

# START ME UP NIAGARA'S NEWSLETTER

## OCTOBER 2024

Welcome to Start Me Up Niagara's first organization-wide newsletter. We invite you to be a continued subscriber to our news and organization updates. This newsletter will be released quarterly, offering insight into our various programs and how you can get involved. If you wish to continue receiving this quarterly update or subscribe to any of our other email lists, please visit [startmeupniagara.ca/site/subscribe](https://startmeupniagara.ca/site/subscribe) to subscribe.



### Organization Announcements

- We have finalized our partnership with **Kits For A Cause**. Check out our [website](#) for details.
- **Save with Boats Niagara!** Until October 25<sup>th</sup>, when you donate \$100 or more to Start Me Up Niagara, and receive 50% off service and storage for the 2024-25 season from **Boats Niagara**. Simply use the special [Giving Form](#) to provide proof of your donation and enjoy this incredible offer.
- **Many Seeds** is a brand new way to connect with and support the Charities and causes you care about for FREE. It's never been this easy to make a difference! Visit [many-seeds.com](https://many-seeds.com) or download the app and start supporting your favourite causes.
- **FlipGive** is a simple and convenient way to support Start Me Up Niagara through everyday shopping. Every purchase you make adds to our team's cashback total. You can shop online or buy a gift card through the FlipGive app. [Join our team here](#) or enter code **PVDSR9** when you sign up.



## Volunteering with SMUN

Start Me Up Niagara provides a wide range of volunteer opportunities. Programs such as Bike Me Up, Mobile Closet, Delta Bingo, The Cafe, From Our Garden, and the Kitchen require volunteers to help operate. Our volunteer program is an excellent way to engage with the community and participate in meaningful work.

We are fortunate to have a group of dedicated, supportive, and caring volunteers. The work we do at Start Me Up Niagara would not be possible without the dedication of our volunteers. We are always looking for volunteers to bring innovative and creative new ideas to our organization through meaningful community contributions.

## From Our Garden

During the last fiscal year, the SMUN Garden produced 9,000 pounds of organically grown food, which was distributed to food banks and social service agencies across Niagara to help those living with food insecurity, at no cost. Additionally, we distributed another 1,000 lbs of food courtesy of Vineland Research and Innovation Centre.

This 2-acre piece of land is operated by a small, dedicated and very skilled SMUN team complimented by a small group of volunteers and service users, offering meaningful activities and community engagement.

In 2025, we plan to grow more produce and expand our distribution area to include more of West and South Niagara, including Port Colborne, Welland and Lincoln. We will also continue to support our many community partners in St. Catharines.

As the summer comes to a close and we move into the

fall season, the garden is in transition. Our beautiful Zinnias have lost a bit of their glory and our tomatoes are starting to wane. Thankfully, we're still seeing wonderful production from our Dragon Tongue fresh beans, some beautiful Watermelon Radishes and our ever-bearing Strawberries continue to flourish. It's time to harvest our Pie Pumpkins and many varieties of Squash.

Our garden will close for the season on October 31st. Of course, this means there's a ton of work to do in the coming weeks; harvesting and distributing the remaining veggies and fruit, preparing the fields for next season and tidying up our hoop houses and storage shed.



## Mobile Closet

The Mobile Closet continues to expand its network of resources and ensure full availability to community locations. Our free shopping events and Mini Closets are held in various locations across the Niagara Region, offering weather-appropriate clothing, shoes, and hygiene products to those who need it most.

We come together to form connections, assist where we can and to create a sense of trust, belonging and safety. We continue to connect with resourceful and informative community partners that can provide the resources







If you're looking to get hired, the fall season is promising. The months of September and October tend to mimic the months of January and February in terms of hiring activity. This is because people are again returning from vacations and feel ready to focus on filling positions. The fall months inspire people to take action as kids return to school and the weather gets cooler. There is a sense of urgency to get things in order before winter! **APPLY APPLY APPLY!**

needed by our community and to overcome obstacles and enrich the lives of our service users in a healthy positive way.

At Mobile Closet we engage and depend on a large volunteer base to support the cause and deliver quality service.

