

# Communities Coming Together

Caring for Canadians.  
Building a Healthier Future.



# Message from Bernard Lord, CEO Medavie



In the face of considerable uncertainty and change over the past year, we are reminded that we are stronger when we come together for each other. And it is in times like these that Medavie's mission to improve the wellbeing of Canadians seems more important than ever.

It was with this strong sense of purpose and urgency that our team of more than 7,200 professionals worked together to help Canadians, when they needed us most, guided by our core values of being Caring, Accountable, Responsive, Innovative and Community-minded.

At Medavie Blue Cross, and similarly at Medavie Health Services, we continue to remove barriers to care by ensuring that Canadians have timely access to support and services. To help slow the spread of COVID-19, our healthcare teams are on the frontlines administering screening tests and vaccinations to protect the health and safety of Canadians.

Our mission is also the reason we created a \$5 million COVID-19 Response Fund, through the Medavie Health Foundation, to support community-based organizations help meet the immediate needs of vulnerable and at-risk Canadians through the pandemic – with a focus on food insecurity and youth mental health care. As the challenges of the pandemic have persisted into 2021, we are continuing to disburse funds to communities.

We are inspired by the stories of Canadians who, in every corner of our country, are caring for their fellow citizens and their communities. From the volunteers safely distributing food, to the mental health service providers rapidly pivoting how they help young people, we can take pride in the humanitarianism of so many people across our nation.

This report is meant to shine a spotlight on some of the stories of care, innovation and resilience that have emerged from the pandemic. These are the silver linings behind the cloud that show the great things that can happen when communities unite for the common good.

We are incredibly proud to partner with each of these organizations in helping make our communities stay safe and build resilience. As communities recover, we will continue to invest in strengthening access to healthy food, active living and adolescent mental health, as well as addressing first responder post-traumatic stress, recognizing that collaboration is key to achieving our shared goals of a stronger, healthier Canada.

Bernard



# Food Security

# Food Security

From Dartmouth, Nova Scotia to Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, non-profits and volunteers joined forces, under challenging circumstances, to make sure those in need had access to food.

## North Grove

The [North Grove](#) is a dynamic community hub in North Dartmouth offering programs, services and space for people to learn and connect through family support, food and friendship. Staff and volunteers at the North Grove worked quickly to reimagine how a community could support each other while physically apart.

The team moved their entire food program to an outside pick-up and delivery system to provide over **30,000 nutritious meals** and **12,000 fresh produce kits to community members**. In addition, they placed over **3,500 calls** to check in on their neighbours, distributed over **1,500 craft kits** for kids, and offered **hours of online programming** such as story & circle time, interactive workshops and cooking demos.



**30,000**  
nutritious meals



**12,000**  
fresh produce kits

*“There are so many testimonials every week. We see families helping families. Community members helping their neighbours and friends. Some declared this was the only good food that they have in the day.”*

- North Grove Staff

Several people picked up meals for neighbours who had a difficult time getting to the centre, enabling the meal program to continue fostering a social connection even when people were unable to sit down together to share a meal. It’s an example of how the North Grove has become a **true community hub, keeping local residents connected, informed and engaged.**

## FoodShare

For over 35 years, [FoodShare's](#) focus has been on building a more equitable food system where communities have power over their food choices. When those communities were facing deep food insecurity, FoodShare quickly pivoted to provide over **100,000 Emergency Good Food Boxes** – filled with over 1.75 million pounds of fresh produce – to individuals and families across Toronto.



**100,000**  
emergency  
Good Food Boxes

Recognizing the connection between access to fresh, healthy food and recovery from COVID-19 and other chronic illnesses, FoodShare also launched the **Food Rx Fruit & Vegetable Pilot Prescription** program. This innovation integrates FoodShare as a community organization with health care resources, such as the University Health Network, to support the health of people who disproportionately experience food insecurity and chronic health conditions.

