

DROP-IN AT THE BRIDGE OPERATING PLAN 2025



746 Queen Street, Kincardine, ON

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Operations

Drop-in creates a safe, welcoming space in which all people are encouraged to participate fully, to the best of their abilities, and journey together toward a deeper experience of the life God has given us. It is a place where individuals can learn to live in a community and take control of their lives. As individuals are accepted by their peers, they learn to accept themselves. Self-acceptance results in the growth of self-confidence and self-esteem. At Drop-in, they learn that they can succeed. With each success, self-confidence grows. With new experiences, support, and faith, individuals learn to believe in themselves.

A challenge for many who come to Drop-in is the absence of family support. At The Bridge, we seek to be family. The strength of a family network and a quiet concern for each other develop at the drop-in. Along with the sense of family a sense of home develops. Many people come to Drop-in because it is like home to them; it is a familiar, predictable, and safe place. There are always others at the drop-in who care, share their lives, and understand. With this “family,” support is found in one’s life. The Bridge is a place of both stabilization and growth because of the family-like atmosphere. Even individuals who have been away for a while always know that they can come “home” to share their successes and challenges.

Drop-in at The Bridge does not have a volunteer group that is separate from our community. Many of the people who volunteer regularly came to us first needing a hot meal and a place to belong. Volunteering at Drop-in is not something we do for “others” but something we are all doing together. Everyone who comes is given an opportunity to help and participate fully.

Drop-in has the potential to facilitate engagement with people living in crisis and help them back into the mainstream. We are about empowering people to be who they truly are without judgment. We value all people for their unique gifts and strengths, and we prioritize welcoming people who are marginalized, disadvantaged, and vulnerable. People and relationships are at the centre of all that we do.

Current Programs

Drop-in at The Bridge began in June 2018 with one program: Monday drop-in. While the Monday drop-in continues to embody the heart of Drop-in at The Bridge, several other programs have been developed in response to needs that were unveiled by crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

Monday Drop-in

Mondays, 10 am-2 pm: Coffee, Games, and Free Lunch

Everyone is welcome to join us for a relaxing day filled with great company, delicious food, and fun activities.

- **Enjoy a Free Lunch** – Indulge in a warm, hearty meal served up with a smile. It's our way of bringing the community together and ensuring no one has to eat alone.
- **Coffee and Tea Galore** – Start the day off right with a fresh cup of coffee or tea. It's the perfect fuel for conversations and games.
- **Games and Fun** – Whether you're into board games, card games, or just want to chat, there's something for everyone. Bring a favourite game or join in on one of ours.
- **Community Connections** – This day is especially popular among seniors and guests from the Community Living program, but we welcome everyone! It's a fantastic opportunity to meet new people, share stories, and build friendships.

Thursday Teen Lunch

Thursdays, 11am-1pm: Free Lunch for Teens (Grades 9-12)

Free lunch served by our fabulous volunteers at The Bridge every Thursday.

- **Tasty Treats** – Enjoy a variety of delicious dishes prepared with care. It's a great way to fill up and fuel your day.
- **Connect and Chill** – This is the perfect chance to hang out with friends, make new ones, and enjoy some great conversations while you eat.
- **Community Spirit** – Our volunteers are excited to serve you and create a welcoming atmosphere. Come share your stories, laughter, and good vibes!

Friday Open Doors (Newcomers Night)

Fridays, 7 pm-9 pm: Newcomers Connection Night

Every other Friday, we invite Ukrainian families and other new immigrants in our community to come together for a special evening of connection, culture, and camaraderie.

- **Cultural Sharing** – This is a wonderful opportunity to share traditions, stories, and experiences that celebrate Ukrainian culture. Whether it's food, music, or crafts, come ready to share and learn!
- **Warm and Welcoming Environment** – We provide a cozy atmosphere where everyone feels at home. It's a space to relax, connect, and enjoy each other's company.

- **Community Bonding** – Meet other families in the area, make new friends, and build a strong support network within our community. Together, we can celebrate our shared experiences and diverse backgrounds.

