



Ottawa Food Bank



# 2026 | VOLUNTEER IMPACT REPORT

ROOTED IN COMMUNITY



*“Here at the Ottawa Food Bank, I feel part of a community of people including staff and volunteers who support each other and work together to help those who are experiencing food insecurity. I am proud to belong to this community.”*

**HANNAH L** | STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEER

## Table of Contents

From the Ottawa Food Bank’s Chief Executive Officer .....	3
Executive Summary .....	4
Meet the Volunteer Engagement Team .....	5
Volunteer Engagement .....	6
Volunteers Across the Mission .....	7
Connecting Community .....	8-10
Community and Corporate Volunteers .....	11
Volunteer Spotlight: Stewardship Volunteers .....	12-13
Volunteer Impact by the Numbers .....	14
Celebrating Our Volunteers .....	15

# From the Ottawa Food Bank's Chief Executive Officer

**Volunteers are the backbone of the Ottawa Food Bank. As an organization rooted in supporting others, supporting a network, and supporting a city, none of what we do can be accomplished alone.**

Last year, more than 2,670 volunteers contributed over 21,300 hours across our warehouse, Community Harvest Farm, events, and beyond. The numbers speak for themselves. Not only are more volunteers showing up day in and day out, but you are also showing up more often and staying longer.

That commitment matters. It matters because our network reported 588,876 visits in our last fiscal year—double what we saw in 2019. As the need grew, volunteer support and dedication rose to meet it. The impact is real.

What does that impact look like? It looks like supporting community and fundraising events. It looks like sorting food in our warehouse, delivering food to community members, and sharing your skills in administration and data. Because of you, we distributed 7.9 million pounds of food, 47 per cent of it fresh, including produce, dairy, eggs, and protein.

It looks like the Community Harvest Farm, powered by more than 1,000 volunteers. You spent hours planting, weeding, and harvesting, often on your hands and knees, to produce more than 174,500 pounds of fresh food across 22 crops.

It looks like standing alongside us at the launch of the Ottawa Hunger Report and advocating for the fundamental human right to adequate food in conversations with partners and community leaders.

It looks like strengthening our foundation by helping us update internal practices, documentation, and processes to achieve the nationally recognized Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement (CCVI) standards, ensuring we can continue this work with excellence and consistency.

Every hour given, every shift completed, and every bit of energy poured into this mission strengthens our ability to serve our community.

Volunteers truly are the backbone of the Ottawa Food Bank. Your contributions are woven into every part of our work. You bring heart, skill, and compassion to everything you do. Because of you, our network is stronger, more resilient, and deeply compassionate.

On behalf of the Ottawa Food Bank, our network, and the thousands of neighbours who rely on emergency food support across our city—thank you.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Natalie Spooner".

**Natalie Spooner**  
Interim CEO, Ottawa Food Bank

# Executive Summary

## The Power of Volunteering

From April 19-25, 2026, the Ottawa Food Bank celebrates National Volunteer Week—a time to recognize the extraordinary individuals who are deeply rooted in our community and make our work possible.

This year also marks the **United Nations International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development**, highlighting the essential role volunteers play in building more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable societies worldwide.

At the Ottawa Food Bank, volunteerism is rooted in compassion, connection, and shared purpose. Our volunteers strengthen programs, partnerships, and the well-being of our community.

The power of volunteerism shapes a better world, and we are excited to celebrate and share all that our volunteers achieve.

Volunteer contributions directly and indirectly support several of the **United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals**:



Through every shift, every action, and every act of kindness, our volunteers contribute to a stronger, healthier future for all.

**To all Ottawa Food Bank volunteers: thank you.** Your commitment is felt far beyond our walls and contributes to meaningful, lasting change in our community.