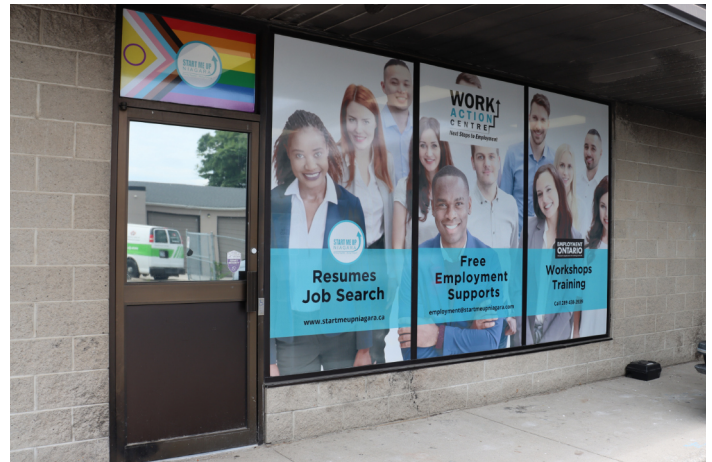
Check out our upcoming events at [www.startmeupniagara.ca/site/mobile-closet](http://www.startmeupniagara.ca/site/mobile-closet)

## Work Action Centre

At the Work Action Centre, our new location at 211 Church St., has enabled us to host an open space computer lab for job seekers to drop in and use the computer supports available.

We deliver in-house workshops to assist job seekers to understand their skills to match their career goals. We launched a Better Jobs program through FedCap where job seekers are able to explore a new career of their choice.

The Work Action Centre partners with employers (large and small) to match job seekers with available employment opportunities. We practice a client centered life stabilization action plan. Often lack of appropriate housing and compromised mental wellness are barriers that prevent employment opportunities. A holistic and tailored approach has proven to be essential and effective in achieving meaningful employment opportunities.



## Resource Centre

The Resource Centre, now at 203 Church St. has an accessible entrance complimented with a medical room, consultaon room and a program room to engage service users seeking health care, mental health care and/or recreational activities with dedicated staff, volunteers and students.



The Resource Centre offers a diverse range of services including systems navigation, phone calls, advocacy and connections to external community partners. We offer a safe, friendly space to everyone who enters our doors. The Resource

Centre offers daily services provided by our community partners and/or an in-house activity.

Our most recent partnership with **REACH** has significantly enhanced service users' ability to receive much needed health care offered by a team of skilled and dedicated practitioners on a weekly basis.

## Kitchen

The Food & Kitchen program has made many positive strides within our community by supplying food throughout the Queenston neighborhood and beyond to help tackle food insecurity.

We offer pick-up meal service on Sundays with the addition of free donated fruit, vegetables and bread. We offer a delivered, hot meal to two low income senior buildings and one permanent supportive housing for men, women and families with low to moderate income once a month at designated locations.

Our Emergency Food Bags, made from donated non-perishable goods, aim to support under-housed and unhoused recipients with breakfast, lunch/dinner and snacks for at least two days. The Kitchen Program has partnered with a local school to provide 50 hot lunches to students that have been identified as food insecure.

In addition, we share our donated extras! From sandwiches to fresh fruit & veggies to families of the school to take home for the weekend.



Our program has developed and maintained close partnerships with many local agencies, churches and community organizations in St. Catharine's. Nothing goes to waste!



## Bike Me Up

Bike Me Up celebrated its 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year! We continue to commit to community engagement through several initiatives. We partnered with **Heart Niagara** to host four training sessions and numerous community pop-up events.

Additionally, we participated in the **Manchester** "Three-on-three basketball tournament" with our partnering organization **Broken Spoke** in Port Colborne, where we distributed 50 bikes to the neighbourhood children!

Staff and dedicated volunteers conducted a six-week training course for students at the **Alternative Pathways** school on Monday and Wednesday mornings during the spring.

Volunteers are paramount to the success of the program, they worked extra shifts over the summer to meet the increased demand which, helps prevent daily sellouts.

BMU not only provides individuals in our community access to alternative and affordable modes of transportation, but also keeps bicycles out of local landfills. The Bike Me Up team is always ready and available to accept donated bikes to add to the inventory to meet the increasing demand from our community.