Saturday Games

Saturdays, 2 pm-7 pm: Game Day Extravaganza – Fun for Everyone!

A fun-filled Saturday at The Bridge, complete with games, delicious food, and great company.

- **Board and Card Games Galore** – Dive into classic board games like **Monopoly**, **Scrabble**, and **Chess**, or challenge your friends to card games like **Uno**, **Golf**, or **500**. Whether you're a seasoned pro or just looking to have fun, there's something for everyone!
- **Pizza and Ice Cream Treats** – What's a game day without delicious food? Enjoy slices of pizza and indulge your sweet tooth with ice cream—perfect fuel for all that gaming!
- **Karaoke Night** – On the last Saturday of the month, we turn up the fun with karaoke! Grab the mic, showcase your talent, or cheer on your friends as they take the stage. It's a great way to end the month with some musical fun!
- **Community Vibes** – This event is all about bringing people together. Whether you're playing games with friends or meeting new faces, you'll find a welcoming and lively atmosphere for all ages.

Frozen Meals

Frozen Food Program – Support for Seniors in Need

Our **Frozen Food Program** runs every week throughout the year, providing essential support to those in our community who may be struggling to provide for themselves. This program primarily assists single seniors who are financially or physically challenged, ensuring they have access to nutritious meals.

- **Weekly Deliveries** – Each week, we deliver frozen meals directly to participants, making it easy for them to enjoy delicious and healthy options at home.
- **A Helping Hand** – If you or someone you know fits this description and could benefit from this program, we're here to help. Our goal is to alleviate some of the burdens faced by those in need, allowing them to focus on their well-being.
- **Community Care** – We believe that no one should have to face food insecurity alone. This program is part of our commitment to fostering a caring community where everyone has access to the nourishment they need.

Holiday Meals

Special Holiday Meals – Sharing Joy and Nourishment

At The Bridge, we believe in spreading warmth and joy during the holiday season. That's why we offer **special holiday meals** for Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving, ensuring that everyone can enjoy a festive meal, regardless of their circumstances.

- **Heartwarming Meals** – Each holiday, we serve a variety of delicious dishes that reflect the spirit of the season. From traditional favourites to comforting options, our meals are designed to bring people together.
- **Serving Those in Need** – On average, we provide **120 free meals** during each holiday, welcoming anyone who may be in need of companionship and a warm meal. Our goal is to ensure that no one has to celebrate alone.
- **Meal Delivery** – If you can't join us in person, don't worry! We'll deliver the meals right to your doorstep so that you can still enjoy a festive meal in the comfort of your home.
- **Community Togetherness** – These special meals are a wonderful opportunity for our community to come together, share stories, and create lasting memories. We encourage everyone to join us and experience the joy of giving and receiving.

Food Rescue

Drop-in's Free Food Store – A Community Response to Food Insecurity

Through food access, education, and compassionate community-building, we are working to create lasting, meaningful change in the lives of families facing food insecurity.

In December 2024, Drop-in at The Bridge launched a new initiative to address the growing challenge of food insecurity in our community. Our goal is to provide increased access to food, flexible support for families, and opportunities for community connection and learning.

- **Redistributing Local Resources:** Through generous partnerships with NoFrills, Commonplace, and Grey/Bruce Food Share in Owen Sound, and in collaboration with Second Harvest, we are rescuing frozen meats, dairy (including eggs), and fresh produce. In just three months, we've rescued over 2,500 lbs of food, with an estimated value of \$12,000—a powerful demonstration of our community's commitment to care for one another.
- **Creating a Free Food Store:** We've opened a Free Food Store, operating every Tuesday (9:30 AM–12 PM) and Saturday (11 AM–1:30 PM). Designed with dignity in mind, the store resembles a consumer-distributor model where guests can select from a rotating inventory of frozen, fresh, and prepared food—all at no cost.
- **Preparing Ready-Made Meals:** For individuals and families who struggle to cook meals at home, we've introduced a ready-made meal program. With the help of Kelly Broere, our part-time kitchen coordinator, and a team of volunteers, we've prepared and distributed over 1,000 meals—using mainly rescued food—out of our rented kitchen space.
- **Creating Community and Connection:** At Drop-in, we understand that food access is just one part of the equation. Our upstairs space is designed like a welcoming café. Guests are

offered coffee or tea while they complete their intake, and then receive a custom inventory list. Volunteers prepare the requested items from our basement stock and bring it directly to the guest. This experience fosters a sense of belonging, dignity, and care, especially for those who may be feeling isolated or overwhelmed.