*“What really makes me feel good after each volunteer shift is knowing that I am part of the Ottawa Food Bank team helping those in our community who really need support.”*

**SHANNON W** | ADMINISTRATIVE VOLUNTEER



# Meet the Volunteer Engagement Team

The Volunteer Engagement Team supports every stage of the volunteer experience at the Ottawa Food Bank—from welcoming new volunteers to ensuring they have meaningful opportunities to contribute.

For 14 years, this work was led by a team of one. Today, it has grown into a small but mighty team of three, working together to strengthen connections, support volunteers, and bring the Ottawa Food Bank’s mission to life.



## Jo-Anne Turple, CVA

**Jo-Anne Turple** is the Manager of Volunteer Engagement and will celebrate 17 years with the Ottawa Food Bank this fall. With more than 25 years of experience in the not-for-profit sector, she is passionate about building strong community connections and has called Ottawa home for more than two decades. Outside of work, Jo-Anne is an avid nature lover who enjoys hiking, snowshoeing, canoeing, paddleboarding, camping—and believes there’s no problem a campfire can’t fix. Jo-anne brings a professionalism, compassion, and humour to everything she does.



## Adam Janes, CVA

**Adam Janes** is the Coordinator of Volunteer Engagement and will celebrate three years with the Ottawa Food Bank this spring. Adam is deeply committed to strengthening volunteer-led communities. In addition to his work at the Ottawa Food Bank, he serves as President of Volunteer Management Professionals of Canada (VMPC), and sits on the board of Ottawa Leaders of Volunteers (OLV). Throughout his career—including previous roles with Volunteer Ottawa and Christie Lake Kids—Adam has championed the power of volunteerism to build stronger, more connected communities. Outside of work, Adam enjoys good coffee, good music, anthropology, and the great outdoors.



## Malika Arjan

**Malika Arjan** is the Coordinator of Volunteer Engagement at the Ottawa Food Bank, having joined the team in January 2026. She brings a strong passion for community involvement and volunteer engagement, along with a belief in the power of volunteering to build meaningful connections. Having long been involved with local non-profits and community initiatives, Malika enjoys finding thoughtful and creative ways to contribute her skills. While she values planning and preparation in her work, she also believes life should not be taken too seriously. After a busy day, Malika enjoys a sweet treat, listening to albums from her growing CD collection, or watching Buffy the Vampire Slayer.

*“We are honoured to work alongside our volunteers. Your commitment and dedication to fight for a more food-secure Ottawa inspires us. Thank you for bringing your unique skills and voice to your work: you help our mission come to life.”*

# Volunteer Engagement

## Best Practices in Action



### Volunteer Engagement and Alignment with the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement

The Ottawa Food Bank's Volunteer Engagement team conducted a comprehensive review of our volunteer practices using the *Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement (CCVI)*, a national framework developed by Volunteer Canada to guide safe, inclusive, and high-quality volunteer engagement.

The audit assessed all core CCVI standards, including mission-driven involvement, recruitment, screening, role clarity, orientation and training, supervision, recognition, records management, and risk management.

This process highlighted both strengths and opportunities to modernize our systems and further align with sector best practices.

**As a result, we have updated several internal processes, documents, and communications to ensure volunteers receive:**



### VOLUNTEER STATEMENT:

Volunteers are a vital part of the Ottawa Food Bank's mission, and support our vision of healthy, accessible, and sustainable food in our community. As an organization started by volunteers, we recognize the invaluable commitment and contributions of volunteers towards building a food-secure Ottawa.

**This statement honours our history—founded by volunteers—and our future, ensuring volunteers remain respected and well supported.**

We extend our appreciation to **Adam Janes, CVA** (Coordinator, Volunteer Engagement), for leading this work, and to summer interns **Jessie Dudding** and **Teni Ogunsanya**, for their research and contributions. We also thank the Ottawa Food Bank staff team for their collaboration and insight throughout this process.

# Volunteers Across the Mission

## Working Together to Reduce Food Insecurity

**Hand in hand, our staff, volunteers, advocates, and donors unite to make our impact possible. We wouldn't exist without the strength and support of our community.**

Because you give your time to our mission, we can keep moving forward, together—meeting new challenges and evolving along the way.

