

2025/ SUCCESS STORY

Hamilton Food Share Success Story

Hamilton Food Share

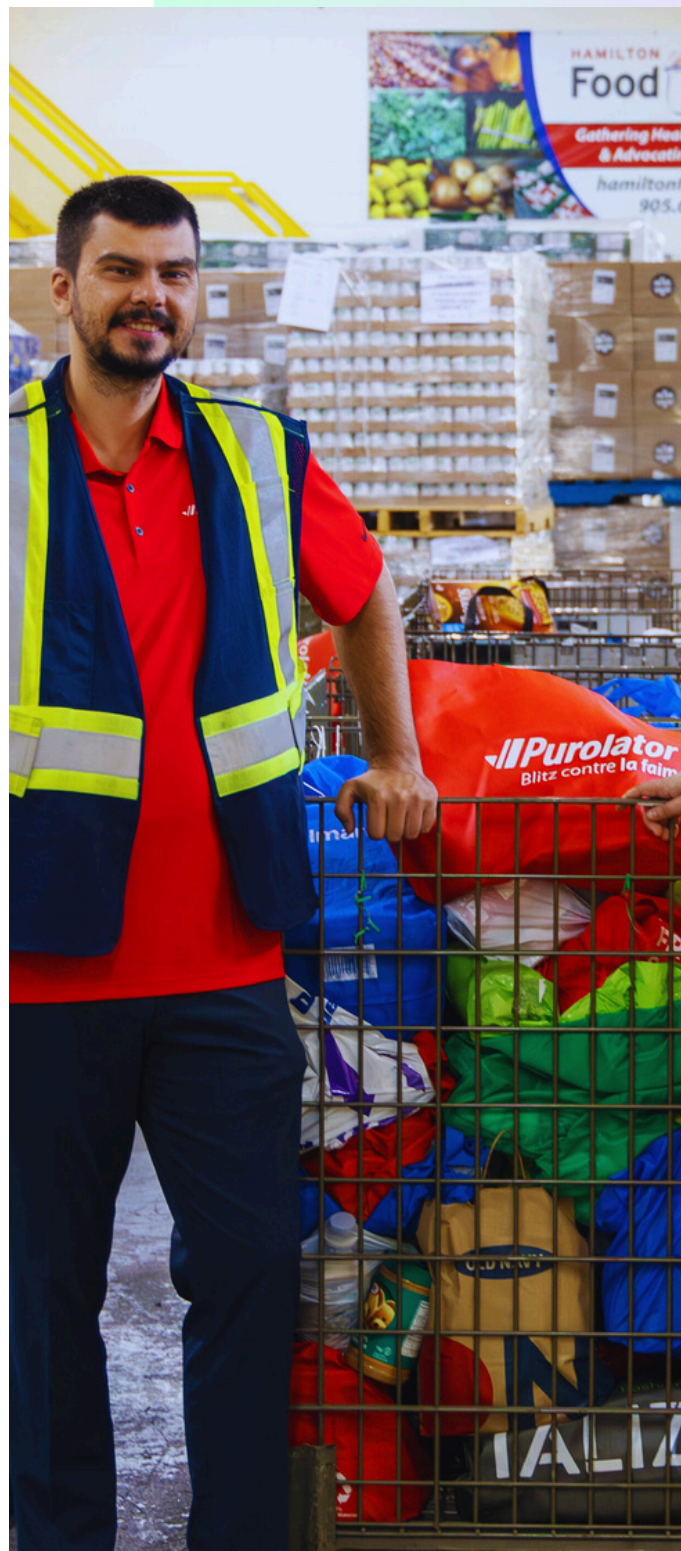
Hamilton Food Share, a food-distribution and food-raising organization, has been a central hub of the emergency food network across Hamilton, connecting food donors, community agencies, and families in need.

