



Children First

2022 Annual Report

Catholic
Children's Aid Society
of Hamilton



Société d'aide à l'enfance
catholique
de Hamilton



Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather and work is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties, and is within the lands protected by the Dish with One Spoon wampum agreement which is directly adjacent to Haldimand Treaty territory. We respect the longstanding relationships with local indigenous communities — the Mississauga's of the Credit First Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River and Métis and Inuit peoples.

As settlers, this recognition of the contributions and historic importance of Indigenous peoples must also be clearly and overtly connected to our collective commitment to make the promise and the challenge of Truth and Reconciliation real in our communities, and in particular, to bring justice for murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls across our country.

As an agency we acknowledge we must do better, be held accountable for results and work in a framework that recognizes and supports reconciliation with Indigenous communities.



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Leadership Message

At the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton (CCASH), our work is deeply rooted in our commitment to preventative care and advocating for children. This year, we have been steadfast to honour our commitment to put children first. As such, this year's annual report presents how the CCASH has remained focused on this commitment.

While reflecting on the past year, the children, youth and families we serve have remained central to our work to build community partnerships, raise funds and implement inclusive practices. As the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child, and our vital work would not be possible without the substantial support and innovation found in our community partnerships. The CCASH has moved forward with partnerships this year that have addressed key issues for our service recipients such as food insecurity and intrusive practices. It is through these partnerships that we have been able to initiate actionable change.

Together with Shalem Mental Health Network and the WrapAround program, we are supporting children in their homes and to wrap supports around them and their families. This strength-based community focus allows for the family to find support from their community and familiarity with the services they receive, minimizing the intrusion as they heal and grow together. Additionally, to address issues of food insecurity, we partnered with Goodwill to provide meals to youth and support the families we serve struggling through the pandemic over a 26-week period. With the help of Hamilton Taste Buds, children who would normally receive meals at school, could now receive meals at home.

Moving through the year, a priority for us was to take steps to create equitable culture at all levels of the agency. We knew that there were areas we could become more equitable and wanted to hold our agency accountable. This year, we completed our equity audit as we have remained committed to our anti racism strategy. This was a point of inflection for the Society. Through the learnings of the audit, and a race-based data analysis, the CCASH was able to address key areas that needed improvement and create a plan to make needed change. We know that marginalized communities are disproportionately represented, and we will conduct ourselves proactively to implement practices through our work with staff and community members regarding anti-racism

and anti-colonialism. We acknowledge that racism exists in all institutions and that our organization is not immune, and we continue to be committed to cultivating a culture of respect and inclusivity.

At the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton, our staff are at the heart of all we do. The work of those in child welfare can be rewarding and challenging. Their tireless dedication is inspiring. Each member of our team is committed to respecting the dignity of each human life and improving service experience for the children, youth and families we connect with.

Thank you to our valued board members, foster parents and volunteers who create opportunities for children to thrive and achieve brighter futures for themselves. We are grateful to our dedicated senior leadership team for their continued focus and commitment to fulfilling the mission, vision and values of our organization.

As this is the end of my 36-year tenure at the CCASH, I want to thank all our donors who generously support our organization — without your support we could not do what we do.

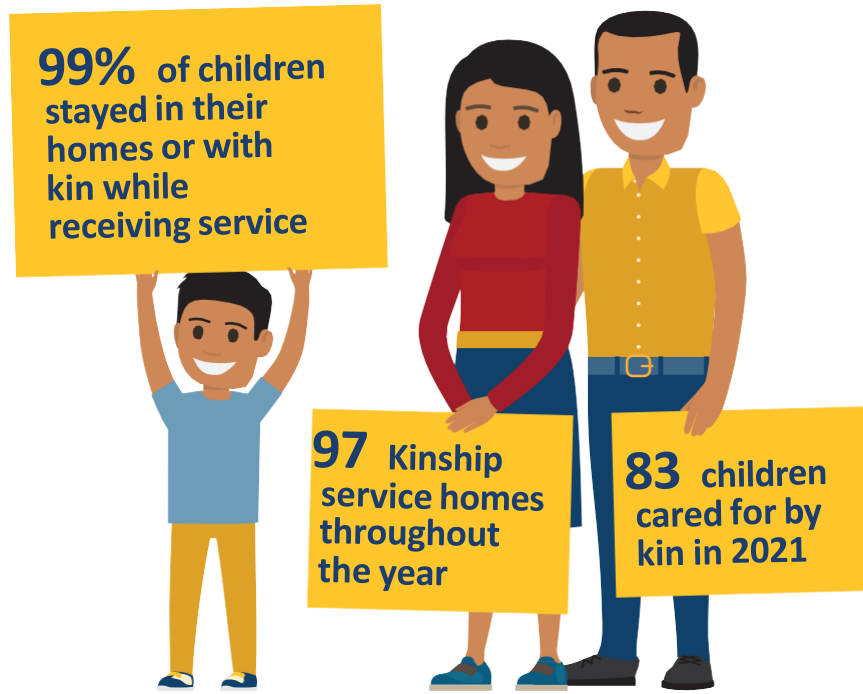
I have a deep sense of gratitude and appreciation for all the experiences I have had and lessons I have learned during my time working in child welfare. I will always have fond memories of working with the inspiring children and youth in our care and have found great pride in seeing so many of them grow and thrive over the years as they have worked to make better lives for themselves. I look forward to supporting the agency as a member of the community while the CCASH team continues with faith-inspired care and compassion for those we serve.