### Empowered and Empowering

Volunteers are invited to lean into their unique time, talent, and voice. During a survey conducted in 2025, we received over 500 responses from dedicated volunteers. Your intentional feedback, engagement, and insights helped us deepen the quality of your contributions.

“

*“I like farming. I grew up on a farm, and I like to see things grow. I also like the idea of giving back and in this case, giving back by helping grow fresh produce for the Ottawa Food Bank network. I feel good by doing something good for the community.”*

**CHIN S** | COMMUNITY HARVEST FARM VOLUNTEER



### OTTAWA FOOD BANK MISSION:

We work in partnership to create a healthier city by empowering people, increasing access to healthy food, and advocating for systemic changes that reduce food insecurity.

### Access to Healthy Food

Our volunteers help enable **7,932,502 lbs.** of fresh, healthy and non-perishable food to the community. From farming to food drives and sorting, volunteers are directly participating in food distribution and ensuring quality food reaches the community.

### Advocating

Volunteer voices carry weight, and those who volunteer also passionately share about how important our mission is. They are the first to invite people to get involved, donate, and raise voices on key issues.

### DID YOU KNOW?

**Over 90%** of surveyed volunteers go above and beyond, supporting local food insecurity initiatives in various ways!

# Connecting Community

## How Volunteers Support the Ottawa Food Bank



**When volunteers support the Ottawa Food Bank, they help strengthen a network of nearly 100 food programs across Ottawa.** Their time, energy, and skills directly support our daily operations, allowing us to distribute healthy, nutritious food to member agencies throughout the city. In turn, these agencies are better equipped to meet the needs of the communities they serve.

Volunteers are central to our work. Many contribute directly to food sorting, coordination, and distribution, while others support the organization in ways that extend beyond the warehouse and daily operations. Across all areas, volunteers bring a wide range of skills that help keep our work running smoothly and support our ability to respond to community needs.

These contributions take shape in several volunteer roles:

### Administrative and Volunteers

In 2024-25, we increased volunteer reception support from five to eight shifts per week, growing the team to ten dedicated individuals. These volunteers provide welcoming smiles and guidance to all who enter our doors.

### Communications Volunteers

Communications volunteers help share the story of the Ottawa Food Bank, reaching more people and strengthening community engagement.

### Handy Volunteers

Our handy volunteers tackle small but critical projects: building desks and shelves, hanging photos, and ensuring staff have the resources they need to work effectively.

### Stewardship Volunteers

Stewardship volunteers thank donors for their gifts, proving that a simple expression of gratitude can have a meaningful ripple effect.

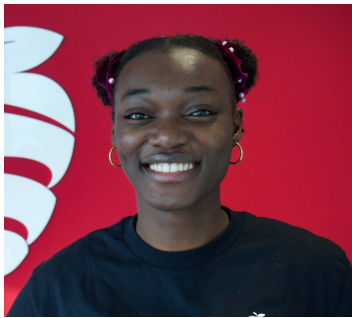


*“At any time during my shift I can be answering emails sent by people looking for information, I can receive monetary donations, I welcome visitors to the lobby, welcome volunteers if they are new and show them to the Volunteer Lounge, and welcome donors who may be taking a tour of the facility. The list of duties is long and helps make the time pass quickly. It also makes me feel like I am doing something meaningful for the Ottawa Food Bank and people in our community who need help.”*

**THOMAS S | ADMINISTRATIVE AND RECEPTION VOLUNTEER**

# Connecting Community

Impact in Action



## Meet Stella N.

Every day, volunteers bring their unique experiences, backgrounds, and passions to the Ottawa Food Bank.

Administrative volunteer, **Stella N.**, draws inspiration from her childhood in Nigeria, where her mother taught her the joy of giving. That early lesson continues to guide her commitment to serving the community in Ottawa.