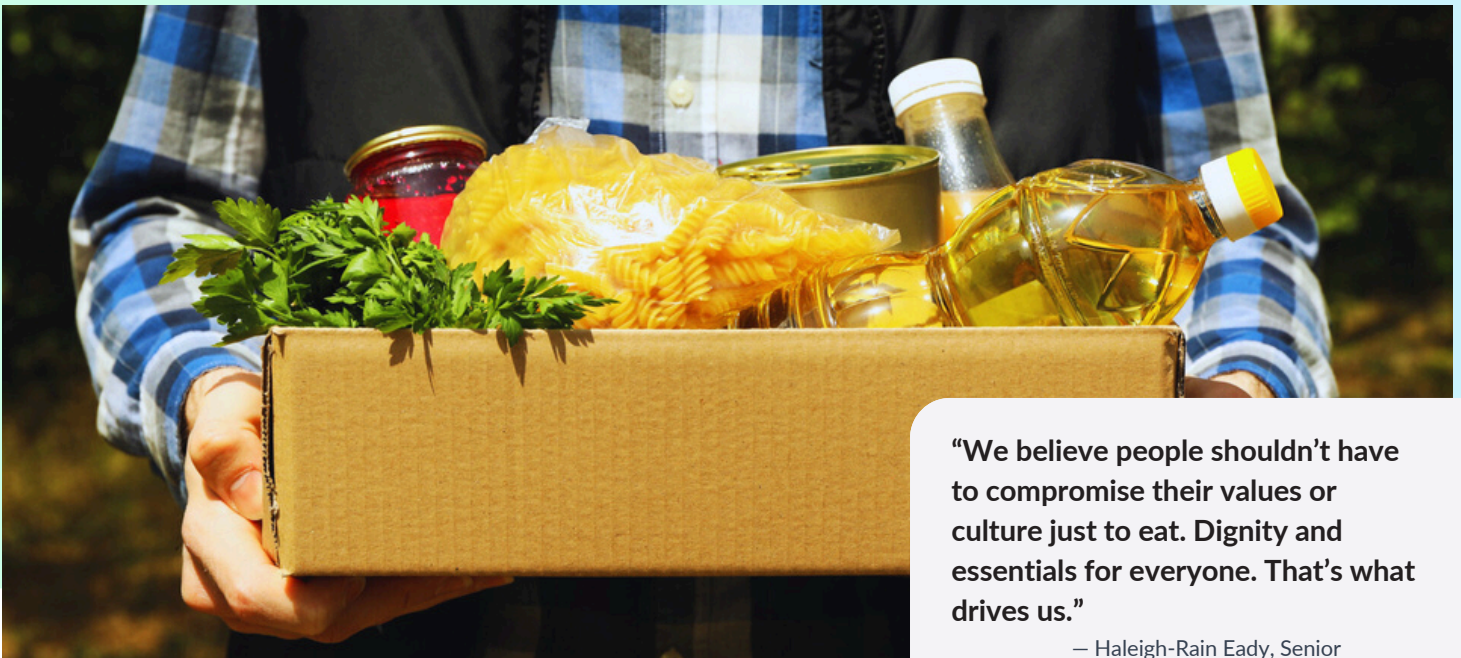
Uses CanadaHelps for:

Donation Forms for:

- in-memoriam pages
- community fundraisers
- direct mail
- general fundraising

See how the charity has increased donations by 25%, monthly donors by 60%, and total donors by 11.6% with CanadaHelps.





“We believe people shouldn’t have to compromise their values or culture just to eat. Dignity and essentials for everyone. That’s what drives us.”

— Haleigh-Rain Eady, Senior Manager, Fundraising & Development, Hamilton Food Share

ABOUT HAMILTON FOOD SHARE

Since 1990, Hamilton Food Share has been the central hub of the emergency food network across Hamilton, connecting food donors, community agencies, and families in need. As a food distribution warehouse and food-raising organization, **it supports 16 member agencies and 22 programs** – including food banks, meal programs, and shelters – ensuring equitable access to nutritious food for everyone in need.

Each year, Hamilton Food Share distributes over 4.7 million pounds of food valued at more than \$17 million, including nearly 3 million pounds of fresh produce, dairy, and proteins. The organization plays a vital role in coordinating resources and logistics that smaller agencies couldn’t manage alone – from cold storage and transportation to food recovery partnerships with wholesalers and retailers.

The charity’s impact goes beyond meals. It’s about building a system that ensures food equity, cultural inclusion, and shared dignity for every person it serves.

From halal and kosher options to fresh fruits and vegetables, they ensure that families can eat in ways that respect health and heritage. For parents, essentials like diapers, baby formula, and hygiene products bring relief at a time when every dollar counts.