David Hennick
Chair, Board of Directors



Rocco Gizzarelli
Executive Director



Kinship

“ We were presented the opportunity to provide Kinship care to our niece when we learned that our relatives could no longer provide a safe space for her to grow and thrive. Family means everything to us, and we believe that every child should have a safe space to grow, laugh and just be a kid. It is because of this that we were right on board with providing Kin care through the CCASH. There are challenges that we face as we navigate this arrangement, but we are grateful for the support that the CCASH has shown us and our family throughout this time. They have shown us that keeping families together while keeping children safe is the priority, and we are grateful for their guidance throughout this process. At the end of the day, every difficult moment is worth it to see the child smile and to know that they feel safe and comfortable.”

— Jane

Fostering

“ Over the past 8 years, we have fostered 14 children. I grew up in a home where my parents fostered children throughout my life, so I had a good idea of what I was getting into when I decided that I wanted to provide a safe home for children in need as my parents did. Fostering a child, whether they are a baby with medical needs, or a school aged child, is a full-time emotional commitment. We welcome these children into our home as part of the family and work to put their needs first.

We understand that the goal is to reunite them with their biological family when possible, and we aim to be a support every step of the way as best as we can. We work closely with the CCASH and the staff to ensure the child's safety and wellbeing. We have seen the agency provide programming and various accommodations to birth families to aid in their visitation time with the children such as translators for parents who are unable to speak fluent English. This shows us that the agency is prioritizing open communication to ensure that everyone is on the same page for the sake of the child. Ultimately, it is a team effort to keep these children safe and thriving and working collaboratively with the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton has seen positive results for the children.

We are grateful to keep in contact with several children that have been in our care and reunited with their biological families, or children that have moved on to successful adoptions where they are thriving. Fostering is an opportunity to truly make a difference in the life of a child as foster parents now have an active role in the success story of the children in care.”

— Pam



Adoption

“ My partner and I have always known we wanted to have a family of our own, and adoption was the avenue that we chose. I have previously worked in a group home in Toronto, so I was exposed to the world of child welfare and knowing that there were older children in need. About six years ago we started our adoption journey by attending an information meeting. Years later, we finally came across the profile of a child who we matched with. From there, everything went quickly – we went from six years of waiting to a couple of weeks till meeting the child.

Throughout this process, we had frequent contact with the worker. The CCASH and the worker offered support along the way as we made progress with our adoption. Our child meshed well with us, so it was a smooth transition. Since we live in Toronto, and our child has younger siblings living in their own adoptive homes, our CCASH worker is our anchor that helps us keep in touch with them in Hamilton. Everyone has been so helpful and supportive throughout this first year that our family has been together. We are grateful for the support of not only the CCASH, but the workers and foster parents as well.

It takes time for the child to acclimate to you, especially when they are so fond of their foster parent. The Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton really advocated for our child throughout the process and made sure that we moved at a pace that was safe and healthy for the child. At the end of the day, the child is the most important, and we need to follow their lead. Trust the process, the workers know what they're doing, and in the end it all comes down to making sure the needs of the child are met first... and that's exactly what the CCASH did.

”

– Jeffrey



Adoption

“ Ever since my 20's, I have always been interested in adoption. It wasn't until later in life that I realized this would be our path to family as I struggled with having children biologically. We learned about the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton when my husband received something in the mail, so we thought we would call and learn more about the organization and their adoption process. From there, we were enrolled in PRIDE training and began our journey. A huge takeaway from the training was learning to see the experience through the eyes of the child, and their traumas. The CCASH really helped us understand that the focus is always on the child, and we are here as part of their healing journey.

