

Where Compassion Meets Care

Gifts of Light Impact Report 2025



A Note from Gifts of Light

Thank you for your continued support of Gifts of Light. This past year has been one of meaningful growth and renewal. As our team embraced new ideas and welcomed fresh perspectives, we remained rooted in a shared vision: to reimagine the patient experience at CAMH with compassion, dignity and innovation. We're grateful to you for helping us bring that vision to life.

Requests for essential items from the Gifts of Light Store have grown steadily, underscoring how these everyday comforts help patients feel supported during their care. In response, the store has expanded its offerings through new partnerships and meaningful volunteer opportunities to reach more clients across CAMH.

At the same time, the Gifts of Light team has broadened its patient programming by introducing new formats, like short-term programs, shared programs and after-hours sessions, to better meet the needs of patients and clinical units. These programs give patients opportunities to express themselves and strengthen their sense of identity. We continue to curate regular monthly experiences for patients that foster connection, community and joy throughout the hospital.

Your generosity also creates space for clinicians to approach their work creatively. It energizes teams hospital-wide and inspires new, patient-centred approaches. Together, we reimagine what healing can look like.

We've deepened collaboration with internal partners to co-create solutions through shared learning and collective decision-making. These conversations help us take bold, forward-looking steps toward recovery experiences that reflect the full humanity of every patient.

More than ever, this work reshapes what it means to receive mental health care. It reflects the trust patients place in us and the power of having the right resources in the right moments. Gifts of Light is not an add-on. It's an essential part of the care environment and experience at CAMH.

None of this would be possible without you. Every act of support you offer translates into lives touched, trust earned and healing made possible. You are part of this work every single day.

As we look ahead, we feel energized. Together, we're building a future for mental health care that places dignity, identity, connection and joy at the centre of recovery. Through that work, we contribute to something even greater: CAMH's vision to uplift societal health. By meeting people where they are and giving them tools to thrive, we don't just change care. We build a more compassionate and equitable world.

Thank you again for your generous support of Gifts of Light.

With deep gratitude,



Johnathan Pathmanathan
Manager, Gifts of Light



Gifts of Light By the Numbers

People & Programming

11,940

patient orders via the
Gifts of Light Store

16,759

patient encounters

66.5%

patient return rate to
programming

33%

new program
participants

3,000+

hours spent delivering
programming

400+

hours of programming
delivered after-hours

Engagement & Activities

25

patient
events held

926

tickets distributed for outings

(the CNE, Ripley's Aquarium, Jays games, Leafs games, Pantomime and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra)

Volunteers & Giving

1,167

total volunteer hours

4,600

gifts wrapped

32

volunteer opportunities
for Drug Treatment
Court Outpatient
Practicum

Gifts of Light Food Pantry Project

A Full Pantry. A Full Heart.

