

IMPACT REPORT

2020

PIVOT

iCAN
for
KIDS





OUR PROMISE TO YOU IS THIS:

We will measure, evaluate and refine our work to alleviate childhood hunger in innovative ways.
 We will listen to constructive feedback based on insights from partners and collaborators.
 We will stay centred on the financial struggles of parents who lack the income to feed their children - meeting them where they are, not where we want them to be.
 We will continue to challenge the status quo - opening up conversations that move us all forward.

And we won't stop because
 for all the volunteers, donors, agencies and partners we rely upon
 for all the children and families that rely on us
 and for our vision of ending childhood hunger

WE REMAIN,

UNDAUNTED

CHILDHOOD HUNGER IS REAL AND PERVERSIVE IN OUR CITY

IT'S BIG AND COMPLEX AND HEARTBREAKING.
 But it doesn't intimidate us. Because it's solvable. We were founded on the idea that if we put our hearts and minds together we could alleviate summer hunger, when children were out of school and out of reach of school meal programs. And we were really making an impact on thousands of children's (and families') lives...

When COVID-19 hit, life for everyone changed. Schools shut down. Parents lost jobs. Even before the pandemic hit, 189,000 Calgarians were living below the poverty line (2018 data). The effects of lockdowns and closures has put tens of thousands more in financial crisis. Children who relied on meals at school are now at home, going hungry. And many more children are now living in households facing the same frightening reality. Hunger can take away a child's ability to focus. It can socially isolate them. It affects their ability to learn and benefit from the education they need to succeed later in life. It affects their physical and mental well-being. And really kicks their self-esteem. Hunger negatively affects a child's future. And society as a whole.

Knowing all this is the reason why we target childhood hunger under any circumstances. Whether it's during an economic downturn or a societal lockdown. So the pandemic didn't

intimidate us. We turned and faced it head on. We stepped up. We had already built a system that was nimble and responsive. And because we've been nurturing relationships with agency partners since day one, we were ready for unexpected challenges. Without disruption, we were able to make the necessary shift. On a dime. Literally overnight. You'll read more about our innovative answer to the pandemic in this report.

We are so thankful for resilient frontline agency partners, amazingly generous donors, a supportive board and selfless volunteers who were more than willing to make this shift with us this year.

Whatever the pandemic has in store for us, we know that with all that support behind us and an undaunted spirit, we will feed children and change lives. **And we will keep making an impact because of you.**

Bobbi Sutton

Bobbi & Sutton
Co-founders
I Can for Kids Foundation

"Most of the families with whom we shared the IC4K cards were moms of small children. It was incredible to see the look of relief in their eyes when we handed them the card. One child said to her mother, as they picked up a lunch bag and a gift card, 'Does this mean that we get to eat dinner?'"
—YOUTH CENTRES OF CALGARY

WE'VE TEAMED UP!

Fresh Routes and I Can for Kids are piloting a unique working relationship to improve access to healthy food for families experiencing food insecurity.

Starting in the new year, I Can for Kids will sponsor Fresh Routes markets at a selection of our agency partners' locations. Families in need will receive Fresh Routes gift cards to shop for the foods they might not otherwise be able to access or afford like fresh fruits and vegetables, eggs and bread.

Fresh Routes and I Can for Kids share a common vision of providing dignified access to healthy food for families struggling with food insecurity. This collaboration is one of many that symbolizes how we continue to break down barriers in the charitable food provision space in order to impact those living with food insecurity.

4



LISTENING

THIS YEAR, I CAN FOR KIDS IDENTIFIED TWO DISTINCT GROUPS OF RECIPIENTS WHO NEEDED SUPPORT:

- families already accustomed to seeking and receiving assistance whose situations were worsened by the pandemic
- families who struggled emotionally with suddenly becoming a “have not” household and needing to access a system that they had never had to navigate prior to COVID-19

“ Due to the support that was provided to me and my children I was able to feel less stress and didn’t feel like I was failing my children. Every time I was able to receive the food items, it gave me the strength to move forward and that people cared for me and my children’s well being.” — IC4K PROGRAM RECIPIENT

“ One mother had come to the point where she had to choose between paying rent or buying food when she reached out for help. IC4K helped her to feed her daughter when she had no other resources to use and by doing so enabled her to avoid eviction.” — CALGARY HOUSING COMPANY

5

“ It is difficult time for our family, everything is difficult, paying bills, buying foods, worried for my kids’ education, and for our health. What you are doing is great and unforgettable. You put a smile on my kids’ faces. There were no words to describe the way I felt at this time. My kids’ smiles are worth a million words.” — IC4K PROGRAM RECIPIENT

“ Thank you for helping families who are struggling right now. Without the food, I will not be healthy.” — GRADE 4 STUDENT, CONNAUGHT SCHOOL



PHOTO: TODD KOROL/SHAW CHARITY CLASSIC

EVOLVING

INNOVATION IN A TIME OF CRISIS: HOW GROCERY GIFT CARDS BECAME OUR 'NEW NORMAL'

WHEN THE PANDEMIC DISRUPTED OUR FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN, shut down our warehouse facility and prevented our ability to assemble volunteers, we went to our frontline agency partners and local food security experts for input. We needed to figure out how we could launch months ahead of our traditional summer program with all the restrictions that a full lockdown presented.