We were matched with two toddler siblings, and we truly feel that it was meant to be. There is no way to fully be prepared for adoption – but despite that, we knew that the CCASH and the workers were there every step of the way with us. We feel so comfortable with the agency, and we have received reassurance about our characters and capabilities as parents to use the tools we need to get through the struggles. Since our children have traumas of their own, everyone they are associated with needs to have understanding and be equipped with the knowledge of how to appropriately interact with them.

We felt supported by the CCASH when one of our workers offered to educate our entire extended family on the realities of dealing with the children and the appropriate ways to interact with them. As new parents of adopted children, this brought us such relief. The support system through the CCASH network doesn't end with the workers, though. We have been able to connect with other adoptive parents who have been through similar situations to talk and find help and comfort in knowing we aren't alone.

We feel the support and care wrapped around our family, and we are so grateful. Each day, we grow more and more, and I see my children healing in their own ways. However we may have found each other, we are in a soul contract and we are meant to be together.

”

– Dallas

Spiritual Care

“ The past year working with Michael and the agency has produced a profound change in my life. I started my journey with them at a time when I felt entirely lost in my faith, and ashamed of my inability to function fully as a mother and wife. Through a tailored experience of therapy and faith enrichment exercises, I was given the opportunity to accept, reflect, and let go of the weight that held me under. I am now equipped with the tools to cultivate a happier, richer life, one that reflects the beauty and might of the Holy Spirit.

”



Top 5
reasons for referrals:
1. Physical maltreatment
2. Caregiver with a problem
3. Domestic violence
4. Emotional harm
5. Neglect

Community Partners Working Together



**33 children
in camp**



Our philanthropic focus has remained on raising funds to provide additional support and resources to those we serve that will encourage growth and development. Key initiatives that do not receive government funding include summer camp, tutoring and school trips. These opportunities provide space for children and youth to find freedom from stresses they face and helps them grow more confident and self-assured.

Through community partnerships and fundraising efforts, the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton has been able to raise \$1.5 million since 2018 to provide enriching opportunities to children, youth and families.

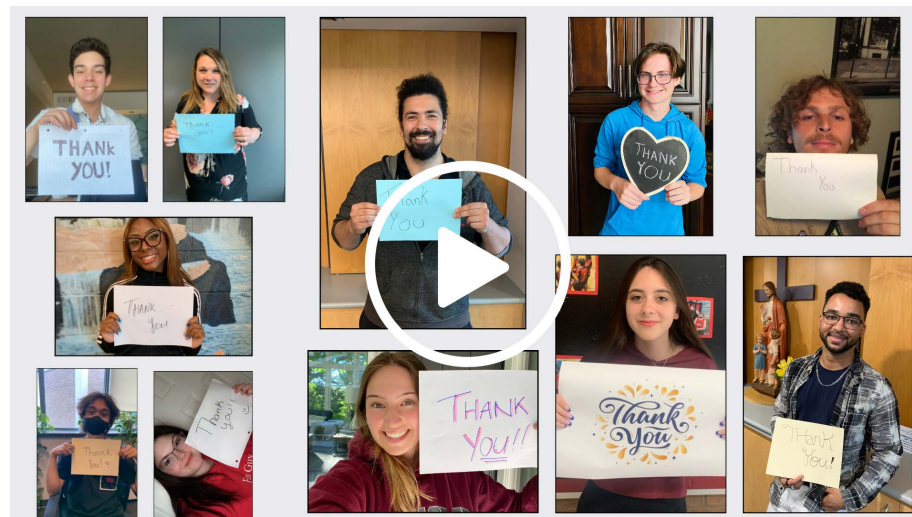


**400 children,
youth and families
supported from
Give the Gift
of Joy Campaign**



In 2021, we launched the Give the Gift of Joy Campaign, which will run annually throughout the winter holiday season.

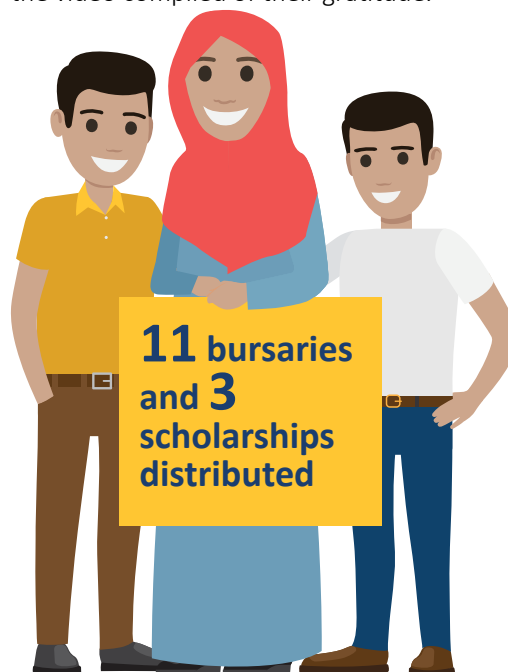
In our kickoff year, we exceeded our fundraising goal and raised \$70,000 and were able to offer financial support to families over the winter and aid in creating a more magical holiday for children, youth and families by compiling gift bags filled with toys and goods. Thank you to everyone who supported the campaign and helped bring joy to children in our community!