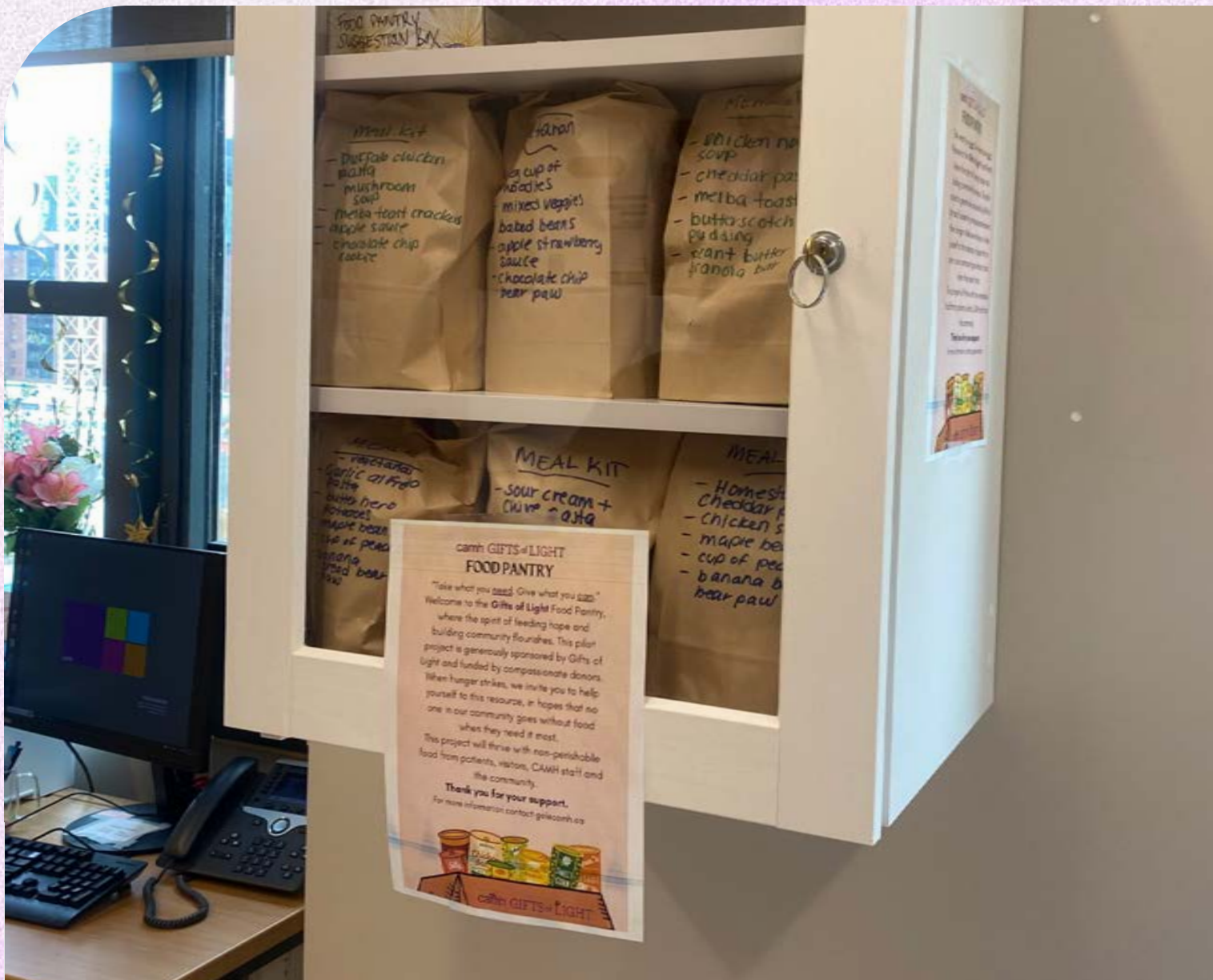
In Toronto, where one in 10 people rely on food banks, food insecurity is a daily reality for far too many. At CAMH, we meet this challenge through quiet, powerful acts of care. The Gifts of Light Food Pantry Project helps patients access the nourishment they need with dignity, intention and connection.

These aren't just shelves stocked with snacks. Each of CAMH's 19 outpatient food pantries is curated to reflect the specific needs of the people it serves. For someone arriving at an appointment on an empty stomach, a simple snack can be a turning point—it's the reason they stay.

For youth programs, familiar snacks help young people focus and feel grounded. At Shkaabe Makwa, Canada's first centre focused on health, justice and wellness for First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, the food pantry includes traditional ingredients like the Three Sisters (corn, beans and squash), offering not just nourishment, but a connection to culture and identity. In other units, pantries are stocked with nutrient-rich, easy-to-open items that address accessibility needs. Across the board, choice is powerful: the ability to select what you want fosters autonomy and respect.

For families, knowing their loved ones have access to something nourishing, whether a granola bar or a familiar canned meal, brings peace of mind. For clinicians, the pantries offer a tangible bridge: a way to build trust in moments when words fall short. Every item is chosen not just to nourish, but to say, "You matter."