We were forced to shift from our normal strategy to a new way of thinking about food security that addressed poverty as the root problem. We needed an approach that could do this and enable families to access the food they needed quickly. Grocery gift cards have been talked about as a possible solution for years. Now it made sense to put that theory into practice.

While other agencies shut down or struggled to maintain food provision activities amidst COVID-19 protocols,

we were able to act immediately by using our current system, relationships and infrastructure. Grocery gift cards represent a dual win: they are small and portable so agencies could more easily distribute them and families could easily access, transport and use them. They represented a barrier and stigma-free way to empower families by giving them immediate access to local stores to purchase food that met their personal, cultural, religious, and health needs. We learned from our agency partners, the people who get the support to families most in need, that gift cards restored pride, dignity, confidence and a sense of belonging. Being able to “shop where everyone else shops” was more inclusive. People felt trusted and respected to make good choices for their families based on their unique situation.

While grocery gift cards represented a significant and positive shift in the support we provide, we recognized the need to

supplement this approach with fresh food for certain recipients. Immediate access to healthy food is a key support for children and youth who experience homelessness, domestic violence, struggles with addiction, or severe poverty and hunger. And the reality is that a sustainable grocery gift card program requires more investment and fundraising and additional partnerships - something we are prepared for and motivated to do.

Moving forward, we know we can have a greater impact to alleviate poverty and hunger by focusing on grocery gift cards rather than limiting our work to the provision of food. And we know we have to keep our minds open about how things might be done differently.

As the situation evolves, we will continue to adapt.

“When Covid hit Canada, most agencies stopped. Dead. No one knew how to continue to support our clients, while providing safety for the staff. When everyone stopped; your agency ran towards the unknown, and stepped up to be a leader within the community. Thank you.”

— WOOD'S HOMES EXIT YOUTH HUB

IMPACT

28,000+
children &
youth fed

WHO WE IMPACT

- Majority of households have **3-4 children**
- Average age range of children is **5-12 years old**
- 50% are **immigrant or newcomers**
- 25% are **Indigenous**
- Many live in **single parent households**
- More than half live in **crowded and/or unstable housing**
- Many have parents who work full-time or hold multiple **low wage jobs**
- 50% live in a household that experiences **domestic violence**

STATISTICS BASED ON 2020 I CAN FOR KIDS AGENCY SURVEY RESULTS

95%
of IC4K recipients
would prefer to receive
a grocery gift card
rather than food

2020

60%
increase in the need
for food support
due to
COVID-19

136 communities
730 cases of fresh fruit & vegetables
2,540 jars of peanut butter
5,400 grab & go food packs
15,280 grocery gift cards for families

\$714,000

Value of grocery gift cards distributed

TEN
weeks became

9

months of support
by I Can for Kids
due to COVID-19

“ I Can for Kids is one of the only agencies in Calgary that has its main focus on providing food security to children. The agency is so helpful and easy to work with and make it so easy for agencies to help the families they work with.”

— WOMEN IN NEED SOCIETY



LEARNING

WE CHANGED – AND PEOPLE NOTICED

OUR GROCERY GIFT CARD

APPROACH represented a major shift in how we can better respond to food insecurity. We are very fortunate that our work has become the subject of a research study by the University of Calgary and the O'Brien Institute for Public Health, Research Program for Vulnerable Populations.

The first of its kind in Canada, the study is designed to help understand how receiving support through grocery gift cards has impacted children and their families, how grocery gift cards compare to food hampers, and how these approaches can be improved. Findings from the research will help inform us of the most effective approach to alleviate children's experiences of food insecurity and what the longer term effects might be on their health.

As we wait for the results, we continue to learn from our partners as well as

those with lived experience with poverty as their voice is critical to ensure we are meeting them where they are instead of making assumptions about what they need.

GROCERY GIFT CARDS AT WORK

Apart from gift cards being the logical solution to supplying families with access to food during a pandemic, we weren't relying totally on our own preconceived notions. We conducted and received ongoing direct feedback through one on one conversations with 43 partners representing 26 agency and/or community organizations.