Upon discharge from the hospital or a COVID-19 testing site, up to **200 individuals** are “prescribed” a subscription for a **Good Food Box for a 3-month period**, free of charge. Not only does this initiative alleviate food insecurity, it **deepens connections** between the healthcare system, community organizations and the individuals they collectively serve.

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## Greater Shediac Community Garden

Over the last year, the benefits of local, community-led sustainable food systems have been demonstrated across Canada. When people have the opportunity to engage in a local food or agriculture system, they not only see improvements in their social and physical wellbeing, but also within their environment and local economy.

The [Greater Shediac Community Garden](#) works to **strengthen food security in their region** through 200+ gardening beds, a learning centre, meditation garden, children’s garden and a 2,000-square-foot root vegetable garden.



**200+**  
gardening beds

In 2021, the Community Garden is adding a **greenhouse and teaching kitchen** to their programming site. The new structure will extend the growing season and provide the community with more space to **develop their food and gardening skills**. The Community Garden offers a variety of on-site and virtual educational workshops, equipping their **300+ members** with the skills to start seeds, tend gardens, harvest produce, and preserve seasonal crops – **building food resilience for themselves, and their community**.

Community organizations provide critical resources to vulnerable Canadians when they need them most. Below are three of the many organizations on the frontlines that responded to the challenges of the pandemic with empathy, compassion and the resources Canadians required to meet basic needs, such as access to good food.

## Fort Saskatchewan Food Bank

The [Fort Saskatchewan Food Bank](#) in Alberta is a volunteer-run charity operated by the Fort Saskatchewan Food Gatherers Society, supporting an estimated **1,000** people in their community each month. Throughout the past year, the food bank has remained open to ensure local needs are met. With a commitment to addressing food insecurity, by providing a hand-up for the short or long term, food bank volunteers work daily to prepare **hampers that clients can access every three weeks. Hampers are filled** with non-perishable staples as well as fruit, vegetables, eggs, dairy and meat. Twice a month, clients can also add **personal care and household items**.



**1,000**  
people

## The Depot Community Food Centre

Montreal's [Depot](#) adapted their drop-in meal program to deliver **over 2,400 meals and close to 700,000 pounds of fresh food** through an Emergency Food Basket Program. In total, over 7,000 individuals were served. In addition to emergency food services, the Depot created and distributed complementary materials such as recipes, ingredient lists and **cooking instructions to support healthy eating for their community** during the pandemic.

*“Thank you for the help you provided during the pandemic and for the videos you posted. They were very helpful in giving us some ideas of the recipes we can make using the food provided in the basket!”*

- Depot Community Member

## Choices for Youth

In St. John's, [Choices for Youth](#) ensured vulnerable youth and young families had continued access to staff support and fresh meals. Not only did this **address food insecurity, it reminded them they were not alone**. At the height of lockdown, Choices for Youth delivered daily meals to **100 young people** and provided weekly food hampers and care kits to **75 parents and 110 kids**.



**100**  
young people  
daily



**75** moms &  
**110** kids weekly



# Youth Mental Health

# Youth Mental Health

Many Canadians, and especially young people, have been experiencing a significant increase in mental health issues over the past year. Service providers on the frontlines shifted and innovated quickly to ensure youth could access the help they needed when they needed it most.

Whether virtual, over the phone, or physically distanced, their stories are only a snapshot of the incredible work mental health service organizations have been doing across the country to “keep the doors open” and meet the diverse mental health needs of youth.

## Dans la rue

Dans la rue provides rapid and comprehensive support to homeless and at-risk youth with mental health issues to facilitate their sustainable exit from homelessness and transition to a more independent life. From March to December 2020, Dans la rue served nearly **750 young people** with complex needs, great psychological distress and various addictions.



**750**  
young people with  
complex needs



**4,400**  
psychosocial  
interventions

*“Distress is already extremely widespread among youth experiencing homelessness. Add COVID to the equation and you get increased anxiety, feelings of stigmatization and loneliness. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we were able to count on our partners to keep our essential services running so that youth can have access to food, shelter and psychosocial support.”*

– Cécile Arbaud,  
Executive Director, Dans la rue

While meeting basic needs such as food and shelter continued to be important, there was **increased mental health strain** brought on by the pandemic. The **emotional and therapeutic support provided by Dans la rue counsellors was even more vital** for helping their clients process the additional stress, anxiety and social isolation they were experiencing.

