



ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024

FACS
NIAGARA

Family and Children's Services
Les Services à la famille
et à l'enfance de Niagara

SUPPORTING | STRENGTHENING | PROTECTING • SOUTENIR | RENFORCER | PROTÉGER

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The FACS Niagara Board of Directors plays a critical role in supporting the needs of children, youth, and families across Niagara.

In addition to providing governance, strategic planning and stewardship, the FACS Board of Directors works to help the agency meet its mission, vision, and values by providing guidance, building and strengthening relationships with community partners, and supporting the dedicated team at FACS.

2023-2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

David Willer, President
Betty-Lou Souter, Vice-President
Shaun Adams, Treasurer
Dr. Karim Ali, Secretary
Anna Bozza, FACS Executive Director
Jessica Dolinski
Jay Gemmell
Rod Hollick
Lynda Hughes
Nathalie LaCoste Ling
Brian Minard
Robert Miller
Wendy Sturgeon



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The Niagara region is filled with many bright and talented young people who will make tremendous contributions to move our community forward in a positive way. For more than 125 years, Family and Children's Services (FACS) Niagara has made it our mission to see that children, youth, and families have the support they need to thrive.

Every young person deserves the opportunity to become the best version of themselves. Through a suite of services and supports, we help the young people we support explore the unique traits that make them who they are so they can share those gifts with the world.

Amidst the rising cost of living following a global pandemic, there has been a greater need than ever to assist people with meeting their basic needs before they can get to a place where they thrive. These basic needs include addressing food and housing insecurity, economic circumstances, as well as providing support for people's mental health and wellbeing.

All these factors were considered as we developed our agency's new five-year strategic plan. Strategic plans are important; they build on our past and chart the direction for our future. The plan is our promise to each other and to the community. It outlines how we will approach our important work in the community.

Putting the Plan Together

To ensure we developed a strategic plan that meets the needs of the community, we needed

to have a solid understanding of what we were doing well, where we could improve, and the opportunities we have for future growth. In short, we needed to hear from those closest to us.

In 2023, we engaged in extensive consultations with our team, those we serve, our partners, and our community. We collected feedback through:

- A survey distributed to FACS staff, foster parents, volunteers, donors, clients, and community members.
- Focus groups with FACS team members to understand their diverse perspectives on their roles and the needs of the children, youth, and families the agency serves.
- In-depth interviews with community partners who work directly with vulnerable populations.
- Consultations with the Board of Directors.
- Reviewing reports and research examining the larger community context, such as the Living in Niagara Report.

Our consultations told us clearly that we're on the right path in prioritizing early intervention supports, working to keep children safe, and walking the path towards greater equity, diversity, and inclusion. We heard that we need to deepen these commitments and continue to work towards a future where families thrive and children remain in their home communities. We heard the need to enhance our collaborative

work as a team, and as trusted partners within the community.

This feedback was crucial to developing the strategic plan and was at the forefront of all discussions at the agency and Board level. The result is a Strategic Plan of Care for the Community that reflects where we've come from, where we need to go, and inspires us to go the extra mile for Niagara's children, youth, and families.

A Strategic Plan of Care for the Community

Developed to address the new realities of our post-pandemic world, our Strategic Plan of Care for the Community articulates the principles we commit to, to support the Niagara community in these challenging times. It recognizes the deep need for collaboration, both amongst our team and with our community partners who also provide needed social services.

We are committed to doing this in a way that promotes dignity and respect for all. We value

each person's unique identity and will provide services tailor made to provide the right support in each situation.

By doing this work together, we will achieve our vision of helping our community to thrive. We look forward to our continued work to shape a future where every child is safe, loved, and has the support they need to succeed.

In the following pages of this report, you will find details of our new strategic plan and we will introduce you to a young man thriving because of the support he received from our agency. We are proud of Sam and know there are many other young people whose lives have been made better by the work of the FACS team, including staff, foster parents, volunteers, and community partners.

Thank you,



David Willer

David Willer
President
Board of Directors



Anna Bozza

Anna Bozza
Chief Executive Officer
FACS Niagara



STRATEGIC PLAN

of care for the community 2024-2029



OUR MISSION

We protect, support, and strengthen the wellbeing of children, youth, adults, and families.