None of this would be possible without the dedication of CAMH staff and the generosity of Gifts of Light supporters. Pantry leads are embedded in each unit. They don't just restock. They listen, tailor and create spaces that reflect the needs and dignity of every person who walks through the door. Maintenance staff keep the spaces clean and welcoming. Clinicians gather feedback to ensure the offerings remain responsive. One youth clinician was even recognized for maintaining a "thoughtfully stocked" pantry that met patients' nutritional and emotional needs.

Despite its wide reach, the program's cost remains modest: year-round support for a single pantry is about \$1,600. But its value is immeasurable.

At its heart, the Gifts of Light Food Pantry Project is about more than food. It's about belonging. Whether it's a parent in recovery, a youth navigating trauma, or an older adult reconnecting with community, every visit to a pantry is a simple affirmation that healing is possible and that no one has to do it alone. This is what it means to nourish dignity. To meet people where they are. To show that the smallest moments can bring recovery within reach—and that it can all start with something as simple as a snack.

Gifts of Light Food Pantry Project

By the Numbers



1,865 clients served in the 2024-25 fiscal year (starting from 336 in Q1 to 1,865 in Q4—more than a 5x increase)



19 active food pantries across CAMH (18 at Queen Street West, 1 at College Street)



32% of pantry funds are dedicated to youth units (6 of 19 pantries serve youth programs)



Over 28 quarterly gift cards used to stock pantries

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“I didn’t realize how hungry I was until you told me about the pantry.”

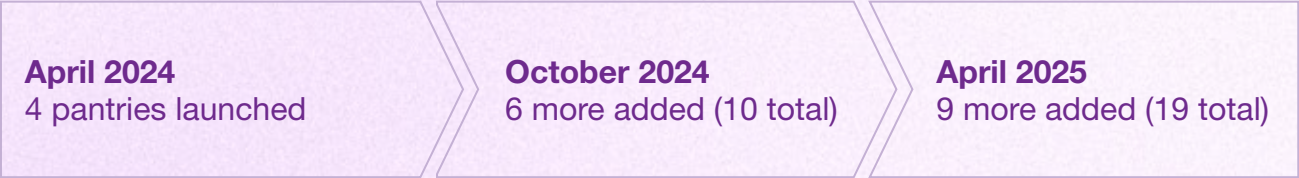
- Client

“

“It is a delight to visit staff at CAMH and get counselling and food—it’s like a specialty restaurant!”

- Drug Treatment Court Client

Program Growth Timeline



Financial Snapshot

Total cost to date: \$14,480

\$400

Gift card for each pantry every 3 months

Where the Pantries Are

19 CAMH outpatient units including:



Youth Day Hospital (YDH),
REACH, Choosing Health



Interprofessional Pain and
Addiction Recovery Clinic (IPARC)



Shkaabe Makwa



Geriatric Mental Health
Outpatient (GMHO)



Downtown East & Central
Clinics (DTE & DTC)



AMANI (formerly the Substance
Abuse Program for African
Canadian and Caribbean Youth)



Drug Treatment Court



Psychosis Coordinated Care
Service (PCSS)

“

“I came to my appointment feeling on edge, because I was hungry...
When you offered me some snacks and explained the pantry was there
for me, I honestly felt better.”

- Client

Growing Wellness, One Plant at a Time

At CAMH, healing takes many forms. In the Sunshine Garden, it takes root and grows through connection, routine and care.

In 2024, the Sunshine Garden continued to thrive, offering a vibrant space where clients reconnected with nature, community and themselves. For more than two decades, this garden has been a place where hands-on experience meets heartfelt recovery. Despite unpredictable weather—from heatwaves to heavy rain—it remained a steady source of nourishment and connection for both the land and the people who care for it.

Over 29 weeks, the therapeutic horticulture program delivered 174 sessions with 224 clients and clinicians. Participants from six inpatient units and one outpatient program took part in the full “field to fork” cycle—from seeding in the greenhouse to harvesting vegetables and preparing meals together. More than a gardening program, it fosters purpose, structure and pride in progress.

Beyond therapy sessions, the Sunshine Garden nurtured the broader CAMH community. A weekly market sold fresh organic produce at accessible prices, promoting food security and dignity. Unsold vegetables were donated to local food agencies, ensuring every harvest helped someone in need.