In 2020, the team carried out more than 1,000 mental and physical health interventions and more than 4,400 psychosocial interventions through their drop-in centre, following strict public health guidelines, to **remain open and connect with youth in need daily.**

## OUTSaskatoon

[OUTSaskatoon](#) provides a safe space and programming to address underlying issues affecting the health and welfare of individuals of all genders and sexual orientations. One of the biggest needs they continue to meet is the provision of **free, gender-affirming mental health counselling** to 2SLGBTQ individuals in Saskatoon and the surrounding area.



**Need for counselling doubled over the previous year**

Due to the pandemic, OUTSaskatoon pivoted to provide all education and support services online, along with the addition of a **second counsellor** to their team to respond to the **need for counselling, which doubled** over the previous year. One of the OUTSaskatoon counsellors even runs two monthly peer counselling groups for 2SLGBTQ youth, **fostering community and support** during this prolonged period of isolation.

After recognizing many of their clients were not accessing the city-run COVID-19 Emergency Support Services Hub for food, clothing, and basic needs, OUTSaskatoon **successfully advocated** to be **deemed an essential service**. The designation enabled them to continue running their drop-in centre and provide 2SLGBTQ individuals with basic hygiene kits, gender-affirming clothing, and assistance in securing stable and safe housing.

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## Atlantic Wellness Community Centre

[Atlantic Wellness Community Centre](#) provides youth in southeastern New Brunswick, who are struggling with a variety of mental health challenges and stressors, **free services** to develop **effective and positive coping strategies**. Over the past year, they adapted their services to continue helping youth, **without interruption**, by using Zoom and telehealth services to connect over 240 youth to their counselling therapist through video, phone and text messaging.



**70% of the youth would have “gone nowhere”**

Technology was also used to move their group therapy sessions and **Youth Mental Health Clinic** online, where **70% of the youth** report they would have **“gone nowhere”** or **“gone to the hospital” if the clinic was not an option**. This further illustrates how critical it has been for Atlantic Wellness to keep their operations going, despite the challenges presented by the pandemic.

## First Episode Mood & Anxiety Program (FEMAP)

London Health Sciences Foundation operates the [First Episode Mood & Anxiety Program \(FEMAP\)](#), a unique program designed specifically to treat youth living with disruptive mood and anxiety disorders.

From pre-pandemic 2020 to early 2021, young people seeking help from FEMAP **increased by 100%** and the FEMAP team worked diligently to ensure continuity of care despite site closures and ongoing lockdowns.

In March 2020, they surveyed all 375 active clients to determine who required immediate support from a social worker. This targeted support **prevented emergency room visits** and ensured young people had the support they needed to **navigate increased stress and anxiety**.

Over the last year, they have continued to offer support via videoconferencing and phone calls, and small in-person group sessions that adhere to strict public health protocols. With a wait list growing, keeping FEMAP operating **continues to meet a critical need** in the London area.

*“Group participants have expressed that we have (for some) been the only lifeline and human contact they have had since the pandemic. They described that they have noticed their social skills (even the ability to greet people) have eroded as a result of social isolation. They were so happy to hear the group was going to run in person (with physical distance and COVID-19 protocols in place, nonetheless). Our attendance and participant engagement has been great. We theorized that they have been craving safe human contact and the group has provided them with that, even for the most anxious.”*

– A FEMAP Social Worker

## Canadian Mental Health Association, PEI

The past year has demonstrated just how vital it is to have access to technology and reliable internet to meet basic needs and stay connected to community resources. Early in 2020, the [Canadian Mental Health Association PEI](#) (CHMA PEI) recognized this need and **mobilized to provide tablets and internet service** to their more isolated and vulnerable clients across all age groups.