OUR VISION

Working together to help our community thrive.



OUR VALUES

We are:

CHILD-CENTERED

The needs of children and young people are paramount. We value their voices and unique perspectives.

COMPASSIONATE

We are caring and treat everyone with dignity and respect.

ACCOUNTABLE

We honour our responsibility to the community by adhering to high ethical standards in everything we do.

COLLABORATIVE

We value everyone's contributions to the wellbeing of children, youth, adults, and families.



STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

GOALS

At its core, FACS Niagara is an agency that is here to help. We recognize there are times where everyone needs assistance to be their best selves. We commit to being there for one another, and the children, youth, adults, and families who need our support.

Provide early intervention supports to strengthen families and keep children and youth safe.

Our practices are informed by evidence and delivered with care and compassion.

We strive to achieve permanency for children and youth who cannot remain at home.

We assist youth in making a successful transition to independence.

Enhance fiscal sustainability to ensure needed resources are available to our community.

DIRECTION #1:
Serving and Supporting

GOALS

We all want to feel like we belong in a community that respects and values our unique identities. We celebrate diversity in all its forms, both on our team and in the community. FACS Niagara is committed to providing equitable services that honours people's individuality.

Children, youth, and families receive equitable services that support their unique cultural, social and emotional needs.

We work with families using a trauma informed lens.

FACS Niagara commits to doing the work to advance Truth and Reconciliation. We promote an environment that supports Indigenous pride, healing, and self-determination.

We reach out to develop and enhance relationships with equity deserving groups on our team and in the community.

DIRECTION #2:
Equity and Inclusion

GOALS

We recognize that no one can do it alone. We rely on one another and work together as an interdependent team of professionals to support the needs of our community. The partnerships we build with others enhance our reach, impact, and effectiveness.

We foster partnerships within our community to provide culturally appropriate services that meet the diverse needs of those we serve.

Enhance a culture of respect, belonging, and trust in the workplace. Work collaboratively across sectors.

Recruit and retain highly qualified team members passionate about our vision. Provide job-embedded professional development.

Recruit and retain a team of diverse and motivated foster parents and volunteers. We invest in their skills and development.



DIRECTION #3: Connection and Unity

OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

Sam's Story About Achieving Goals and Discovering Resilience

“Good evening everyone...” Sam says standing in front of the podium at the FACS Niagara Foundation’s 25th Annual Charity Gala. The room falls silent, each attendee’s eye on this remarkable young man standing in front of them. Sam draws a deep breath, taking in the room, and begins to share his story.

In 2017, Sam moved to Canada from Lebanon as an Armenian-Syrian refugee and came into care with Family and Children’s Services Niagara almost immediately. At the young age of 14, Sam faced a great deal of challenges.



Dealing with the transition to a foreign country, struggling to find a sense of identity, navigating the LGBTQ+ community, experiencing various forms of abuse, dealing with the loss of friendships and personal relationships from my home country, I was left feeling utter loneliness.



Navigating the transition into the care of a Children’s Aid Society can be difficult for young people. “I was quite mad at the world and struggled pretty heavily with mental health issues. I dropped out of high school, and I was not sure what my future held.” With this uncertainty looming, Sam turned to the only people he thought he could trust at the time – his foster parents and FACS Niagara staff.



“Our amazing team and foster parents create a stable support system for our children and youth,” says Anna Bozza, FACS Niagara CEO. “Their dedication and conscientiousness for our children and youth creates a safe space for these young people to develop trusting relationships.”

During his time in foster care, Sam developed a strong bond with his foster parents Matthew and Diane. Despite the challenges that were present when Sam was trying to adapt to his new surroundings in a foreign country, his foster parents provided an unwavering belief in him, which Sam recalls “made it all bearable.” His foster parents were not just caregivers, but amazing adult figures that saw the best in Sam regardless of his actions or behaviours.