This garden goes beyond soil and planters. The Sunshine Garden is a place of learning, healing and hope—where skills are shared, dignity is restored and every harvest feels like a collective win. Season after season, it reminds us that even in the toughest conditions, growth is always possible.



Program Participation

224

patients & clinicians
involved

174

horticultural therapy
sessions (over 29 weeks)

6

CAMH inpatient units + 1
outpatient program participated

Food & Production

~3,200 lbs

of organic food harvested

96

vegetable varieties grown

19

flower varieties
cultivated

>15,000

seedlings grown in the
greenhouse

>3,500 lbs

of composted plant material

Community Access

\$4,000+

in produce sold at weekly market
(June–October) with leftover
produce donated weekly to local
food distribution agencies

Engagement & Events

6

CAMH-led events
(including Seedling
Sale, Salad Festival,
Garden Picnics)

132

one-time
volunteers from
16 group events

300+

participants in online
training (12 sessions)

200+

community members
trained in gardening
workshops

Enhancing Patient Care with Purpose and Dignity

At CAMH, every detail can play a role in supporting healing. This year, the Gifts of Light Store evolved to better reflect that belief. Through thoughtful updates and meaningful volunteer opportunities, the store is creating a brighter, more inclusive space. One that uplifts clients, engages the community and brings the mission of Gifts of Light to life.

Redesigning the Store to Enhance the Patient Experience

To create a more welcoming environment for everyone who walks through its doors, the Gifts of Light Store recently underwent a series of improvements. From the layout to the signage, each update was designed to make the space easier to navigate, more inviting to visit and more reflective of the care and dignity it offers.

Key updates included:

- **Overhead signage:** to improve navigation and spotlight donor contributions
- **Reorganized product displays:** including separate Hair Care and Skin Care sections
- **New backroom storage:** creating a more welcoming storefront by keeping extra inventory out of sight

These changes transformed the store into a more joyful, professional space for everyday visits, volunteer engagement and donor tours. With hundreds of people moving through the store each year, the refreshed environment now better reflects the heart of the Gifts of Light mission: to offer care with intention and dignity.

A Path to Healing: Drug Treatment Court Clients Volunteering in the Store

The Gifts of Light Store also supports recovery in a new way: through a practicum program for clients from the Drug Treatment Court. Each month, approximately three clients volunteered in the store and contributed a total of 100 hours over the year.

Their responsibilities included:

- Unboxing and restocking inventory
- Organizing and counting items
- Fulfilling online orders

This hands-on experience helps clients build confidence, develop practical skills and meet volunteer requirements as part of their program. Just as importantly, it gives them a meaningful way to contribute to a community that believes in their potential, while building routine and pride in their progress.

Expanded Offerings and Growing Generosity

The Gifts of Light Store broadened its inventory to better meet patient needs. New additions include compression socks and reading glasses, more essential items that support comfort and recovery.

Thanks to growing partnerships, the store now features in-kind donations from brands like:

- **Heelboy**
- **Kala Lamps**
- **Knix**
- **More Than Lips**

Each new item reflects thoughtful generosity and a shared commitment to dignity. These products are practical and personal, and they ensure patients feel seen, supported and respected.



Enhancing the Patient Experience

Programming Updates

Each year, thanks to donor support, Gifts of Light delivers programming every day of the week, extending into evenings and weekends, creating consistent opportunities for connection, creativity and self-discovery. These varied programs help patients build a sense of identity beyond their diagnosis and remind them that recovery includes more than treatment.

Smile Serenades: Bringing Music to the Moment

With 165 hours of programming and nearly 1,000 patient encounters, Smile Serenades offered the most accessible and uplifting entertainment this year. Whether at bedside or in common areas, music became a powerful medium for emotional connection and comfort. For many patients, these spontaneous concerts sparked moments of lightness, memory and joy—reminders of who they are beyond their diagnosis.