**200**  
virtual social  
activities

This action, which included reaching seniors, enabled their clients to fully participate in CMHA virtual programming and daily check-ins conducted by the team. They could also attend online learning sessions on varied topics including wellness, cooking, employment and education, housing, social recreation and more. In total, CMHA PEI provided nearly **200 virtual social activities** to **decrease isolation** and **improve social connection**.

In addition, the team ensured **their 400+ clients** had access to reliable internet connections for psycho-social rehabilitation and the continuation of their therapeutic programs. Normally, they would access these services face to face in Charlottetown, Alberton and Summerside.



# Responding in New & Innovative Ways

# Responding in New & Innovative Ways

Unlike any other time in recent memory, the COVID-19 pandemic prompted community action on a scale, and at a speed, that required community organizations, service providers and funders to work differently and create new ways of doing things. The stories below illustrate the ingenuity, flexibility, and innovation that has unfolded in communities right across the country.

## A Culturally Specific COVID-19 Response Strategy for African Nova Scotians in the Prestons

A research study led by Dr. Ingrid Waldron and Dr. Barbara Hamilton-Hinch of Dalhousie University will provide solution-oriented recommendations for how clinical services, health promotion and the collection of disaggregated race-based health data can **improve access to COVID-19 testing and health services**, and reduce infections in the Prestons, by identifying the social determinants of health that create exposure to COVID-19 and risk for infections and its exacerbation of current illnesses experienced by African Nova Scotians in the Prestons.

At a time when more Canadians are cognizant of systemic anti-racism and asking questions about equity and access, this study is a timely response to **better understand the impact of health inequities on emergency response and preparedness**. CBC [profiled the study](#) as part of their series *Being Black in Canada*, an ongoing dialogue on the experiences of Black Canadians.

*“Under Dr. Waldron’s leadership, we are excited to work with members of the Preston community to collaboratively develop a culturally specific response strategy for COVID-19 that will be beneficial to the larger African Nova Scotian community. We recognize the impact the pandemic has had on members of the province but particularly on African Nova Scotians. By developing culturally relevant strategies for African Nova Scotians, with their input, we will help reduce some of the stigma and stereotypes experienced by so many in the future.”*

- Dr. Barbara Hamilton-Hinch, Associate Professor Recreation and Leisure Studies, and Assistant Vice-Provost Equity and Inclusion, School of Health and Human Performance, Dalhousie University

## Food For All New Brunswick

**Food For All New Brunswick** developed a new model to **coordinate and rapidly respond to food security needs** across the entire province. What began with a conference call in March 2020 with 75 provincial leaders, including politicians, government officials, service workers and food experts discussing a provincial response to food security, **evolved into a robust network** that:

- » Directly deployed **over \$100,000** in funding to community organizations
- » Supported the redistribution of **over \$800,000** in emergency grants to **100+ organizations**
- » Supported organizations to determine **hyper-local community solutions** to food needs
- » Advocated for legislation to **keep community gardens and farmers markets open** across the province, with public health protocols in place
- » Connected stakeholders to emergency food programs through an **open-sourced database**
- » **Produced a digital map of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) & Food Projects**

Food For All recognized that **addressing food security needs to be about more than delivering meals** – it's about building capacity and skills across the province to **develop strong, local food systems**. This food movement demonstrates what a **cross-sector coalition with a shared goal can achieve** – putting aside any political, cultural or regional differences to ensure all New Brunswickers have access to good food.