- **Building Skills and Sharing Knowledge:** Looking ahead, we're expanding our program to offer free cooking classes for individuals and families experiencing food insecurity. Led by culinary nutritionist Kala Stuckless, these sessions will focus on preparing nutritious, affordable, plant-based meals. Participants will also receive practical guidance on meal planning and adapting recipes to their individual needs, preferences, budgets, and available food resources.

Special Events

Through our relationships with other agencies, The Bridge will host informative events throughout the year, such as help at tax time, legal aid help, health services, and acquiring legal identification.

Leadership

Board of Directors

Drop-in at The Bridge is governed by a Board of Directors. The Board ensures that all Drop-in activities comply with Canada Revenue Agency standards and best practices for charitable organizations. The Board works closely with the Executive Director to assess the success of Drop-in programs, create annual budgets, and cast a vision for the future of Drop-in.

Executive Director

The executive director is a paid staff person whose responsibilities include operational management, volunteer recruitment, marketing, and strategic planning.

Other staff

Drop-in at The Bridge may hire full-time, part-time, or temporary staff as employment capacity increases.

Volunteers

Volunteers are the lifeblood of Drop-in. As of October 2024, there are over 60 volunteers who host weekly programs, make and deliver meals, run fundraising events, and more! Volunteers increase community ownership. The more community members are involved in Drop-in, the easier it will be to gain local support. In addition, volunteers from the community ensure that Drop-in sets goals that are aligned with the heart of the broader community in Kincardine.

Individuals or teams who volunteer can see the value of what Drop-in at The Bridge does firsthand. They often have specialized knowledge (computers, advertising, mentoring, etc.) that may be utilized through Drop-in programs. Volunteers can bring a fresh perspective and enthusiasm for the work. This can help revitalize staff and may help move projects in exciting new directions.

The role of a volunteer is to serve clients and fellow volunteers with an attitude of humility and respect. People of different faiths and walks of life are welcome to volunteer. Many volunteers originally came to The Bridge as clients. Volunteers are asked to read, understand, and sign the Drop-in at The Bridge list of values before joining the team.

Volunteers are trained to recognize when someone requires more help than they can provide. Volunteers are also trained in conflict resolution. To promote emotional safety and confidentiality, volunteers are prohibited from discussing client's issues with anyone outside of the centre. Volunteers must be at least eighteen years old and complete a police background check. The only exception to the age requirement is for our holiday meals, where younger volunteers are welcome. Volunteers from Community Living and local elementary schools are encouraged to participate, but they MUST be accompanied by an adult who is responsible for their safety.

Team Leads

Program Leadership

- Oversee Daily Operations:
- Ensure that scheduled drop-in sessions or events run smoothly.
- Act as the primary point of contact for volunteers and guests during the shift.
- Uphold Organizational Values:
- Promote Drop-in at The Bridge's mission of inclusivity, community connection, and empowerment.
- Foster a safe, welcoming, and respectful environment for everyone.

Volunteer Coordination

- Manage Volunteers:
 - Assign roles and tasks to volunteers, ensuring everyone is clear on their responsibilities.
 - Provide on-the-spot guidance, answering questions and addressing concerns.
- Mentorship:
 - Support new volunteers, offering training or pairing them with experienced team members.
 - Encourage and model positive engagement with guests.
- Problem-Solving:
 - Step in to address challenges that volunteers may encounter, whether related to tasks, guest interactions, or logistics.

