

# people power

At Strong Fort Erie Neighbourhoods (SFEN), we know that our mission is only as strong as the people behind it.

This report showcases the **“People Power”** that fuels our outreach programs. From the **first smile** at the door to the boots on the ground in the streets, our volunteers prove every single week that **FORT CARES.**



Strong Fort Erie  
NEIGHBOURHOODS

**VOLUNTEER  
PROFILES  
2025**



## The First Smiles You See

**Impact starts** at the front door with our Welcome Ambassadors and Registration Team and “triage” lead. People like **Beth, Kayla, Suzanne** at the door. **Laurie** our triage helper directing people to **Vince** who sits at the “back table” to provide system navigation.

Each of these folks know how important their smile of welcome is, and their message “I’m glad you are here” can disarm and welcome someone in a tough situation. Being an Ambassador is more than opening a door; it’s about providing eye contact, dignity, and a calm “welcome neighbour” always followed by a “how can I help you?” message because **FORT CARES**.

Our Registration Team of **Carole, Bonnie** and **Elaine** work with sensitivity to ensure every person is heard and every need is noted.

### Impact Fact:

- ♥ This team has registered over 800 individuals and on a weekly basis
- ♥ Assists over 100 neighbours who come to our programs, often remembering personal stories that make our outreach truly personal.

### The “Why”:

- ♥ A smile costs nothing, and a message of “how can we help you?” to someone having a hard week, can mean everything.



## The “Coffee & Connection” Team



## More Than Just a Cup of Coffee

**Christina with Ida, Emrah, Katrina and Tom** serve up a hot cup of java or tea and offer a warm morning snack. Nothing like the comforting smell of toast in the morning. Every Wednesday, they are the smiling faces behind our coffee and bagel station. This isn't just about pouring a drink or toasting a morning snack; it's about creating a space where everyone belongs. By rescuing Tim Horton's donuts via The Bridge in Niagara Falls, this team ensures that the moment a neighbour walks into St. Michael's Hall, they are greeted with a "hot cup of comfort" and something to fill a hungry belly because **FORT CARES**.

### Impact Fact:

- ♥ This team serves between 60-80 cups of coffee, dozens of bagels, and distributes lots of donuts every Wednesday!

### The “Why”:

- ♥ “We love being part of the Wednesday buzz and seeing the community come together.”



# The Culinary Heartbeat



## 300 Meals, 5 Teams, 1 Mission

By 8:30 a.m. every Wednesday (thanks to the ITALO CANADIAN CLUB for funding our 1st Wednesday meals now) St. Michael's kitchen is buzzing with one of 5 rotating cooking teams who come prepared to serve 300 meals of hope, and all from scratch. Thanks to our kitchen leads, **Linda, Scott, Beth, Karen and Mark.**

We prepare nutritious and balanced hot meals, ensuring there is a protein entrée, fresh bun, fruit, and dessert. It takes a lot of funding (thanks to OLG BINGO) and incredible stamina to plan, prepare and pack a hot meal for 300 people in a three-hour window! We do it because we believe there is no place for food insecurity if **FORT CARES.**

### Impact Fact:

- ♥ Rain or shine, wind or snow, SFEN ensures that fresh nutrition is a constant every single week of the year.

### The "Why":

- ♥ "Knowing that annually we provided almost 11,000 hot, healthy meals helps to build a stronger and healthier Town."



## The "5th Wednesday" Warriors

### Serving Up Hope with the Fort Erie Lions

When a month has a fifth Wednesday, the FORT ERIE LIONS Cooking Team roars into action! These culinary volunteers bring their "A-game" to the kitchen, preparing a hearty, nutritious meal for hundreds of neighbours. Collaborating with other local service clubs proves that when we work together, no one goes hungry because **FORT CARES**.

#### Impact Fact:

♥ A 5th Wednesday means an extra 300 meals served—thanks entirely to this team!

#### The "Why":

♥ "Service is what we do, but the smiles at SFEN are why we do it."



## Cultivating Community at Our Pop-Up Market



At the heart of our Pop Up Market is a simple but powerful mission: ensuring our neighbours have access to the freshest, healthiest fruits and vegetables to fuel their families. Twice a month, our market transforms into a vibrant hub of choice and nutrition, helping residents incorporate seasonal produce into their daily menu planning. Led by **Pam** with the help of **Ida, Dan, Anne, Olga, Yazemin** and **Eric** we distributed 5000 lbs of fresh food.