RELATIONSHIP WITH CANADAHELPS

Since 2015, Hamilton Food Share has partnered with CanadaHelps for all its online fundraising. CanadaHelps has supported Hamilton Food Share with a reliable, user-friendly system.

The organization uses CanadaHelps for:

- Custom donation forms
- Monthly & one-time donor campaigns
- Automated tax receipts & thank-you emails
- Donor management & reporting, and more

“We use CanadaHelps for any and all of our online donations. It’s our only online platform – everything runs through it,” shared Haleigh-Rain.

Fundraising: A Diverse Approach

Hamilton Food Share's fundraising model mirrors the community it serves – collaborative, diverse, and grounded in trust.

Corporate and Community Partnerships

Local businesses and community groups form a major part of Hamilton Food Share's giving ecosystem. One standout example is the long-standing partnership with Purolator's Tackle Hunger Program and the Hamilton Tiger-Cats, which in 2025 alone raised over 253,000 pounds of food. These campaigns combine corporate support, community participation, and digital giving through CanadaHelps donation forms.

"The partnership with Purolator and Tiger-Cats was a huge success for us – it's proof of how the city comes together when there's a cause to rally behind," shared Haleigh-Rain. "Through that program, we broke a record this year over the summer, which is usually our slowest period. So, yes, every season we work a lot with partners and run them through CanadaHelps."

Community Fundraising & Food Drives

Schools, faith groups, and local businesses organize drives and fundraisers that run year-round. Organizers can use Hamilton Food Share's accessible CanadaHelps standard donation link and the provided QR code, or receive a custom CanadaHelps donation form and QR code for their event. This allows donors to give instantly online – a major step in modernizing traditional community giving.

Digital Fundraising & Monthly Giving

As more donors shift online, Hamilton Food Share has leaned into digital fundraising through CanadaHelps, transforming one-time donors into ongoing supporters. **Their monthly giving program has grown by an incredible 60% in less than a year** – and it continues to rise. The team often reaches out to existing donors and invites them to consider breaking that gift into smaller, manageable monthly contributions.

Major Gifts & Foundations

In addition to grassroots donations, Hamilton Food Share receives grants and gifts from family foundations and corporate donors who value its transparent, high-impact model. With over 90% of funds spent directly on food programs, only 1–2% on administration, and rest on other operations, donors trust their contributions are making a tangible difference.

"Despite limited access to federal or provincial funding, Hamilton Food Share thrives on donor generosity and transparent operations. Our donors can see exactly where their money goes. That transparency has been key to building a loyal donor base," emphasized Haleigh-Rain.

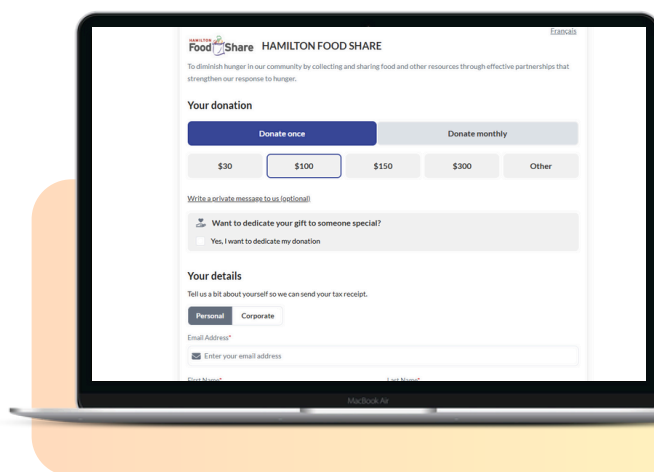
Digital Fundraising with CanadaHelps

CanadaHelps plays a vital role in helping Hamilton Food Share build and sustain its donor community. From streamlined donation forms to automation tools to donor data, the platform has been integral to their digital fundraising success.

CUSTOMIZABLE DONATION FORM (CDF)

The charity uses CanadaHelps CDF for all its digital campaigns. Through CDFs, the team can create fully branded, mobile-friendly donation pages for every campaign – from seasonal food drives to memorial funds and community-led fundraisers.

Additional features, like Smart Sums that suggest preset donation amounts to donors, have helped the charity encourage higher giving by suggesting meaningful donation amounts to donors. *“It takes five minutes to make a form. We use them for our campaigns and food drives as they’re easy to share across different donor segments,”* shared Haleigh-Rain.