## Supporting a Healthy Future



From event volunteers creating joyful experiences, photographing moments, and welcoming the community, to warehouse volunteers checking, sorting, and packing non-perishable items, protein, and hampers, volunteers make a measurable difference.

TOGETHER, VOLUNTEERS PACK  
**OVER 1.2 MILLION LBS OF DONATIONS**

REPRESENTING MORE THAN  
**50,000 CASES OF FOOD**



**Over 90% of regular food sorting volunteers returned this year, marking the third consecutive year of exceptional retention.**

At the Community Harvest Farm, volunteers—including families, corporate groups, Farm Ambassadors, and trainees—help plant, tend, and harvest more than **20 crops**, producing over **170,000 lbs** of fresh, local produce for the community. These efforts show how volunteer time and skills directly translate into food, nourishment, and hope.

# Connecting Community

## Advocating for a Food Secure Future

Volunteers play a vital role in raising awareness of food insecurity and advocating for long-term solutions. Often the first to recognize emerging community needs, they take action in meaningful ways—writing to elected officials, attending town halls and community events, and sharing information that helps others better understand local food insecurity.

Through these efforts, volunteers help drive meaningful change toward a stronger, more food-secure city.

### “THE EMPTY CUPBOARD”

Poem by **Stacy**, Reception and Event Volunteer

*In quiet homes on quiet streets,  
Where maple trees in autumn sleep,  
A silent hunger stirs at night—  
An empty plate, a faded light...*

This poem reflects the lived reality behind food insecurity and reminds us that volunteer advocacy helps bring forward voices that might otherwise go unheard.

In fact, **30% of volunteers surveyed actively promote the Ottawa Food Bank to others**, amplifying our mission throughout the city.



**SCAN THE QR CODE  
TO READ THE POEM**



## Collecting Insights to Strengthen the Network

Volunteers also play a critical role in collecting and managing data.

A special project that relied on In-Community Data Input Volunteers was the Link2Feed system opening. Link2Feed is a program that tracks data as individuals visit member agencies.

By learning more about food bank visits, we can better understand community needs and serve our network. Volunteers carefully verified visitor information to ensure quality and accuracy, reducing the burden on already stretched agencies.



*“Without our volunteers, the opening of Link2Feed would have been far more challenging. They collected data with care, tact, and patience, ensuring a friendly face greeted everyone who came to the Ottawa Food Bank.”*

**GREY | LINK2FEED VOLUNTEER SUPERVISOR**

## Operations Volunteers

Operations Volunteers support efficiency, dashboards, and product traceability, helping to ensure food moves quickly and accurately to those who need it most.



*“Our operations volunteers have played a key role in improving efficiency across our work. We deeply appreciate the many hours contributed, especially in supporting Food Distribution Model updates, dashboard implementation, and strengthening product traceability.”*

**TRAVIS | MANAGER, INVENTORY**

# Community and Corporate Volunteers

When community and corporate groups give their time, they directly strengthen the ability to sort, pack, and distribute fresh food to thousands of households every month. These shared volunteer experiences not only boost our operational capacity but also foster teamwork, empathy, and a deeper understanding of food insecurity in our community. By showing up together, groups become active partners in creating a more food secure Ottawa and help drive meaningful, lasting change. We are grateful for the support of these groups, many of whom return several times, year after year.

**92%** of surveyed community and corporate group volunteers said they hope to return to volunteer with the Ottawa Food Bank next year!



Community and corporate group volunteers made significant contributions to the Ottawa Food Bank, including:

 **2,386 hrs**  
at the Community Harvest Farm

 **2,846 hrs**  
at the Ottawa Food Bank warehouse



The Ottawa Food Bank recognizes long-time corporate supporter **Ciena**, named the 2025 recipient of Volunteer Ottawa's Leadership in Corporate Volunteerism Award.

Employee and volunteer advocate, **May Lee**, accepted the award on the organization's behalf.