This initiative was originally made possible through the generous support of the **UNITED WAY** and has grown into a community staple. Today, it continues to thrive thanks to the kindness of individual donors and the incredible contributions from our local growers including partnerships with **SMUN** and the **Vineland Community Garden**. A shout out to the **RIDGEWAY LIONESSE**, who, for two growing seasons, has purchased a small share from **Sexsmith Farms** and donated it to **SFEN** for distribution.



# “Winter and Season Ready”: It Takes a Village



## Wrapped in Community Kindness

We are spotlighting the hands that keep our neighbours warm and dry: St. Paul's Anglican Knitting & Crocheting Club, the St. Michael's Catholic Women's League, our Fort Erie Library and many caring neighbours. From hand-stitched hats, scarves and mittens to donations of winter coats, socks and boots, (shout out to REVEL for donating over 200 pairs of shoes and boots ), these groups ensure our neighbours are “winter and weather ready.”

### Impact Fact:

♥ 1,000+ winter items were distributed this cold season.

### The "Why":

♥ “A warm coat is more than clothing; it's a message that **FORT CARES** about you.”





# The Emergency Food Pantry



## Nourishing Our Neighbours with Respect

Our pantry provides a "shopping experience" rather than a handout. Volunteers like **Joan**, meticulously organize shelves so neighbours can select items their families actually like.

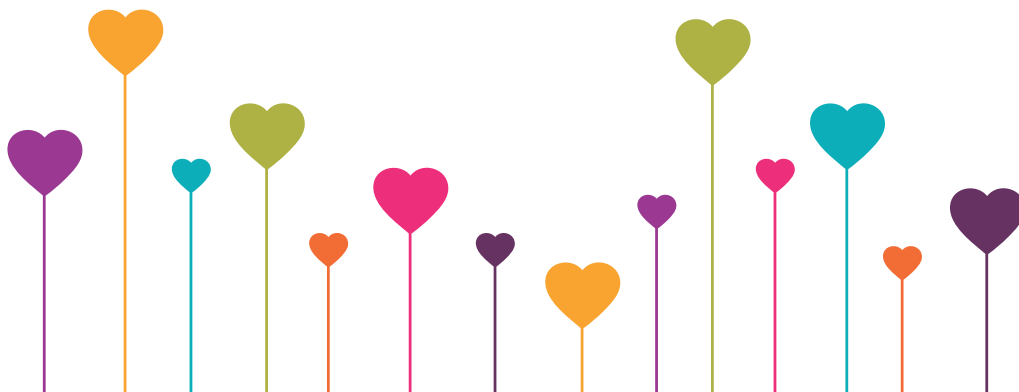
Volunteers also offer fully cooked frozen meals. Thanks to **Rod** and **Vince**, our Board members who make sure the right people, get the right support at the right time.

### Impact Fact:

- ♥ The pantry provides peace of mind for 10-15 families/individuals each week.

### The "Why":

- ♥ "It's about neighbours helping neighbours, no questions asked," because **FORT CARES**.





# The Hygiene Heroes



## More Than Just the Basics

The Personal Hygiene Packing Team, (**Gillian, Tina, Muriel, Caroline, Olga and Evelyn**) ensures no one has to choose between a meal and a bar of soap. They pack 150 bags monthly with essentials like laundry soap, toothpaste, toilet paper and a variety of other items. This is all made possible by donations from **Riverside Church, The Village Church Stevensville, St. Michael's Parish** and individual donations. SFEN also packs 10-15 bags to share with local Meals on Wheels for our homebound neighbours. Teamwork and sharing are all because **FORT CARES.**

### Impact Fact:

- ♥ It costs approximately \$1,000 every month to sustain this vital program. We provided over 7000 products this past year.

### The "Why":

- ♥ "A bottle of laundry detergent, a stick of deodorant, make a massive difference in how someone feels facing the world."



# Beating the January Blues



## The Post-Holiday Food Boost

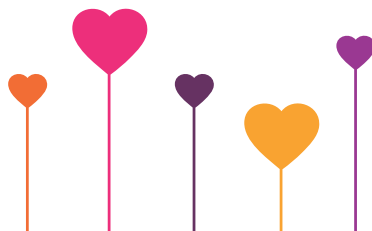
January is often the hardest month financially. For the 3rd year in a row, REVEL REALTY has collected the non-perishable food items for Week 1. This year, SAFARI NIAGARA added to the collection, and together, we can fill the January hunger gap. Led by **Bernie**, Board Member and supported by dozens of volunteers, including students for GFESS, SFEN can offer this special two-week food boost program because **FORT CARES** and understands the reality of post-holiday food insecurity, with January being a financially challenging month.

