

START ME UP NIAGARA'S NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2024

Welcome to Start Me Up Niagara's organization-wide newsletter. Our newsletter will be released quarterly, offering insight into the happenings within our various programs and how you can get involved. We have more news on our social channels so be sure to follow us and check back often. If you wish to continue receiving this quarterly update or subscribe to any of our other email lists, please visit startmeupniagara.ca.



Organization Announcements

- The new addition to the 211 Church Street office is now open alongside the recently opened offices of The Work Action Centre. This will house the general offices of all Start Me Up Niagara's team along with our new partnership with **REACH Niagara**. REACH's mission is to work with community partners to provide compassionate care and reduce barriers to healthcare for the marginalized community. We are so pleased to have this partnership and celebrated this with an event on November 22nd where we welcomed local dignitaries and government official from Health Canada. Read the article about the event [here](#).

Save the Date

January 12:

CNOY Team Captain & Crew Launch Party: Kick off Coldest Night of the Year with fellow team leaders! Watch your email for a personal invitation. Thank you to our sponsor **Parkway Social**.

February 8:

Niagara IceDogs Game:

Join us for a special event game night supporting Start Me Up Niagara. Buy discounted tickets [here](#) and make sure to use code CNOTY.

February 22:

Coldest Night of the Year Walk:

Walk to raise funds and awareness for those experiencing homelessness and poverty. Register to walk or join a team [here](#).

From Our Garden

The garden season wound down at the end of October as the weather turned and the days became shorter. We forged new roads this year, distributing produce widely from Grimsby in the north to the southern reaches of Niagara in Fort Erie and Port Colborne. In total we supplied 17 organizations with freshly harvested produce throughout the region and made some valuable contributions to food banks and other social service agencies tasked with tackling the issue of food insecurity.

We could not have done this without the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre (VRIC) where our two-acre plot of land is located. From Our Garden alone produced in excess of 14,000 lbs of food, and we were able to harvest an additional 26,000 plus lbs of food grown by the VRIC, for a total of 41,000 lbs of food.

This small but committed group of workers and volunteers worked hard to achieve these results and make a difference! And that is a good feeling.



Mobile Closet

Start Me Up Niagara's Mobile Closet continues to form and collaborate on relationships withing the Niagara Region. We achieve this by providing free shopping events in our community as many of you know. We are proud to have just celebrated our 4 year anniversary with a drop-in event where we welcomed our community and supporters from over the year.

Another successful service we offer is our Mini Closet project. A Mini Closet provides a customized and organized selection of new or gently used, clean, seasonal clothing and footwear. Mini Closets are provided to our partnering frontline agencies and are restocked by our volunteers monthly based on usage.

The Mini Closet allows 24-hour access to clothing and footwear therefore making clothing more accessible where it is most widely needed by those facing a clothing crisis. In some situations, this provides a lifeline which fosters compassion, dignity and hope, the basis of human connection.

How do we know the Mini Closet project is successful in our community? Here are some of the statements that have been shared with us about Mini Closets:

"I was able to provide a client with warm clothes when they were being discharged to an emergency shelter during the cold winter months. This client presented at the ED with very little belongings and the mini closet ensured that they were able to be properly clothed when they left. They expressed immense gratitude for this program."

"The compassion and dedication from this team and program is OUTSTANDING! It has made a difference in so many lives already and continues to grow! I love having



somewhere to make donations where I know those in need are not being charged and are being supported, unconditionally! THANK YOU!!



We are grateful to those who donate to Start Me Up Niagara's Mobile Closet as it allows us to keep our Mini Closets stocked and continue with our free shopping events. Check out our [social media](#) for a list of our much-needed clothing items.

Work Action Centre

The Work Action Centre continues to flourish in helping job seekers find and retain employment and or start a new small business initiative. Since our last newsletter in October we have welcomed over 20 new job seekers to commence their employment journey with our team. The exciting part however is that 14 of our job seekers have gained full and part time jobs. Each month we offer a variety of in-house workshops to help provide our seekers with the tools they need in their employment search. We offer our core workshops monthly on topics from Resumes to Interview Skills to Career direction. Last month we launched a new workshop in cooperation with our Mobile Closet program. It is called "Dress for Success" and it is designed to help understand the importance of attire in the

workplace, in job hunting and in interviews. After the workshop, our attendees got the opportunity to "shop" for work wear with the guidance of our talented Mobile Closet team. This has been a very successful initiative to get our job seekers even more confident and prepared for the workforce.

Resource Centre

Our Resource Centre has had an excitingly active few months! Our team of students and volunteers have added some great touches to activities with our participants with a focus on self-care and other activities like hand drawing and painting, and making crafty art from pine cones!

Further to art, we had therapy dogs visit twice, showing such calm, love and care to all those they came in contact with. Our faithful Alessandrdo crew performed several haircuts at their last visit, leaving with big smiles and participants looking sharp.

With our feedback surveys we collected a rich list of games and activities our participants would like to engage in at the Centre, and with every suggestion heard, we anticipate to bring many suggestions to life!

One of our main services at the Resource Centre is our Kitchen Program. Each Friday to Sunday we serve about 250 community members. On Saturdays we are mobile to a few apartment buildings in the same vicinity of SMUN and share lunch with the residents. On Sunday we offer a hot, nutritious meal to take away and freely offer fruits, veggies, and bread products courtesy of the



generous vendors at St Catharines Farmers Market. Since 2023, we have provided a Friday lunch to students at our neighborhood school. It has been a pleasure to foster a relationship outside of our walls with young people. Join all of the above with our hardworking, loyal and kind volunteers and we are ready, willing and able to accomplish much!

This holiday season we will be partnering with Northend Church on Dec 25th and Jan 1st for an eat in/take out delicious meal courtesy of CAA Niagara and Kelsey's Roadhouse on Glendale Ave and Joe Feta's on Lake St. We are honored to work with giving partners and businesses who pour into our community. We look forward to 2025 and filling tummys!

Bike Me Up

Over the past few months, we have supplied over 20 bikes, increased our revenue, and recieved 240 volunteer hours.

We were thrilled to be featured recently in [Niagara This Week](#) for a heartwarming story that truly showcases the power of community. After a local resident's cherished tricycle, gifted by her late father, was stolen, her mother found a replacement bike that needed major repairs. With teamwork, we restored it to excellent condition and returned it to the family. Their gratitude reminded us of the power of resilience and coming together to support one another.



Coldest Night of the Year

Join Us for the Coldest Night of the Year in St. Catharines!

This year's theme is **"Let's change the tune for people experiencing hurt, hunger, and homelessness... because it's cold out there."**

Be part of something meaningful this winter by joining the Coldest Night of the Year (CNOY walk in St. Catharines on February 22, 2025. This family-friendly fundraiser raises awareness and support for Start Me Up Niagara, helping those facing poverty, homelessness, and food insecurity in our community.

Grab your friends, family, or colleagues and register a team to walk with us! Together, we can make a difference and work toward building a more inclusive community.

Join Us!

Want more information, [subscribe to our CNOY email list](#).

Schools: Want to use the powers of your local school, college, or university to activate and improve your community? Step up and get involved in CNOY. [Walk with schools across Canada](#).

Volunteer with Us! Be part of something special this winter by volunteering at the Coldest Night of the Year Walk in St. Catharines! We need dedicated volunteers to help make this event a success as we raise awareness and support for individuals facing poverty and homelessness. Roles include greeting and cheering on participants, assisting with registration, helping along the route, and providing refreshments. Your time and energy will help make a difference in our community. For more information or to sign up, [click here](#).

Team up, fundraise, and walk with us on February 22nd, 2025!



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