Funds donated from the HGCC Foundation and major donors like the Sazio Family were dispersed to youth earning a post- secondary education. You can hear from these youth by watching the video compiled of their gratitude.



Rocco Gizzarelli receiving cheque from HGCC Foundation



We saw another successful year at our annual Peder Larsen Golf Tournament with funds raised to support Kinship families. Each year, we are grateful for the opportunity to connect with our community of supporters and further the impact that donations can make.

Major community partners such as the Diocese of Hamilton and Hamilton Golf and Country Club (HGCC) Foundation have continued to graciously support the work of the CCASH with monetary gifts. When many of the children and youth we serve were not able to access hot meals during the pandemic, The Bishop Crosby Fund was available to support our families through these trying times.

Strength-Based, Equity-Focused & Faith-Inspired Services

The Catholic Children's Aid Society has made notable strides in operationalizing equity focused services in a more holistic approach to ensure children are remaining with their families in a safe and supported environment. Part of our ongoing commitment to make positive change and disrupt racist and colonialist practices was to instigate an Equity Audit of our organization.

As a result of the Equity Audit conducted, our agency is actively implementing four key priorities to guide our practices:

Priority 1: Deepen the CCASH's anti-racism work

Priority 2: Diversify the workforce at all levels

Priority 3: Strengthening Human Resource Policies and Practices

Priority 4: Create a more inclusive and respectful organizational culture

To deepen our work with anti-racism and anti-colonialism, Indigenous community members have been invited to discussions related to recruitment of Indigenous caregivers and in anticipation of the development of agency specific curriculum related to the Heart & Spirit tool. Heart and Spirit enables us to provide a more wholistic and cultural safe process of assessing Indigenous families and community members to become alternative care providers which in turn will keep Indigenous children with their families and communities in the event they must be brought into a place of safety.

Through the work of the CCASH Indigenous team, Indigenous clients have been connected to Indigenous service providers for support to minimize the amount of time our agency is involved. The CCASH has seen a drop in cases involving court, a

drop in the number of cases opening to ongoing, and many historical cases being closed after being open for years. Through the efforts of the Indigenous workers, we have been able to access

85% of Indigenous children on adoption probation are in a culturally matched home



over \$90,000 in Jordan's Principle funding, which has enabled us to work collaboratively to keep kids safe with their families. This is part of our ongoing goal to keep kids safe and families together.

We are engaging with the black community in Hamilton for more dialogue to build a more trusting relationship. Our mission as an agency is to have a more centralized approach to supporting youth and provide one-on-one support whenever possible. Through our DEI team, we were able to connect with black youth throughout the pandemic to arrange activities and provide one-on-one support. We assisted a youth living in a foster home to learn how to navigate the bus transportation he would need to get to his high school and back home.

Ensuring that kids are safe is only one part of our work here at CCASH... they also need to know that they can count on us to be there for them, if they need us. Staff at all levels are committed to ensuring that the children, youth and families we serve, no matter what race, nationality, sexual orientation or religion know that we are here to support and foster a safe and inclusive space for positive growth and change.

85% of Black/African Canadian children in kin service are in a culturally matched home





Tribute to Rocco Gizzarelli: 36 Years of Putting Children First

After 36 years of service, our Executive Director, Rocco Gizzarelli will be retiring from his work here at the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton as of June 30, 2022. Rocco has dedicated his career to helping children, youth, and families in the Hamilton community, beginning on the front lines, and working all the way to executive leadership where he has made formidable contributions and developments in the agency. Leading with compassion and care, Rocco has fostered welcoming and inclusive spaces which have inspired staff and left service recipients feeling empowered and supported. Due to his long tenure at the agency, Rocco has made an impact on many youths that have come to know him and confide in him over the years.

Here's what some of them had to say ...

Throughout my time at the agency, Rocco has always been very welcoming and encouraging to everyone. During my time on the Board, he provided me with enormous support and mentorship which instilled in me the confidence to keep moving forward. I truly feel blessed and thankful for his honesty, integrity, and strength in his leadership.