Sam also developed a strong bond with two FACS child protection workers, Barb and Bonnie. “When any youth comes into care, our goal is to help them become safe, stable, independent young individuals,” says Bonnie. “This will look different for every youth, but our main goal is to help them become their best by the time they leave us.”

In his more recent years, with the support from his worker Barb, Sam decided he wanted to pursue his educational goals. “Ever since I dropped out of high school, Barb always encouraged me to get back into school, keeping my best interests at heart,” Sam says. Sam has received his high school diploma, is set to graduate from his undergrad studies in August 2024, and is starting a postgraduate program in Autism and Behavioural Sciences at Niagara College in the fall.

“It’s exciting to celebrate our youths’ successes,” says Barb. “Whether it’s a quick chat in the car or an invitation to attend a graduation ceremony, it is so rewarding to be there cheering them on.”

Bonnie adds, “I always have my pompoms ready for our youth.”

Sam’s time in care not only provided him with essential resources but also instilled in him a sense of belonging and stability which enabled him to navigate adversity with resilience and determination. He exclaims,

“

Without the support from FACS, I wouldn't be where I am today.”

The commitment to providing support to children, youth and families is clearly outlined in FACS Niagara’s strategic plan. This commitment is articulated through the continued provision of culturally appropriate services and the recognition of the agency’s child-centered approach. It is essential to honour and understand the voices of the young people served by FACS Niagara, so that the organization can foster a community where all members thrive.

Showing resilience and finding his place in the world, Sam, alongside many incredible youth served by FACS, is overcoming adversity and thriving in his community.



FACS BY THE NUMBERS

6,221

Referrals related to children in need of protection.



600+

Families receiving ongoing services and supports at any one time.



96%

Children served in their own homes.



103

Resource Consultants supported

3,431

Unique number of families served (investigation and ongoing).



6,432

Children and youth served.



18

Completed adoptions.

3,118

Child protection investigations conducted.



429

Children in care (monthly average).



151

New Outlooks & Beginnings (Youth under 18).



Childcare programs supported

44

Children at Bunting and

85

Children at Western Hill

FACS VOLUNTEERS

Dedicated more than
11,613
hours to helping families
children and youth served
by FACS.

Collectively, they drove
more than
526,521
kilometers in 2023-24.

We are grateful to our
93
volunteers who give so
generously of themselves!



Family Counselling Centre
Centre de counseling familial

The Family Counselling Centre (FCC) has been offering quality counselling services to individuals, couples, and families in the Niagara Region since 1964. In addition to counselling services, the FCC offers a variety of special groups and programs designed to address specific issues and concerns. The FCC believes that wellness is in reach and they're able to support you on your journey.



3,939

Scheduled counselling
sessions.



47

Caring Dads.



35

Family group counselling
sessions.

Child witness:
82
unique clients

Violence Against
Women:
427
sessions

Partner Assault
Response:
96
unique clients

Foster Kin Support
Services:
58
families

UNITED WAY FUNDED SESSIONS



997

Fee Subsidy Sessions



66

Walk-In Sessions



90

Child Advocacy Sessions

FACS NIAGARA FOUNDATION

The Foundation for Family and Children's Services Niagara has raised needed dollars to support vulnerable children in Niagara for nearly a quarter-century.

In 2023, generous community support enabled the Foundation and agency to provide:

- Gifts and essentials to make the holidays magical for more than 430 children.
- 85 holiday gift baskets to youth living independently.
- Funding to develop a program to assist youth preparing to make the transition to living on their own. More than 50 youth participated in the Navigating Adulthood programs.
- 5 Home for the Holidays events. These events bring youth who have been in care back to the agency for a holiday meal, camaraderie with their friends and workers, and gifts.
- 63 grants to assist youth in continuing their education at college, university, or a postsecondary job training program.

We extend our most heartfelt gratitude to all the donors, sponsors, and supporters who contributed to enhancing the wellbeing of families, children, and youth served by FACS.



