

## **Community Care St. Catharines & Thorold and Brock University**

2023 PARTNERSHIP UPDATE



*A young skater interacts with Brock University's mascot, Boomer the Badger, at the December 2023 free community Holiday Skate at Canada Games Park where donations of unwrapped toys and non-perishable food items were collected for Community Care.*

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On May 28, 2019, Community Care St. Catharines & Thorold and Brock University signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to solidify their collaborative efforts to produce mutually beneficial outcomes for the community. Through student service and experiential learning opportunities and placements they are supporting vulnerable populations and helping address issues related to poverty. The partnership reflects Brock's commitments to community engagement, knowledge mobilization and experiential learning. Together they are working towards their shared priority for mutually beneficial partnerships that enhance the life and vitality of our local Niagara community.

## Projects and Initiatives in 2023

This past year, Community Care and Brock University worked together in several ways that address the immediate impacts of poverty while also working to address the systemic barriers to poverty reduction. Strengthening this partnership has greatly enhanced the services and supports to the agency, not only through experiential learning and service, but also through exploring research collaborations which will inform future program delivery and a renewed vision for partnership in 2024 and beyond.

### Research

Opportunities for research collaborations between Brock and Community Care continue to be explored and prioritized, specifically related to food security and supporting families. In 2023, the following research collaborations took place:

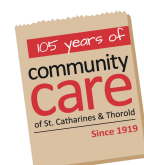
- A Brock student volunteer is supporting Liette Vassuer, a Brock Professor of Biological Sciences; UNESCO Chair in Community Sustainability: from local to global; and Member of the Brock Environmental Sustainability Research Centre, on a research project related to food security and climate change in St. Catharines in collaboration with Community Care.

### Service

Community Care and Brock collaborated on several acts of service that supported individuals in need in the Niagara region.

Initiatives included:

- Meaghan Rusnell, Interim Vice-President External, served as a Director on Community Care's Board of Directors in 2023. Scott Plugers, Brock University Alumni, was the Treasurer of the Board in 2023.
- Brock Government & Community Relations held a roundtable on February 8, 2023, with leaders from Niagara's not-for-profit sector, including Community Care, to share current projects, challenges and outcomes of their partnerships with Brock.
- As a part of Brock's Homecoming line-up, the Annual Grape Stomp event in September 2023 hosted by Alumni and Student Life & Success collected non-perishable food items in support of Community Care.



- Brock's Annual Trick or Eat Campaign occurred in partnership with Community Care on October 31st, 2023, led by Brock's Student Life & Success department. Several student volunteers went door-to-door across local neighbourhoods collecting food donations for Community Care.
- Brock Athletics hosted several Men's and Women's Varsity Hockey Games for Community Care, collecting 120 pounds of non-perishable food items for the organization.
- The Student-Athlete Leadership Council (SALC), along with Brock Sports and Recreation, hosted a free Holiday Skate at the Algoma Central Arena in December 2023. This event was free for all attendees and donations of unwrapped toys or non-perishable food items were encouraged in support of Community Care.

## Student Experiential Learning

The partnership between Community Care and Brock facilitated an enriching experiential learning opportunity for a co-op student between May and September 2023. The student was hired to work on an EFT Modernization Project for Community Care, working closely with the Housing Manager. The student collaborated with various stakeholders to understand current processes through a needs assessment, to design and test a new payment system through a pilot project, and then to review and assess the new software/systems. Community Care was able to implement the new system that led to efficiencies in payment collection/processing and the student gained valuable and practical skills in problem-solving, communication, and collaboration.

*"This work term experience has helped me improve my skills in problem-solving, communication and collaborating effectively with teammates. This experience has opened my eyes to a field that I would be willing to pursue post-graduation." – Brock Co-op Student*

## Next Steps

Community Care and Brock University continue to explore opportunities to advance collaborations for mutually beneficial outcomes, specifically through research and continued dedication to service and experiential learning. In 2024 the current MOU between Brock and Community Care St. Catharines & Thorold will expire. As such, Brock will continue to learn more about Community Care's research needs and explore meaningful ways to expand partnership opportunities and support Community Care's program delivery through a renewed MOU.

