutritious meals and activities that help reduce social isolation, as well as information on social issues and community resources

- 10,092 breakfasts were served (a 34% increase from last year) to more than 1,200 community members
- The Stop Café served up 13,485 lunches (a 26% increase from last year)
- Regular workshops and forums were held on such things as the Tenant Protection Act, housing, legal aid and social assistance

Mr. Thompson* is a homeless man who lives in a nearby park. On the coldest nights of the year he stays at a local shelter. During the day Mr. Thompson is a regular at the drop-in, sharing a meal with friends, watching a movie and, quite often, working on an intricate



math equation. Mr. Thompson states his situation bluntly: "If I didn't come here, I probably wouldn't eat."

Thanks to The Stop's 20

The Stop thanks the following funders and donors for their generous support over the past year. We'd also like to acknowledge the significant contributions made by over 700 individual donors.

FAITH GROUPS

Bathurst Street United Church
 Centennial-Japanese United Church
 Christ Church ACW - Coboconk
 Christ Church Deer Park
 Christ Church Deer Park ACW
 Church of St. Timothy - St. Andrew's Group
 Church of Transfiguration ACW
 Deer Park United Church
 Eglinton St. George's United Church
 Fairlawn Heights United Church
 Flora McCrea Group of Timothy Eaton Memorial Church
 Grace Church-on-the-Hill Brandon Group
 Grace Church-on-the-Hill Outreach Committee
 Hillcrest Women's Fellowship
 Holy Cross Priory
 Kingsway Lambton United Church
 St. Barnabas ACW
 St. James Cathedral York Group
 St. John's Church West Toronto
 St. John's Norway ACW
 St. Mark and Calvary Church
 St. Philips ACW - Martha Group
 The Church of St. Clement - Eglinton ACW
 The Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields
 The Church of St. Timothy
 Timothy Eaton Memorial Church
 Women's Community Service Club—TEMC

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 United Way Of Greater Toronto—Winter Relief Grant



GOVERNMENT FUNDING

FEDERAL

Health Canada
 • Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program
 Human Resource Development Canada

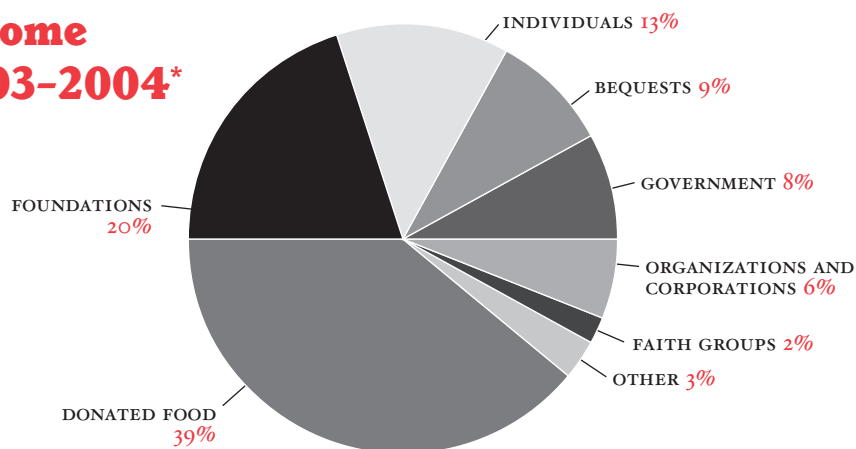
PROVINCIAL

Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services (Early Years)

MUNICIPAL

City of Toronto
 • Food and Hunger Action Fund
 • Homeless Initiatives Fund
 • Community Services Grants Program
 • SCPI

Income 2003-2004*



03/2004 Contributors

This list was compiled in October 2004 and includes those who have contributed since May 2003.

ORGANIZATIONS

Appleby College
Bishop Strachan School
Steelworker's Humanity Fund
United Steelworkers of America—various locals

IN-KIND SUPPORT/ COMMUNITY PARTNERS

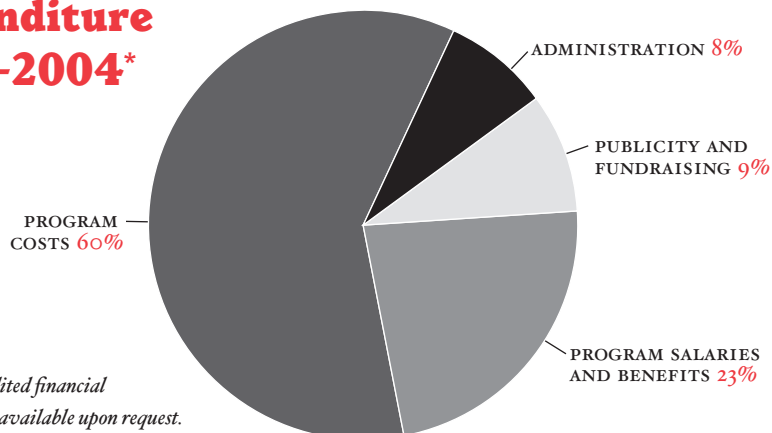
Access Alliance Multicultural Community Health Centre
Allseating
Andrea Curtis
Annette Street School
Alternative Grounds
Ascot Avenue Community Day Care
Beckta Dining & Wine
Bell Mobility Foundation
Bishop Marocco/Thomas Merton CHS
Bistro Tournesol
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Caban
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CONNECT Information Post
Cyberplex
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Symington Place Tenants' Association
T-FAL
The Amazing Food Service Inc.
The Caring Box Project
The Carmichael Inn & Spa
The Community Health Network - West Toronto
The Composting Council of Canada
The Cookworks
The Marion Singers
The Printing House—160 Bloor St. location
The Printing House Charitable Office
Tiffany & Co.
Toronto Community Housing Corporation
Toronto Zoo
TSX Group
Turtle Express
West End Drop-in Network
West Toronto Community Legal Services
York Marble Tile & Terrazzo Inc.
Yorkshire Pudding Inc.

Expenditure 2003-2004*



*Complete audited financial statements are available upon request.

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

BEQUESTS

- The Estate of David C. Hamilton
- The Estate of Harry Montgomery



THIS YEAR AT THE STOP:

• 10,005 hours were donated by 125 volunteers

Volunteers are integral to everything we do. Thank you for your spirit, dedication and commitment to fighting hunger



THE STOP'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Celia Harte (*President*) · Rick Eagan (*Vice President*) · Tom Currier (*Treasurer*) · Roseann Barry (*Secretary*)
Allyson Collymore · Gillian Hewitt · May-Lin Poon · Winston Husbands · Charles Lennox · Seana Irvine
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The Stop Community Food Centre P.O. Box 69, Station E, Toronto, Ontario M6H 4E1

TEL: (416) 652-7867 · FAX: (416) 652-2294 EMAIL: nadien@thestop.org · WEBSITE: www.thestop.org

LOCATION: 1884 Davenport Road · CHARITABLE # 1191-92763-RR0001

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