Foundation Board of Directors, 2023

Caroline Polgrabia (President)
Chris Accursi (Vice President)
Sheryl Mathews (Secretary)
Yar Diduch (Treasurer)
Anna Bozza (FACS Niagara CEO)
Rhianon Burkholder
Rick Dritsacos
Nina Jain Sheehan

Dr. Lorraine Jensen
Richard Madume
Ellen Schonewille (Senior Manager, Donor Relations)
Carly Eckhardt (Community Engagement Coordinator)
Brett Sweeney (Director of Communications and Community Engagement)

Mark Basciano, President and Owner of Mountainview Building Group, is the recipient of the 2024 Niagara Impact Community Leader Award announced by the Niagara Region. This award was presented at the 2024 State of the Region that took place on March 27 at John Michael's Banquet and Event Centre in Thorold.

The Niagara Impact Awards recognize community members who have made a positive impact on life in Niagara. Individuals, businesses and non-profit organizations are nominated for going above and beyond for making life better for those living in Niagara.

Mark was nominated for this award by FACS Niagara for his dedication, philanthropy, and generosity to its largest fundraiser to date – Mountainview LemonAID Day. Back in 2022, Mark enthusiastically embraced the idea of a lemonade stand fundraiser conceived by two local children aspiring to send children served by FACS Niagara to summer camp.



MAKING AN IMPACT

*- Mark Basciano,
President and Owner
of Mountainview
Building Group.*

"I recognized the impact that 'kids helping kids' would have on the community and I immediately knew this was something I wanted to be a part of,"

MOUNTAINVIEW LEMONAID DAY 2023

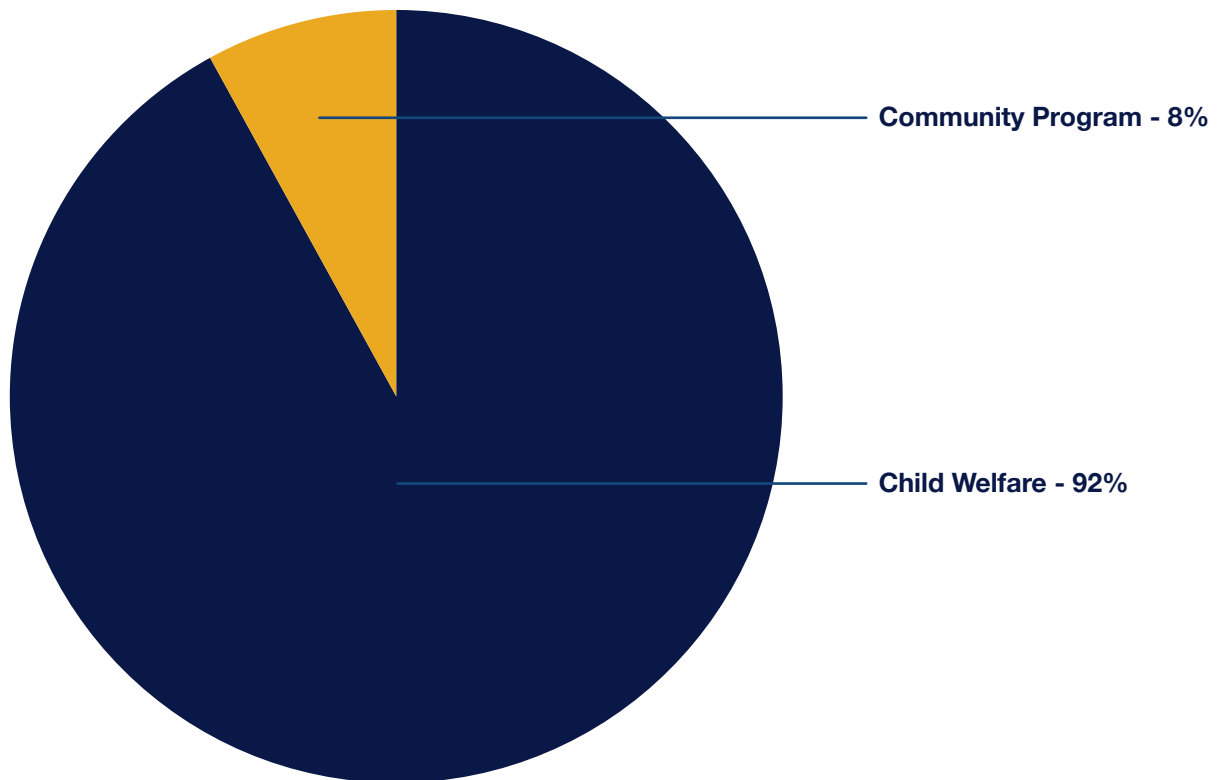
Provided more than **500** weeks of summer camp to **421** children served by FACS