Here are some different types of campaigns that Hamilton Food Share uses CDFs for:



➤ Community Fundraisers: Turning Every Neighbour into a Champion

Hamilton Food Share gives local businesses, schools, and community groups the tools to run their own food drives online with CDFs. When a partner hosts a fundraiser, Hamilton Food Share provides a general donation link and QR code that all organizers can use. For recurring annual events, the charity creates custom forms with the partner's name, branding, and direct link, and shares them along with supporting materials.

This model also helps bring in new donors that the charity might not have reached otherwise. Each donor who gives through a community-run food drive is automatically added to Hamilton Food Share’s database, allowing the team to steward those relationships long after the campaign ends.

“The power is really in their hands. They can send it to people, put it in their email signatures, and do the fundraising work – and it takes that burden off our small team.” — Haleigh-Rain



➤ In-Memoriam Pages: Honouring Loved Ones Through Giving

Hamilton Food Share also helps their community give in the form of in-memoriam pages. When families lose a loved one, they often want to honour their memory through acts of generosity.

Instead of a single one-time gift, Hamilton Food Share helps them create a dedicated donation page in memory of that person.

Each page often includes a short note about the individual and their connection to Hamilton Food Share, offering families something deeply personal to share with friends and relatives.

These pages and forms are kept private (not listed publicly on the website) and remain open as long as families wish. *"Families feel like they're contributing to a legacy, and we love to do that for them,"* shared Haleigh-Rain.

These in-memoriam pages also create lasting relationships. Hamilton Food Share checks in with families periodically, offering to keep the page active or transition the giving into an annual tribute.

"Usually, they'll come to us. We don't ask them to set it up, but if somebody asks how they could donate at their funeral, we'll make a form for their family member. Sometimes they ask that it stays open so they can donate every year. It becomes like a living fund, something they can return to together."

— Haleigh-Rain

➤ Seasonal Food Drives: Turning Moments into Movements

Seasonal campaigns, such as the charity's annual Thanksgiving Food Drive, are an example of how digital tools amplify real-world generosity.

This year, the team launched the drive with a simple CanadaHelps donation link. Within hours of sending the first email, donations started to flow in.



"When we sent the link out, there were just a couple of hundred dollars at first," recalled Haleigh-Rain. "By the end of the week, it was almost \$20,000. It just took off."

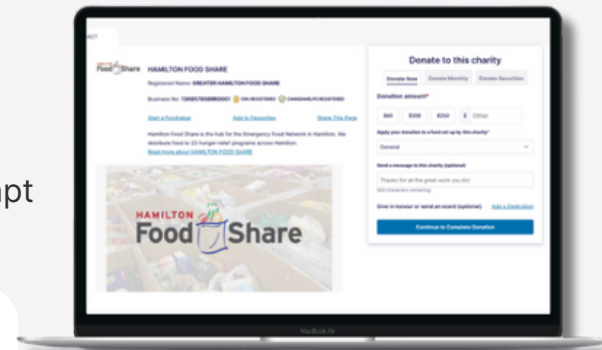
The combination of social sharing, QR codes, and easy-to-use donation forms has made it possible for Hamilton Food Share to turn a weeklong event into a citywide movement.

➤ Digital Touch to Traditional Mail Campaigns

Even their traditional mail campaigns now carry a digital touch. This hybrid approach bridges the gap between long-time supporters who prefer physical mail and a new generation of digital donors, while helping the charity adapt to challenges such as postal disruption.

“Something that I changed this year is adding scan-to-donate QR codes on our direct mail and envelopes. It just provides an instant way for people to just scan and donate. We did this even before the strikes happened, and I’m now thanking myself that we thought of doing so. Now, if a person knows a mail strike is going on and they can’t mail anything, they’re more likely to just scan and give via the online donation form instantly. It’s quick and easy.”

— Haleigh-Rain



MONTHLY GIVING

For Hamilton Food Share, monthly donors via CanadaHelps represent a growing segment.