### Impact Fact:

- ♥ 1. Week 1: Pantry Essentials (soups, pasta, cereal, canned goods, granola bars, etc.).
- ♥ 2. Week 2: The Fresh Fridge Fill (eggs, milk, butter, meat, bread, meat).

### The "Why":

- ♥ "There's a specific relief on a person's face when they realize they don't have to worry about food for the table during a financially challenging and long January."





# The Heart of Street Outreach



## Meeting Neighbours Where They Are

For those who live unhoused and often cannot make it to St. Michael's Hall, our Street Outreach Team goes to them. Led by **Karen** with her trusty partner **Ray**, they make it their mission to go and find those living in the streets. Thanks to a special community program grant provided to us this year from **FE SOBEYS**, we were better able to purchase specialty items for these living conditions. (i.e food options with pop up lids).

Our Street Outreach team makes it their mission to see our neighbours who are often “invisible” and they deliberately get to know each one, referring to them by name and showing them that **FORT CARES** about their survival too. They deliver hot meals and other essential supplies to 5-10 unhoused neighbours each week, building friendships and trust so that SFEN might help them to navigate the journey towards more stable housing options.

### Impact Fact:

- ♥ This team acts as a bridge for those hesitant to engage with formal programs.

### The “Why”:

- ♥ “It’s about letting them know they are seen, valued and loved as neighbours living in our community.”



## Dignity in Choice: Clothing & Essentials

### More Than Just a Table of Clothes

Our Clothing Volunteers, led by **Paula** and helpers **Kayla, Yazemin, Christina**, who create a weekly “boutique of hope.” Every Wednesday, they transform donations into an organized market where neighbours can select what fits their style and needs - from casual comfy to interview shirts. This system is fuelled by the residents of Greater Fort Erie who donate high-quality, clean items. No cost - but produces big dividends.

#### Impact Fact:

- ♥ We provide hundreds of weather-appropriate items monthly, restoring confidence one garment at a time.

#### The “Why”:

- ♥ “When a neighbour finds that perfect coat, a cool pair of shoes, a new pair of socks, you see their posture change and hope twinkles in their eyes. Giving people access and choice to a variety of clothing proves that **FORT CARES**.”



## Fueling Minds and Feeding Futures



SFEN has an incredible collaboration with Community Crew to offer a School Lunch Volunteer Team that packs and delivers a staggering **22,176 nutritious lunches** to our Fort Erie schools. Thanks to **Elaine, Beth, Angie, and Jeff** (the driver) for their love for this program and our local students.

Three days a week, rain, snow or other, these dedicated volunteers step up to ensure that students at three of our local Fort Erie elementary schools have more than just a meal - they have the fuel they need to succeed.

#### The “Why”:

- ♥ “Knowing that we are hitting a milestone of over 22,000 lunches this year is incredible. It’s a testament to what happens when a community decides that no child should go hungry - kids shouldn’t go to school without a lunch”



# The Hands, Heads, and Hearts

## Meet Your SFEN Board of Directors

Our Board doesn't just meet in a room; they are the "boots on the ground" every Wednesday to prove that a **FORT CARES** model can embrace and plan for life challenges to beat food insecurity, a lack of essential living needs or unstable housing by connecting people to the right supports at the right time.

Member	Role	Impact
<b>Bernie</b>	<b>Volunteer Lead</b>	The strategist ensures every helper is in the right place.
<b>Rod</b>	<b>Pantry and Legal</b>	Identifies legal barriers and helps to keep the pantry running effectively and efficiently.
<b>Vince</b>	<b>Community Connects</b>	Builds relationships and develops individual support plans to help neighbours navigate and lower any barriers that they are facing.
<b>Pam</b>	<b>Donations and Market</b>	Secures business donations and helps to run the Pop-Up Market.
<b>Theresa</b>	<b>Governance and Communication</b>	Ensures the organization strategically uses its resources to fulfill its mission and serves the community as promised and mandated to do.

From the first "welcome" at the door to the fresh meals prepared in our kitchen, Strong Fort Erie Neighbourhoods is powered by volunteers who believe in one simple thing: **FORT CARES**.



[strongforterie.ca](http://strongforterie.ca)