*Thank you, Ciena!*

# Volunteer Spotlight: Stewardship Volunteers

Volunteering is all about people. It is about people giving their time to benefit others. This happens in a unique way within our stewardship volunteering; it is a small, dedicated team who spread gratitude and appreciation on behalf of the Ottawa Food Bank and the community we support.

Each week, stewardship volunteers call donors to thank them for their gifts, recognizing the impact of their generosity and helping to build meaningful, lasting connections to our mission.



## Rebecca L. (Stewardship Volunteer)

**“Thank you—two simple words that mean so much to those who give.”**

Rebecca L. retired in 2023 after assisting Investment Advisors in the financial sector. Originally from Hongkong, she decided to stay and call Canada home. Following retirement, Rebecca applied to be a volunteer with the Ottawa Food Bank. Rebecca would have accepted any opportunity to give back to her community as a volunteer, and when she was invited to join the new stewardship volunteer program she said “yes.”

*“Most donors I have spoken to appreciate someone from the Food Bank calling to say Thank you. Even those who receive a repeat phone call each year still tell me that they enjoy hearing from us. I can see the change in the conversations since we began the Stewardship Program a year ago and especially with donors who contribute monthly and with younger donors. They all seem to enjoy hearing ‘thank you.’”*

## Fatima J. (Stewardship Volunteer)

Fatima J. has been a Stewardship Volunteer since Spring 2025. She had worked as an electrical engineer with a satellite communications firm in Toronto for most of her career. She and her husband moved to Ottawa to live closer to their children who had moved to the community. While her husband remained working, Fatima decided it was time for her to change course and look to volunteering to fulfill her desire to ‘give back’. She searched online and eventually found the Ottawa Food Bank and decided to join the Stewardship Team.



*“When I call on behalf of the Ottawa Food Bank I usually speak with two types of people. The first group are those who immediately think I am calling to request a donation. When I clarify that I am calling to say thanks, I feel a light turns on in their hearts. The second group wants to engage in a conversation with me, and they thank me and the Ottawa Food Bank team for the good work done in the community.” Fatima continues by sharing a moment that stood out to her: “I recall speaking to a woman for about 15 minutes, and she thanked me at least three times and said she wished that she could do more. Her comments made me think of a quote from my favourite Persian poem, which states “the beauty you see in me is within you.”*

# Volunteer Spotlight: Stewardship Volunteers

## Hannah L. (Stewardship Volunteer Supervisor)

Hannah L. has been a stewardship volunteer since the beginning of the program. She had been working in the hospitality industry for several years and wanted a volunteer experience to fulfill a need to give back to her community. Upon finding the Ottawa Food Bank, she learned about volunteer opportunities in administration, stewardship, and other programs. She expressed an interest in joining the stewardship team, and the Ottawa Food Bank called to say “welcome!” She is now in a supervisor role on the stewardship team.



*“I admit that I was a little nervous at first, as I take great pride in doing things properly and getting it right. My confidence grew as I worked more shifts and spoke to more donors. At first many thought I was calling to solicit a donation, but when I assured them that I was just calling to say thank you on behalf of the Ottawa Food Bank, they all seemed to appreciate it.”*

**AUTHORED BY: KEVIN BROWN**



## Heather raves about her volunteer team:



*“It is such a beautiful thing to have a front row seat to community members giving the gift of their time engaging with other community members who give financial gifts to support food security in our community! Working with Rebecca, Fatima and Hannah is a joy. Their commitment and enthusiasm are outstanding, and my hope is that our supporters' days are brightened when they receive a call, voicemail or email from our stewardship volunteers.”*

*Thank you for the valuable work you do!*



**SCAN THE QR CODE  
TO LEARN MORE**

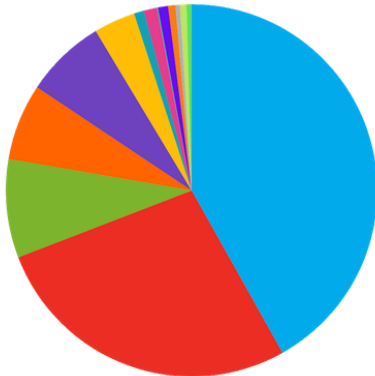
Individuals like Rebecca, Fatima, and Hannah help strengthen relationships with donors and cultivate a community of engaged supporters through their volunteerism.