We heard that families were impacted in very meaningful ways. By simply receiving a grocery gift card, parents or caregivers felt more empowered to make good choices and provide for their families. They felt respected and trusted, feelings that get eroded when living in poverty.

This is some of what we heard from recipients through those agencies.

GROCERY GIFT CARDS:

- reduced household stress
- helped build a sense of confidence, belonging, autonomy and dignity
- gave clients the freedom to shop in regular grocery stores with everyone else
- improved the quality of and variety in their diets
- allowed clients to choose the foods they need and prefer
- reduced stigma, lessening feelings of being marginalized
- freed up money for rent, bills and living expenses
- allowed a client to have someone shop for them on their behalf if they were unable to

"The youngest child of one family has severe allergies to many common foods. One of the counselors took this young man shopping. After his food was rung up, he had \$1.95 left. He took the gift card back to the end of the line and bought himself a small bag of regular chips. You provided this family with the autonomy to be able to buy their own groceries."

—WOOD'S HOMES EXIT YOUTH HUB



12



PHOTO:TODD KOROL/SHAW CHARITY CLASSIC



WORKING TOGETHER TO BUILD HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

SINCE THE LAUNCH of I Can for Kids, our network of frontline social service agency and community partners has been critical in facilitating our food program across the city. It was the power of these collaborative relationships that allowed us to quickly and effectively shift to a grocery gift card model and reach thousands of children and youth within days of schools closing their doors due to COVID-19. We owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude for supporting our initiative. They demonstrated great courage and shifted right along with us. They showed up during one on one conversations throughout the year and to faithfully answer our fall survey (a 95% participation rate) to give us valuable insights about the effect our shift to grocery gift cards had on their clients.

Our partners and collaborators include:

- BETHANY CHAPEL
- BOWWEST COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTRE
- CALGARY HOUSING COMPANY
- CALGARY POLICE SERVICE
- CALGARY POLICE YOUTH FOUNDATION
- CALGARY WOMEN'S EMERGENCY SHELTER
- CARYA
- CENTRE FOR NEWCOMERS
- CHILDREN'S COTTAGE SOCIETY
- CLOSER TO HOME
- COMMUNITY KITCHEN PROGRAM OF CALGARY
- CONNAUGHT SCHOOL
- CUPS
- DEER PARK UNITED CHURCH
- GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
- HULL SERVICES - PATCH PROGRAM
- METIS CALGARY FAMILY SERVICES
- SE CALGARY COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTRE
- THE ALEX YOUTH HEALTH CENTRE
- THE BRENDA STRAFFORD CENTRE
- THE CITY OF CALGARY - NEIGHBOURHOODS
- THE WOMEN'S CENTRE OF CALGARY
- UMOJA COMMUNITY MOSAIC
- WOMEN IN NEED SOCIETY
- WOOD'S HOMES - EXIT YOUTH HUB
- YOUTH CENTRES OF CALGARY - OGDEN

13

"The cards help these people not only access food but serve as a reminder that they are not forgotten and that they are viewed as valuable members of our community."

— COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER

COMMUNITY



14



PHOTO: TODD KOROL/SHAW CHARITY CLASSIC

WHY I GIVE: “FOOD INSECURITY IS A BIGGER ISSUE THAN ANY ONE OF US WISHES TO IMAGINE.”

IT'S A CAUSE THAT IS CLOSE TO MY HEART because of the impact hunger can have on kids. It is unthinkable that in a city as developed, prosperous, caring and thriving as Calgary, that 20% of kids rely on a school-based food program, a reflection of a struggling, hungry home. They needlessly suffer, feel hopeless and fall short of reaching their full potential. It's an unnecessary cycle, which can have negative effects for them – as children, youth and as adults in our community. I have felt compelled to jump in to volunteer with my hands often by packing hampers or cutting food for school nutrition programs. But I knew that more needed to be done.

Although people have struggled with putting food on the table for decades in our city, this pandemic hit (and continues to hit) hungry kids and their families disproportionately hard with job losses, reduced hours, school closures, summer camp/program cancellations and forcing them to take public transit just to find their next meal. That is not how any of our kids should live, especially not here, not in my city.

I first learned about I Can for Kids through a friend who was impressed by their track record of successfully filling the summer hunger gap for years. It's called a gap because there wasn't anyone focused specifically on kids being home from school and those vital school meal programs. When COVID-19 hit, the 10 week summer hunger gap season moved into a nine

month pivot. I Can for Kids acted immediately and responsibly, putting the needs of the kids first. Kids were home. They were scared and parents were scared.