“A good portion of our monthly giving growth has come from new recurring monthly donors. It’s something I feel extremely strong about and have been working hard to build,” shared Haleigh-Rain. But the relationship doesn’t stop at the transaction. Hamilton Food Share ensures monthly donors stay connected and engaged through regular updates, behind-the-scenes tours, and volunteer opportunities at their warehouse.

“Those recurring monthly donors stay in touch with us a little more closely,” shared Haleigh-Rain. ***“We take that opportunity to really get them involved – to invite them in, show them how things work, volunteer and connect them directly with the impact they’re making.”*** They even educate and touch base with donors who engage in mail-in donations to encourage online monthly giving instead.



AUTOMATED TAX RECEIPTS & THANK-YOUS

With CanadaHelps, Hamilton Food Share can automatically send CRA-compliant tax receipts and thank-you messages for every donation made. This has streamlined a manual process and ensured that donors receive prompt acknowledgment.

Haleigh-Rain noted that this has been a meaningful improvement for the team. This level of automation and support allows staff to focus on fundraising and donor engagement rather than administrative tasks.



“When it comes to the tax receipts, that is a massive piece for us. People really enjoy the immediate response. I also like that we can customize our thank yous and that there's just an automation portion that we don't need to be thinking about consistently. It's really taking the administrative burden off from that fundraising side and making it simplified for us.”

— Haleigh-Rain

POWERFUL REPORTING FOR SMARTER STEWARDSHIP

Data from CanadaHelps donation reports has changed the way Hamilton Food Share plans and evaluates campaigns.

With weekly performance insights, the team can adjust messaging, track repeat donors, and better understand what motivates giving.

“When it comes to the monetary side, the reporting aspect is extremely important for us because we do still have a lot of people who do mail their donations in and things, but it's actually transitioning from that to online. I use the reporting tool every week to check where we are at and what we can improve,” shared Haleigh-Rain.



Results with CanadaHelps

Since expanding their use of CanadaHelps tools, Hamilton Food Share has seen steady, measurable growth across all key fundraising areas. This growth represents more than just numbers – it's increased stability, deeper donor relationships, and greater ability to respond to Hamilton's growing food needs.

25% Increase in total funds raised since January 2025

11.6% Increase in total donors

60% Growth in monthly donors

8.6% Increase in online donations year-over-year

GROWTH IN DONATIONS

With CanadaHelps, Hamilton Food Share has seen a 25% increase in total funds raised in the past year, and an 8.6% increase in online donations year-over-year. This reflects a steady digital growth and donor confidence.

IMPROVED DONOR STEWARDSHIP

Automated receipts and thank-you notes have improved donor communication, while reporting insights support personalized follow-ups and acknowledgment of impact.



INCREASED MONTHLY GIVING AND NEW DONORS

Hamilton Food Share appreciates the donation form features that enable it to leverage monthly donations, which are now a key revenue stream for it. They have seen a steady rise in monthly contributors, marking a ~60% increase. They have also seen an 11.6% increase in total donors.

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

Automation through CanadaHelps has also significantly reduced manual tasks, allowing staff to focus on community partnerships and program delivery rather than administration.



Why Hamilton Food Share Recommends CanadaHelps

For Hamilton Food Share, CanadaHelps is more than a donation processing platform – it's a trusted partner in growth. The team values its ease of use, dependable support, and powerful reporting features.

The ability to quickly launch new campaigns, create branded donation pages, and immediately track performance gives the organization flexibility and confidence.

Reliability and responsive support have made CanadaHelps a trusted partner, not just a tool. *"If something happens, I know I can call and get it resolved easily. That support matters,"* emphasized Haleigh-Rain.

CanadaHelps enables Hamilton Food Share to spend less time managing systems – and more time connecting with their community.

"It's easy, intuitive, and adaptable. From forms to reporting to automated receipts – it makes fundraising simpler, faster, and more personal."

— Haleigh-Rain

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Impact on the Community

Hamilton Food Share's reach extends across every corner of Hamilton's food network.

Feeding Families with Dignity

Each year, the organization distributes over 4.7 million pounds of food, ensuring thousands of households have consistent access to nutritious meals.

"One of our biggest champions in the community is Eva Rothwell Center, who has been with Hamilton Food Share since it started. And the Director at the center recently mentioned to me that he thinks of us as the 'beating heart of the community and that we feed everyone, big and small,'" shared Haleigh-Rain.