Guest Engagement

- Welcome Guests:

- Greet attendees warmly and help create a sense of belonging.
- Assist guests in accessing resources like meals, games, or information about programs.
- Conflict Resolution:
 - Act as the first point of contact for resolving disputes or concerns among guests, ensuring issues are handled with compassion and discretion.
- Support Vulnerable Individuals:
 - Recognize when a guest may need extra assistance (e.g., emotional support, meal delivery, or connecting to services) and act accordingly.

Event and Session Preparation

- Set-Up and Clean-Up:
 - Organize the space before the session, ensuring all materials (games, food, supplies) are ready.
 - Lead the clean-up process, delegating tasks to volunteers as needed.
- Food Coordination:
 - Oversee meal service, ensuring that food is served efficiently and safely.
 - Ensure compliance with food safety standards during preparation and distribution.

Communication and Reporting

- Internal Updates:
 - Communicate with Drop-in leadership (e.g., Wes Larson) about the day's outcomes, challenges, or guest feedback.
 - Report any incidents or concerns promptly, especially those involving safety or vulnerable individuals.
- Encourage Feedback:
 - Gather input from both volunteers and guests to help improve sessions and programs.

Safety and Compliance

- Ensure Safety Protocols:
 - Monitor the space to prevent hazards or unsafe behaviors.
 - Be familiar with emergency procedures and act quickly if an incident occurs.
- Safeguard Vulnerable Individuals:
 - Adhere to the organization's vulnerable sector and safe practices manual.
 - Ensure all interactions are respectful and aligned with best practices for supporting marginalized populations.

Building Community Spirit

- Model Inclusivity:
 - Treat all guests and volunteers with equal respect, setting the tone for others to follow.

Administrative Tasks

- Track Attendance and Resources:
 - Maintain accurate records of guest attendance and any resource distribution (e.g., meals or supplies).
- Feedback for Leadership:
 - Provide insights on how programs are meeting the needs of the community and suggest improvements.

The Team Lead role is essential for maintaining the positive, inclusive atmosphere that defines Drop-in at The Bridge while ensuring operational success and community impact.

Cooks

Meal Planning

- Plan Menus:
 - Create nutritious, balanced, and cost-effective menus that cater to diverse dietary needs, including vegetarian, gluten-free, or other restrictions.
 - Incorporate available resources, including donations from the Second Harvest program, and adapt menus to seasonal ingredients.
- Collaborate:
 - Work with the leadership team to align menus with event themes (e.g., holiday meals, Saturday pizza nights).

Food Preparation

- Prepare Meals:
 - Cook meals for daily or special events, ensuring high-quality and flavorful dishes.
 - Portion food appropriately to meet guest needs while minimizing waste.
- Batch Cooking:
 - Prepare and package frozen meals for the Frozen Food Program, ensuring portions meet the requirements of single seniors or families.

Food Safety and Hygiene

- Maintain Standards:
 - Follow all food safety regulations, including proper storage, handling, and cooking temperatures.
 - Ensure the kitchen is clean, organized, and sanitized before, during, and after use.

- Compliance:
 - Adhere to health department guidelines and Drop-in's safety protocols.

Inventory Management

- Track Supplies:
 - Monitor pantry and freezer stock, ensuring adequate ingredients are available for planned meals.
- Utilize Donations:
 - Integrate food rescue items (e.g., produce and meat from Second Harvest or local donations) into meal preparation.
- Minimize Waste:
 - Repurpose leftover food creatively to reduce waste while maintaining quality.

Collaboration

- Work with Volunteers:
 - Guide and coordinate kitchen volunteers, delegating tasks such as chopping, serving, or cleaning.
 - Train new volunteers on kitchen procedures and food safety practices.

Special Event Support

- Holiday Meals:
 - Prepare large-scale meals for events such as Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving, which can involve cooking for over 120 people.

Administrative Duties

- Recordkeeping:
 - Document meal counts, ingredient usage, and any feedback on the food.
- Budgeting:
 - Work within allocated budgets for ingredients and supplies, suggesting cost-saving measures if needed.