*“Food For All NB provided the time and connections needed to plan ahead in an urgent moment, and generated essential income for local farmers during the lockdowns.”*

- A local farm partner of Food For All New Brunswick

*“I want to highlight the tremendous value of the conferences offered by your group. Your leadership is a beacon of light during those difficult times.”*

- A community services organization that works with Food For All New Brunswick

*“Food insecurity, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, presents a health and social crisis and it has never been more important to work together to provide access to affordable and healthy food for all New Brunswickers. Due to Medavie’s thoughtful donation to Food For All NB, citizens in need will have access to community-based initiatives that support active living and healthy eating in our province.”*

- Health Minister Dorothy Shephard

## Indigenous Peoples Resilience Fund

The [Indigenous Peoples Resilience Fund](#) (IPRF) is an Indigenous-led effort to respond to urgent community needs while taking a long-term view on building community resilience. The fund demonstrates a **new approach to philanthropy** by **trusting communities to determine and deliver what they need most**, rather than prescribing specific programs or frameworks. By taking this approach, Indigenous communities can be more flexible, adaptable, and nimble in meeting the needs of their residents.

In the spring of 2020, a group of Indigenous people with deep experience in philanthropy in Canada, **representing many First Nations**, came together to establish the fund to meet urgent needs using a humans-first approach, rather than divvying up resources across a defined list of solutions. This group of champions for Indigenous communities came together every two weeks to be as nimble as possible in allocating immediate resources for Indigenous-led initiatives as these communities managed the impacts of COVID-19. The result is **increased sovereignty** for Indigenous communities and Indigenous-led organizations in strengthening **food security, mental and cultural health** and **digital connectivity**.

*“Trust is the underlying principle of the Indigenous Peoples Resilience Fund. We trust and understand Indigenous ingenuity, and respect that communities know what they need better than anyone because we have the lived experience of working collectively. Through this approach, to date more than 140 Indigenous-led initiatives and organizations coast-to-coast-to-coast are leveraging local data and community knowledge alongside philanthropic capital to provide flexible, adaptive and crucial support where it is most needed.”*

– Wanda Brascoupé - Kanien'keha, Skarù rë', Anishinabeg, Indigenous Peoples Resilience Fund

*“The original peoples of Turtle Island have many stories of the past and present that reflect adaptability living in relationship with Mother Earth. We have learned that as the earth changes so does our relationship. Embedded in all of our stories are values that speak to humility, openness, listening deeply, awareness, trust and bravery and so too does the creation of this fund.”*

– Kevin Lamoureux, Anishinabeg, Faculty of University of Winnipeg



# Organizations Receiving Funds

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## Atlantic Compassion Fund

Listed below are the community organizations that benefited from a \$750,000 contribution from Medavie, through the Medavie Health Foundation, to the Atlantic Compassion Fund. The Atlantic Compassion Fund was launched in March 2020 for the purpose of helping Atlantic Canadians in need of safe shelter, food, connection or mental health care at a difficult time. The fund provided critical support to agencies across Atlantic Canada, making it possible for them to respond to the immediate and emerging needs of their local communities. It was co-created with 11 United Ways across the region, in partnership with Atlantic Business Interiors. To date, more than \$10 million has been distributed by United Ways to over 450 organizations across the Atlantic Region.

Atlantic Compassion Fund Recipient	Location
Adsum for Women & Children	Halifax, NS
Association of Black Social Workers	Dartmouth, NS
Atlantic Wellness Community Centre	Moncton, NB
Beauséjour Family Crisis Resource Centre	Shediac, NB
Canadian Mental Health Association - Halifax-Dartmouth	Halifax, NS
Canadian Mental Health Association - Prince Edward Island	Charlottetown, PEI
Capital Region Mental Health and Addictions Association	Fredericton, NB
Community Centre Alliance	St. John's, NL
Eating Disorders Nova Scotia	Nova Scotia
Family Plus/Life Solutions	Saint John, NB
Family Service PEI	Charlottetown, PEI
Inspiration Café	Moncton, NB
Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre	Halifax, NS
PEI Association for Newcomers and Charlottetown Farmers Market	Charlottetown, PEI
Greater Shediac Community Garden	Shediac, NB
Wolastoqiyik Cultural on the Land Program	Fredericton, NB
Women's Network+	Charlottetown, PEI

## United Way Employee Giving Match

Each year, Medavie employees contribute to their local United Way through payroll deductions. This year, employees doubled their impact as the Medavie Health Foundation matched payroll donations up to \$200,000 in recognition of the unprecedented need for community assistance.