Supporting Children and Seniors

The organization's reach extends beyond food. From diapers and baby formula to hygiene kits and ready-to-eat foods, Hamilton Food Share ensures that vulnerable groups – especially children and seniors – are not left behind.

Reducing Food Insecurity through Collaboration

By coordinating food logistics for its member agencies, Hamilton Food Share ensures that smaller programs can focus on community connection, while larger partners benefit from cost efficiencies and centralized supply. The organization handles warehousing, logistics, and distribution, allowing agencies to focus on direct community support.

"We're the warehouse and logistics team behind our partners – they can count on us to get fresh food to their doors every week. A lot of our member agencies also have limited staffing capacity. So they are big champions of us and our support – both in terms of logistics and giving," shared Haleigh-Rain.

Ensuring Cultural Inclusion

The team actively sources and distributes halal, kosher, and culturally relevant foods to meet the needs of Hamilton's diverse communities. This inclusivity ensures that no family has to sacrifice cultural or religious dietary values to access food, even in difficult times.

Looking Ahead

Hamilton Food Share is preparing for another year of growth and innovation – both in food distribution and donor engagement.

- **Scaling Food Distribution:** With demand for food support still rising, Hamilton Food Share plans to expand warehouse capacity and enhance delivery logistics, ensuring a more efficient network for its member agencies.
- **Building Donor Programs:** The team aims to grow its monthly giving program beyond 1,000 donors and expand its tribute and memorial giving campaigns, helping donors connect with causes that matter to them.
- **Enhancing Planned Giving:** As Hamilton Food Share looks to the future, they are looking to redevelop its planned giving program and is looking to really highlight the impact of a donor's gift. The team's goal is to make legacy donors feel even more connected not only to the cause but also to the concrete impact their support makes possible. Every thank-you letter and follow-up comms already tie in donations to real impact – the number of people fed, meals provided, and pounds of food distributed.
- **Investing in Technology:** By deepening its use of CanadaHelps data and automation tools, Hamilton Food Share plans to refine donor segmentation and launch more targeted digital campaigns.
- **Peer-to-Peer Fundraising with CanadaHelps:** Hamilton Food Share is also looking to expand its use of CanadaHelps with peer-to-peer fundraising. *"We do have some events that are coming up, and for us, there's a lot of functionality we are looking to leverage,"* shared Haleigh-Rain. And with access to donor and fundraiser data, they can reconnect with participants and invite them to become monthly donors.
- **Strengthening Community Partnerships:** The organization will continue to build strong partnerships with corporations, schools, and community groups – ensuring that Hamilton's food network remains united and resilient. *"We're always looking for ways to keep building community. Working together toward a hunger-free Hamilton – that's what it's all about,"* emphasized Haleigh-Rain.

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Meet the Team

HALEIGH-RAIN PAXTON

Senior Manager, Fundraising and Development, Hamilton Food Share

Haleigh-Rain Paxton is the Senior Manager of Fundraising and Development at Hamilton Food Share, where she plays a pivotal role in sustaining and expanding the organization's impact across the community. She champions community investment by leading grant writing initiatives, cultivating meaningful partnerships with donors and local stakeholders, and orchestrating signature fundraising events that bring vital resources to Hamilton Food Share's network of member agencies.

As the driving force of the organization's outreach efforts, Haleigh-Rain is dedicated to building strong, community-rooted relationships that transform into lasting support. Her strategic, community-driven approach ensures that investments made by individuals, organizations, and partners directly strengthen local food programs and empower Hamilton's most vulnerable residents. Through her leadership, she continues to grow the collective capacity to combat food insecurity throughout the region.



KASHMIR LESNICK-PETROVICZ

**Marketing and Community Engagement Coordinator,
Hamilton Food Share**

Kashmir Lesnick-Petrovicz is the Marketing and Community Engagement Coordinator at Hamilton Food Share, serving as the creative force behind the organization's communications and outreach efforts. She manages social media, creates visual content, and develops marketing materials that connect the community to Hamilton Food Share's mission.

As the organization expands its reach into radio partnerships and new advertising channels, Kashmir ensures their message resonates across diverse audiences and platforms. Her work focuses on making Hamilton Food Share's programs and impact accessible to the community — transforming complex information into clear, engaging content that resonates across diverse platforms.