Community Engagement

- Support Programs:
 - Assist with initiatives like cooking classes, collaborating with the volunteer dietitian to teach basic cooking skills and meal planning.
- Encourage Participation:
 - Involve guests in meal preparation where possible, fostering community and skill-building.

Personal Development

- Stay Updated:
 - Attend training sessions or workshops on food safety, nutrition, or cooking techniques, if available.
- Adaptability:
 - Be open to feedback and ready to adjust meals or processes as community needs evolve.
- Key Attributes for Success:
 - Strong cooking skills with experience in preparing meals for large groups.
 - Familiarity with food safety protocols and kitchen management.
 - Ability to work collaboratively with volunteers and leadership.
 - Creativity and resourcefulness in meal planning and ingredient use.
 - Compassion and a commitment to serving the community.

The cook plays a crucial role in creating nourishing meals that bring people together and support the diverse needs of the community, making them an indispensable part of Drop-in at The Bridge's mission.

Drivers

Meal Pickup and Preparation

- Collect Meals:
 - Pick up prepared frozen meals from The Bridge's freezers in the basement.
 - Ensure the meals are taken from the correct freezer to ensure proper rotation of meals.
 - Put the meals into the insulated bags
- Verify Deliveries:
 - Double-check the delivery list to confirm the correct number of meals and recipients.

Delivery Execution

- Timely Delivery:
 - Ensure meals are delivered within a timeframe that maintains their quality and safety (e.g., ensuring frozen meals remain frozen).

Interaction with Seniors

- Provide Friendly Service:
 - Greet recipients warmly, fostering a sense of community and care.
 - Offer brief, friendly conversation to brighten their day, especially for those who may feel isolated.
- Check on Well-Being:

- Observe and note any immediate concerns regarding the recipient's health or living conditions, reporting back to Drop-in leadership if necessary.

Safety and Compliance

- Food Handling:
 - Ensure meals are handled and transported in accordance with food safety standards.
 - Use insulated bags or coolers to maintain proper temperature during transport.
- Follow Safety Protocols:
 - Drive responsibly, adhering to traffic laws and safety guidelines.
 - Observe protocols for contactless delivery, if applicable, to ensure recipient safety.

Administrative Duties

- Report Issues: Inform Drop-in leadership of undelivered meals, recipient absences, or any unusual circumstances.

Support for the Program

- Provide Feedback: Share insights from interactions with recipients or observations during deliveries to help improve the program.

Key Attributes for Success:

- Dependability: Commitment to reliable and timely deliveries, as recipients depend on these meals.
- Interpersonal Skills: Ability to engage kindly and respectfully with seniors, many of whom may value the interaction as much as the meal itself.
- Attention to Detail: Ensuring the right meals are delivered to the right recipients.
- Physical Ability: Capable of lifting and carrying bags of meals.
- Confidentiality: Respecting the privacy of recipients and maintaining discretion about any observations.

The delivery driver plays a crucial part in ensuring that seniors in the community receive not only food but also a connection to Drop-in at The Bridge. By providing this service, they help alleviate food insecurity, reduce isolation, and demonstrate care, which aligns with the organization's mission of empowering and supporting vulnerable community members.

Youth Volunteers

Youth Engagement

- Build Relationships:
- Interact with teens in a friendly, respectful, and approachable manner.

- Be a positive role model by demonstrating kindness, patience, and inclusivity.
- Encourage Participation:
- Motivate youth to join in activities like board games, conversation, or creative projects.
- Support shy or reserved attendees by gently involving them in group activities.
- Create a Safe Space:
- Ensure that all youth feel welcomed and accepted, respecting their individuality and needs.

Program Support

- Assist with Activities:
- Help set up, run, and clean up activities such as board games, Crokinole, Catan, karaoke, or other recreational options.
- Lead or facilitate small group discussions or activities when needed.
- Provide Homework Help:
- Offer light assistance with homework or school-related questions (optional and informal support).
- Encourage Creativity:
- Promote the use of the reading corner, encourage storytelling, or help with artistic or music-related activities.