Listed below are the local United Way or Centraide organizations across Medavie's business locations that have received the match funding through our campaign partner United Way Greater Moncton and Southeastern New Brunswick.

- » Centraide of Greater Montreal
- » United Way Central Alberta
- » United Way Central N.B.
- » United Way Chatham-Kent
- » United Way Elgin Middlesex
- » United Way Greater Toronto
- » United Way Halifax
- » United Way Newfoundland & Labrador
- » United Way of Greater Moncton and Southeastern New Brunswick
- » United Way of the Alberta Capital Region
- » United Way Perth-Huron
- » United Way Prince Edward Island
- » United Way Saint John, Kings & Charlotte
- » United Way Saskatoon & Area

## COVID Response Fund Grant Recipients

Listed below are the community-based non-profit organizations that directly received funding from Medavie's COVID Response Fund from April 2020 through June 2021. Funding continues to be disbursed to communities to help with ongoing food security and youth mental health needs, and to help communities recover from the pandemic. The grants listed also include new grants as existing funding commitments were repurposed to help community-based organizations focus on supporting vulnerable Canadians.

Grant Recipient	Location
Alice House	Dartmouth, NS
Atlantic Wellness Community Centre	Moncton, NB
Atlohsa Family Healing Services Inc	London, ON
Beauséjour Family Crisis Resource	Shediac, NB
BGC Canada	National
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Moncton	Moncton, NB
Black Creek Community Farm	Toronto, ON

Brigadoon Village	Nova Scotia
Business Community Anti-Poverty Initiative	Saint John, NB
Canadian Mental Health Association/Prince Edward Island Division	Prince Edward Island
Capital Region Mental Health & Addictions Association	New Brunswick
Children's Aid Foundation of Canada	National
Choices for Youth	St John's, NL
Colchester Food Bank	Truro, NS
Community Food Centres Canada	National
Covenant House Toronto	Toronto, ON
Crossroads for Women	Moncton, NB
Culturally Specific COVID-19 Response Strategy for African Nova Scotians in the Prestons (Dartmouth General Hospital Foundation)	Dartmouth, NS
Dans la rue	Montreal, QC
Ecosource	Mississauga, ON
Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth	Toronto, ON
Feed Nova Scotia	Nova Scotia
Food For All NB	New Brunswick
FoodShare Toronto	Toronto, ON
Fort Saskatchewan Food Bank	Fort Saskatchewan, AB
Hope Blooms	Halifax, NS
Indigenous Peoples Resilience Fund	National
Innisfail and Area Food Bank	Innisfail, AB
Jack.org	National
La Fondation Jeunes en Tête	Montreal, QC
La Rue des femmes	Montreal, QC
La Société de Saint-Vincent de Paul	Montreal, QC
Laing House Foundation	Halifax, NS
Little Brothers	Montreal, QC

London Health Sciences Centre	London, ON
Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia	Nova Scotia
Moncton Headstart	Moncton, NB
Nathan's Urban Farm	London, ON
OUTSaskatoon	Saskatoon, SK
Pathstone Mental Health	Niagara Region, ON
Phoenix Youth Programs	Halifax, NS
Ponoka Food Bank	Ponoka, AB
Share the Warmth	Montreal, QC
Shelley Cares Foundation	Scarborough, ON
St. Paul & District Food Bank	St Paul, AB
Stonegate Community Health Centre	Toronto, ON
The 519	Toronto, ON
The Boys & Girls Club of Moncton	Moncton, NB
The Depot Community Food Centre	Montreal, QC
The North Grove	Dartmouth, NS
The Salvation Army Wetaskiwin	Wetaskiwin, AB
The Youth Project	Halifax, NS
United Way Chatham Kent	Chatham, ON
United Way Elgin Middlesex	Elgin, ON
United Way Perth Huron	Perth, ON
White Buffalo Youth Lodge	Saskatoon, SK
Youth Impact Jeunesse	Moncton, NB