Tai Chi and Fitness: Building Strength from Within

Tai Chi was the most popular physical program of the year, with 1,095 patient encounters across 193 hours, including 64 hours after regular programming hours. Its calming, grounding movement made it especially popular in inpatient units, where clients reported feeling more centred and connected to their strength.



Short-Term Programs: Big Impact, Small Commitments

Programs like Improv and Good Mood Fitness reached 569 patients across 10 units. More than half of participants were new each week, a testament to their accessibility and appeal. These shorter, low-barrier offerings helped patients take small steps toward self-expression and movement, without requiring a long-term commitment.



Mobile Arts & Art Cart: Creativity as Connection

Mobile Arts Programming reached 2,645 patients across 22 inpatient and two outpatient units, with 80 per cent of participants returning weekly. These programs foster identity and emotional release, especially during after-hours, when patients need engagement most.

The Art Cart Showcase gave patients the opportunity to exhibit and even sell their artwork, demonstrating how creativity can foster confidence, purpose and connection with



“

“John and Wes help me express myself.”

– Client

“This helps me explore my abilities”

– Client

iCare Integration: Measuring What Matters

This year, Gifts of Light programming became part of iCare, CAMH's clinical information system. That means patient engagement is now tracked alongside treatment outcomes, giving CAMH the ability to measure the therapeutic value of creative and community-based programs. It's a major step forward in showing that often-overlooked things like joy, connection and creativity are critical to the recovery journey.

Therapeutic Notes			
* Therapy Name	Location		
* Mode	* Category		
* Topic			
* Date	* Start Time	* End Time	
22/04/2025	13:21	13:21	

Experiences that Heal

At CAMH, Gifts of Light experiences are essential to building community and redefining what mental health care can look like. These experiences offer moments that remind patients their lives are not on hold, and that connection, comfort and joy are still possible here and now. This year, Gifts of Light orchestrated rich and diverse experiences that reached thousands of patients and facilitated many opportunities for shared experiences.

Wellness Days: Self-Care in Action

GOL hosted three Wellness Days, now expanding to a quarterly offering thanks to positive feedback. Patients received haircuts, manicures, protective styling, fitness sessions, pet therapy and product giveaways—all provided by partners like DECIEM, Estée Lauder and Sephora. These days are celebrations of self-worth, offering patients the chance to feel polished and supported.



Caribbean Carnival: Culture and Community

Despite the rain, over 300 people, two-thirds of them CAMH patients, came out to celebrate this year's Carnival. With music, food and flags filling the air, the event brought together culture and joy and celebrated identity and belonging.



GOL Showcase: Creativity Meets Recovery

A collaboration between GOL Programs and Experiences, the Gifts of Light team proudly hosted its fourth annual Program Showcase this year—an event that challenges outdated views and highlights the meaningful role of programming in recovery.

The Showcase gives CAMH clients the opportunity to share their talents and stories through performances, visual art displays and co-led wellness activities such as Tai Chi and songwriting. As always, it was a celebration of resilience and recovery, and a powerful reminder of the creativity and strength within the CAMH community.



A Note from CAMH Foundation

Thank you for your support of Gifts of Light.

As you know, Gifts of Light is one of the most powerful expressions of care at CAMH. It's a clean pair of socks before a first appointment. A snack before therapy. A chance to grow food in the garden or create art alongside fellow patients. These moments may seem small, but they carry deep meaning—for the people who receive them and for the community that makes them possible.

In my time at CAMH, I've seen the impact of this program again and again. How it brings dignity, comfort and connection to people navigating some of life's hardest days. And how it reminds patients that they are supported and never alone. And I've seen how it energizes our entire community—staff, volunteers and donors alike—to show up with compassion and purpose.

Gifts of Light is more than a program. It's a bridge to healing that reflects the very heart of CAMH's commitment to build better mental health care for everyone. Your support makes this possible.

Every person at CAMH deserves care that meets them where they are—and reminds them of who they are. With you by our side, we can ensure that people feel hopeful, cared for and supported on their journey to recovery.

Thank you for being part of this work.

Anne-Marie Newton

Anne-Marie Newton
President & CEO
CAMH Foundation





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