As the Ottawa Food Bank continues to advocate and meet daily needs for healthy, sustainable food for all, our effort is enhanced and sustained by our amazing volunteers.

# Volunteer Impact by the Numbers

Numbers don't tell the whole story—people do.

Behind every number in this report is a person who chose to give their time, energy, and care to strengthen the Ottawa Food Bank in countless ways. While numbers can never fully capture these efforts, they help us illustrate the incredible impact volunteers make when they come together for a shared purpose.



- Food Sorting - 8,928.5 hrs
- Community Harvest Farm- 5,821 hrs
- Special Events - 1,824.5 hrs
- Board of Directors - 1,495 hrs
- Hamper Delivery - 1,418.5 hrs
- Admin Support - 772.5 hrs
- Link2Feed - 772.5 hrs
- Data Volunteers - 244 hrs
- Stewardship - 186 hrs
- Repackaging - 135 hrs
- Survey Support/In Community - 123.25 hrs
- Info Sessions - 89.25 hrs
- Donor Door Support - 82.75 hrs
- Handy Person - 20 hrs
- Data and Communications - 3 hrs

**Total:** 21,329.25 hrs

**2,670 individuals** volunteered with the Ottawa Food Bank in 2024-2025, contributing over **21,300 hours** of their time. This represents an increase of **more than 1,000 volunteer hours** and **30 additional volunteers** compared to the previous year.

## Celebrating Dedication and Commitment

95% of volunteers recommend volunteering with the Ottawa Food Bank, a reflection of the meaningful experiences and community connections they help create every day.

While every volunteer's contribution is valued, we would like to recognize volunteers whose long-term service and dedicated hours have made an extraordinary impact:



**10 Years**  
of Significant Impact

**BETH TROBRIDGE**  
**CAROL MALLET**  
**CLAIRE GORMAN**  
**ELAINE REYNOLD**  
**MASON LI**  
**RHYS WILLIAMS**  
**ROBERT JOLICOEUR**

**2000+**  
of Volunteer Hours

**ALEX PATCH**  
**KAITLIN B.**

## Celebrating Our Volunteers



## Food Sorting and Friends Holiday Potluck

Thank you to the volunteers who join us in our daily food sorting operations in the warehouse! We appreciate your attention as you check for damage, sort, and box with care and intention. We were so happy to celebrate a year of hard work and dedication with you!



## Farm Virtual Open House

Thank you to all the participants at the Farm Virtual Open house. We appreciate your work sowing, harvesting, and getting your hands dirty on the farm this past year. We can't wait for another year of farming!

## Hamper Delivery Program Appreciation

During a time of crisis, our volunteers helped make the Hamper Delivery Program a vital success—ensuring food reached those unable to access a food bank. Your compassion and commitment remind us that, together, we can respond to challenges and care for those in need.

## Office Volunteer Trivia and Potluck

From teamwork to trivia, we are grateful for the moments that bring us together. Events like these remind us how meaningful it is to connect as a community.

*Thank You!*

## THERE'S NO OTTAWA FOOD BANK WITHOUT OTTAWA.

Volunteers are a vital part of the Ottawa Food Bank's mission, and support our vision of healthy, accessible, and sustainable food in our community.

As an organization started by volunteers, we recognize the invaluable commitment and contributions of volunteers towards building a food-secure Ottawa.

[OTTAWAFOODBANK.CA/VOLUNTEER](https://ottawafoodbank.ca/volunteer)