- Samidha

All the best in your retirement. You have changed many lives.

- Morgan

You've done a fantastic job Rocco — congrats on retirement and enjoy it!

- Sam

Congratulations

- Ryan

Congratulations!

- Matt

Congratulations!!! You will be truly missed. Thank you for 30 plus years, wishing you the very best Rocco.

- Liam

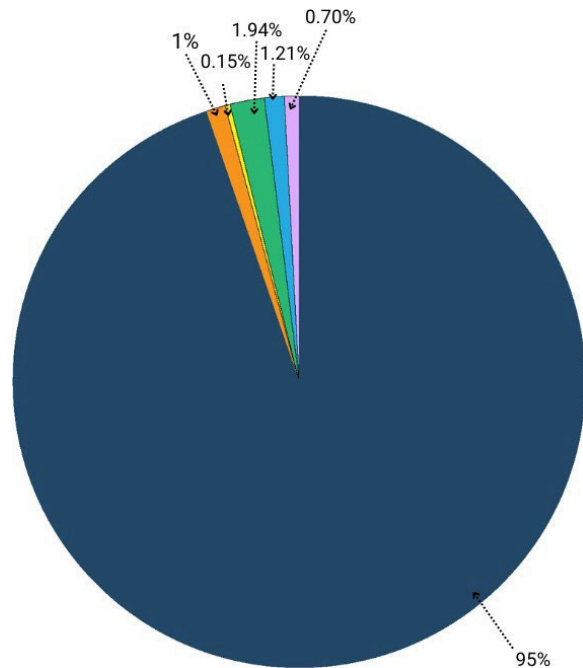
Congrats Rocco! You have always been very kind to me since I was young and I always enjoyed you being in my corner along with other CCASH workers! I hope this change brings you all the happiness and relaxation you deserve!

- Paige

Congrats Rocco you have made such a good impact on so many lives during your time within the agency and I'm sure even retired you will still be touching lives every day. I wish you a relaxing and enjoyable next step in your life.

- Taylor

FY 2021-2022 Financials



Revenues

- Province of Ontario
- Donations
- Events
- Government of Canada
- Inter-Agency
- Miscellaneous

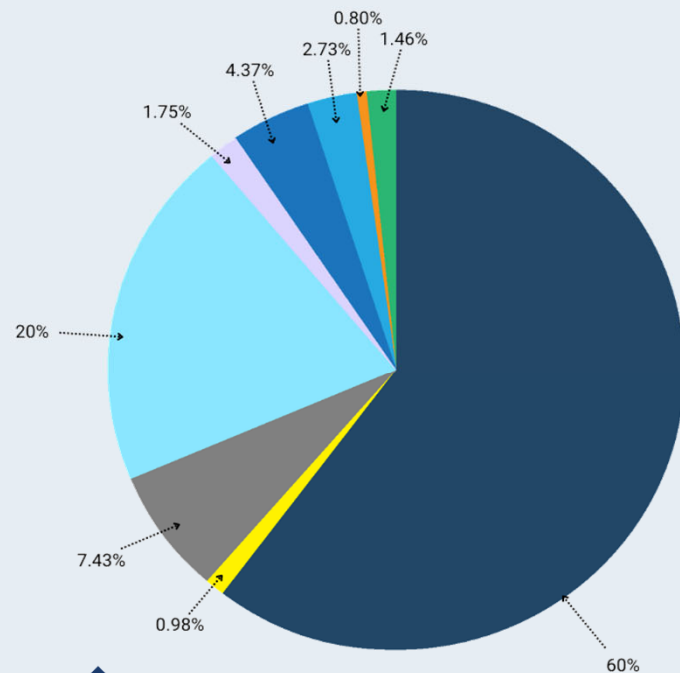
Total Revenues 24,927,886

Surplus Reported for the Year

The Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton is reporting a surplus of **\$397,749** for the fiscal year. In keeping with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services guidelines, our portion of the surplus will be used to support the agency's strategic direction and business plan. We are committed to maintaining prudent fiscal management as a steward of public funds.

This is a summary of details in the 2021-22 audited financial statements prepared under Public Sector Accounting Standards (PSAS) and audited by HGK Partners LLP.

[Click here](#) for a full audited financial statement.



Expenditures

- Salaries & Benefits
- Travel
- Financial Assistance, Scholarships and Special Programs
- Boarding Rate Payments
- Children's Personal Needs
- Technology and Purchased Services
- Office Administration and Other
- Training and Recruitment
- Building Occupancy

Total Expenditures 24,530,137