Raised more than
\$103,000



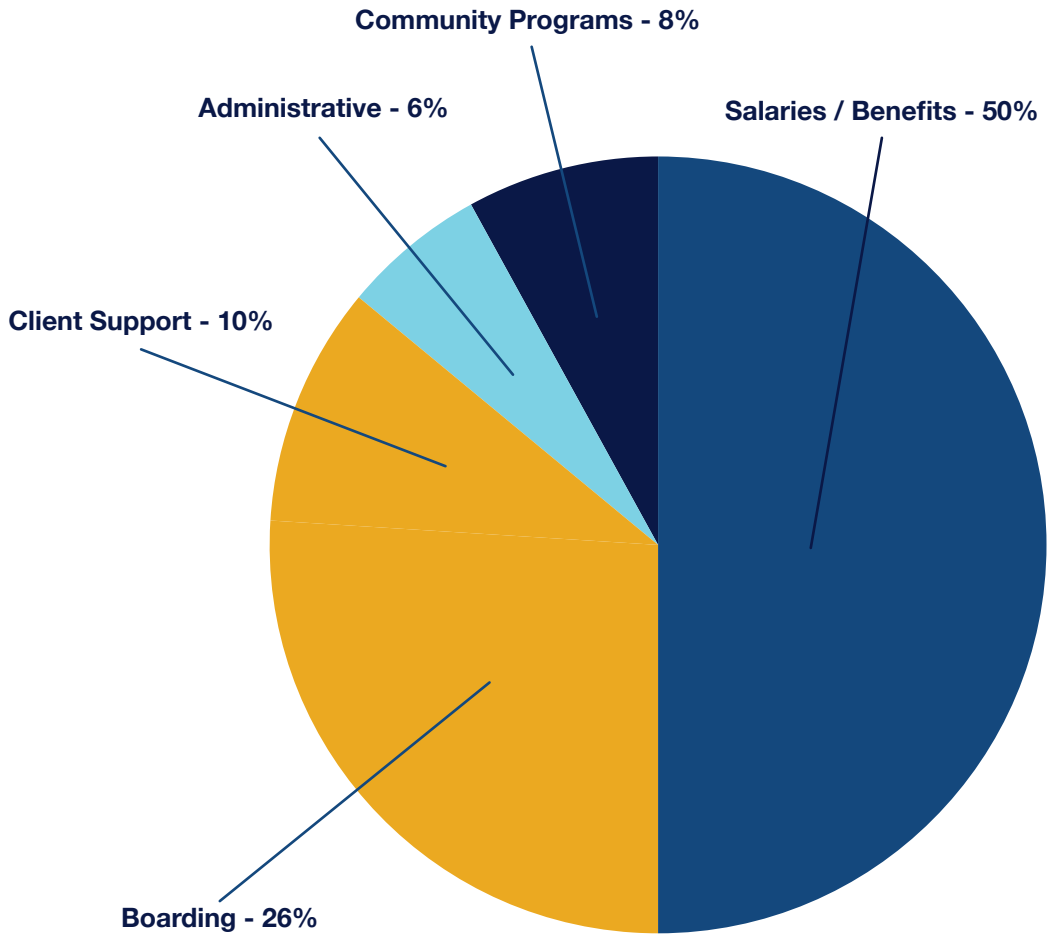
FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

REVENUES 2023-2024 % BREAKDOWN BY PROGRAM



EXPENSES 2023-2024

% BREAKDOWN BY CATEGORY



Summary \$000s

	Child Welfare	Community Programs	Total
Revenue	\$51,939	\$4,379	\$56,318
Expenditures	51,986	4,238	56,224
Surplus/(Deficit)	\$ (46)	\$141	\$94



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