I Can for Kids developed a better way to support hungry children and their families in a dignified, cost effective way when schools closed in March. They were able to shift their efforts to the grocery gift card approach which, it turned out, was a more culturally sensitive, non-judgemental and community-based way to offer families support. I Can for Kids met that challenge head on, they weren't intimidated by the pandemic response, the lock down, the loss of school meal programs. It's that attitude, combined with compassionate problem solving that inspires my continued support.

I became a monthly donor to help IC4K feed hungry kids across the city. Seeing that donation on our monthly statement, alongside our monthly grocery expenses validates our choice to give.

I help out with my heart and my hands when I can. And I give with my head – supporting a smart organization like I Can for Kids. I give because I care about our kids, they are the future of our community.

— IC4K ANONYMOUS DONOR

GIVING

SAVE-ON-FOODS
ANONYMOUS
THE CITY OF CALGARY - FAMILY & COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES
101.5 TODAY RADIO
95.3 WILD FM
CALGARY HERALD CHRISTMAS FUND DONORS
UNITED WAY OF CALGARY AND AREA
NUTRIEN
EMERGENCY COMMUNITY SUPPORT FUND - COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS CANADA
CALGARY FOUNDATION
COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRES CANADA
THE CITY OF CALGARY - EMERGENCY RESILIENCY FUND
TC ENERGY

CENOVUS ENERGY
BREAKFAST CLUB OF CANADA
CALGARY FLAMES FOUNDATION
THE PROSSER CHARITABLE FOUNDATION
SHAW CHARITY CLASSIC FOUNDATION
ASPEN POINT PRODUCTIONS
CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL AID SOCIETY
INTER PIPELINE
ROTARY CLUB OF CALGARY
ROTARY CLUB OF CALGARY OLYMPIC
ROTARY CLUB OF CALGARY FISH CREEK
ROTARY CLUB OF CALGARY CENTENNIAL
CENTENNIAL ROTARY CLUB OF CALGARY FUND
ROTARY CLUB OF CALGARY SARCEE
ROTARY CLUB OF CALGARY WEST
JUPITER RESOURCES

ALBERTA ELECTRIC SYSTEM OPERATOR
ATB FINANCIAL
CALGARY CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION
GRAYDON AND DOROTHY MORRISON FUND
AT CALGARY FOUNDATION
HUNTER FAMILY FOUNDATION
MAZON CANADA
RBC FOUNDATION
TMX GROUP
UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY PROPERTIES GROUP
WEST SPRINGS/COUGAR RIDGE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
CALGARY FOOD & DRUG EXECUTIVES
KINETTE CLUB OF STAMPEDE CITY
BENEVITY
CANADAHOLPS

SHELL
CORNERSTONE DEVELOPMENT & PROPERTIES
ORDER OF THE EASTERN STAR - CHINOOK #133
VIEWPOINT FOUNDATION
RAYMOND JAMES CANADA FOUNDATION
CALGARY HERITAGE LIONS CLUB
PRECISION LABEL
FOOD DONORS:
SUNRYPE
OCEAN'S
COMMUNITY KITCHEN PROGRAM OF CALGARY
GATE GOURMET
WESTJET
COBS - MARDA LOOP
LEFTOVERS FOUNDATION

THANKFUL



SINCE DAY ONE, SAVE-ON-FOODS HAS BEEN AN ENTHUSIASTIC PARTNER WITH I CAN FOR KIDS.

With all that we've asked of them, they too have remained *undaunted*. They shifted right along with us at the beginning of the pandemic and continue to think of ways they can help to deepen our impact.

For their commitment, we are humbled and grateful.

We also want to recognize a very important contribution from The Jim Pattison Group for believing in our mission and supporting our work.

**WILD 95.3
101.5 TODAY RADIO
OCEANS
SUNRYPE**

I CAN FOR KIDS FOUNDATION IS A CALGARY-BASED CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION WHOSE MISSION IS TO RELIEVE FOOD INSECURITY IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CALGARY.

BOARD: SHAWN HOWARD (CHAIR), JESSICA DIROM (SECRETARY), SUSAN CUERRIER (TREASURER), TS LANE, BYRON TSE, BOBBI TURKO (EX-OFFICIO)

MAILING ADDRESS: 26 RIVERVIEW PARK SE CALGARY AB T2C 3Z7 PHONE: 403.815.9604 EMAIL: INFO@ICANFORKIDS.CA CHARITABLE REGISTRATION #788073294RR0001

ICANFORKIDS.CA/DONATE

iCAN
for
KIDS