Snack and Beverage Service

- Assist with Café Offerings:
 - Help prepare and serve beverages like hot and cold lattes or other snacks provided during the event.
 - Ensure food and drink stations are clean, stocked, and welcoming.

Safety and Supervision

- Maintain a Positive Environment:
 - Help supervise activities to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants.
 - Address and de-escalate minor conflicts or concerns, with guidance from staff if needed.
- Adhere to Policies:
 - Follow Drop-in's guidelines for interacting with youth, including safe practices and vulnerable sector protocols.

Administrative Support

- Track Attendance:
 - Assist with signing in teens, ensuring accurate attendance records.
- Feedback Collection:

- Share observations or feedback about activities and youth engagement with the program coordinator.

Setup and Cleanup

- Prepare the Space:
 - Help arrange tables, chairs, and activity areas before the program begins.
- Clean and Organize:
 - Assist with tidying up, including cleaning dishes, packing up games, and resetting the space for the next use.

Collaboration with Team

- Work with Other Volunteers:
 - Coordinate roles and responsibilities with fellow volunteers to ensure smooth operations.
- Communicate with Leaders:
 - Keep program leaders informed about any notable situations, concerns, or suggestions for improvement.

Building Connections

- Support Youth-Led Initiatives:
 - Encourage teens to take ownership of activities, such as leading a chess game or suggesting new program ideas.
- Foster Community:
 - Help create a sense of belonging among the participants, emphasizing inclusivity and mutual respect.

Key Attributes for Success:

- Interpersonal Skills: Ability to connect with youth in a non-judgmental and understanding way.
- Patience and Positivity: Staying calm and upbeat, even in challenging situations.
- Flexibility: Being open to stepping into various roles based on program needs.
- Reliability: Showing up on time and committing to the agreed-upon schedule.
- Passion for Youth Empowerment: Genuine interest in supporting teens' growth, confidence, and community involvement.

Volunteers in youth programs contribute directly to building a welcoming and inclusive environment where teens can thrive. By supporting social, educational, and recreational opportunities, they help empower young people and strengthen community connections, aligning with the mission of Drop-in at The Bridge.

Safety

Whether on-site or off-site, Drop-in at The Bridge is a physically, emotionally, and spiritually safe environment. The on-site centre in downtown Kincardine has an open floor plan that is well-lit and comfortable. This promotes a feeling of security for both the clients and volunteers. Everything is seen, which greatly diminishes problems that arise from bullying, misbehaving, and drug dealing. The washroom is small, allowing only one person in at a time. One door leads to another section of the building, which is only accessible to volunteers and staff.

At any Drop-in event or activity, no weapons are allowed. Any violation of this rule will result in immediate removal from the premises. During these events, whether on-site or at another location, no one is permitted to threaten or harm themselves or others. Aggressive behaviors such as name-calling, bullying, and swearing are strictly prohibited within the building.

The Drop-in Centre is designed to be an emotionally safe space for both clients and volunteers. Clients often come to us in vulnerable states; therefore, building trust takes time, patience, and consistency. Expressing and managing emotions can be challenging, as many of our clients have suppressed their feelings for so long that they struggle to articulate them. The Drop-in Centre provides a safe outlet for individuals to learn about and express their emotions. It is a place for conversation, comparison, analysis, and understanding of one's feelings. As individuals share their experiences, they often realize that they are not alone. Volunteers will step in if a guest exhibits aggressive behavior, whether through actions or speech. They will first attempt to calm the guest, then invite them outside for a private discussion. If the guest refuses to leave, the lead volunteer will contact the police. Our staff and volunteers are dedicated to helping clients restore relationships when feelings are hurt and tensions rise. Reconciliation is always our goal, provided that all parties are willing to work towards it.

Finances

Please contact the Board of Directors at thebridge746board@gmail.com for the current budget and financial report.