



FACS
NIAGARA

Family and Children's Services
Les Services à la famille
et à l'enfance de Niagara

SUPPORTING | STRENGTHENING | PROTECTING • SOUTENIR | RENFORCER | PROTÉGER

2025-2026 Annual Report



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2025-2026 FACS Board of Directors

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A Message from Board Chair and Chief Executive Officer



David Willer
BOARD CHAIR



Anna Bozza
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OFFICER

Across our community, children, youth, and families continue to face a world that is growing more complex and uncertain. Amid these challenges, we are continually inspired by the resilience we see in the young people we serve, the dedication of our team, and the ongoing support of our community partners and donors. Together, we remain focused on a shared purpose: supporting, strengthening, and protecting the wellbeing of those we serve.

Our work is guided by the core values that define our organization: being child centred, collaborative, accountable, and compassionate.

Being child centred means showing our young people that we value their voices and unique perspectives. This involves listening and ensuring they are active participants in decisions that affect their lives. One meaningful example of this commitment took place on May 14, when our team travelled to Queen's Park for Child and Youth in Care Day. This experience provided our youth with an important opportunity to share their perspectives directly with government leaders and advocate for meaningful change.

The two young people who accompanied our team that day had an opportunity to meet with Michael



Members of the FACS Youth Advisory Committee travelled to the Ontario Legislature at Queen's Park on May 14 to watch the democratic process in action and meet with the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services to share their perspectives on the needs of youth in and from care in Ontario.

Parsa, Minister of Children, Community, and Social Services. The Minister spoke passionately about his desire to hear from young people across Ontario to understand their needs so the government can ensure it is providing the right supports to help youth in and from care become successful in life. We're deeply appreciative of the Minister's comments and willingness to continue engaging with youth.

Locally, our youth continue to shape the programs and supports that help youth in and from care successfully transition into adulthood. Our New Outlooks and Beginnings and Navigating Adulthood programs were designed based on our youth's feedback to ensure they have the knowledge, skills,

and confidence they need to thrive.

Our work is also deeply collaborative and compassionate. Positive outcomes for children and families are possible when people come together with empathy, commitment, and care. This year, we were reminded of the extraordinary impact foster parents and community partners have on the lives of children and youth. Individuals such as Betsy Witteveen, who has fostered for more than 50 years, embody the compassion and dedication that strengthen our community every day. By working closely with foster families, service providers, and caregivers, we can see that children receive safe, loving care while we continue supporting families with the ultimate goal of reunification.

At the same time, we recognize our responsibility to be accountable to the community as responsible stewards of public funds. Children's Aid Societies across Ontario continue to be challenged by the rising costs associated with caring for children and youth, particularly those with complex mental health, developmental, and behavioural needs. This requires us to think differently, and to look for innovative and fiscally sustainable solutions that support high-quality care for our young people. We have been intentional about strengthening partnerships with donors, community organizations, and supporters who share our vision. Projects such as the development of our new group home in Niagara Falls, named Tilling's Safe Landing for Youth (read more on page 12) demonstrate what can be achieved when a community comes together in support of its most vulnerable.

None of this important work happens alone. We extend our sincere gratitude to our team, volunteers, foster parents, donors, and community supporters for the care, professionalism, and compassion they bring to this mission each day. Your dedication makes a lasting difference in the lives of children, youth, and families across our region.

Together, we will continue working towards a stronger, more compassionate community where every child and youth can thrive.

Sincerely,

Anna Bozza
Anna Bozza

David Willer
David Willer



FACS CEO Anna Bozza and members of the Youth Advisory Committee meet with Niagara West MPP Sam Oosterhoff during Child and Youth in Care Day



Michael Parsa, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services hosted youth across Ontario at the Legislature on May 14.



On the Cover

In 2026, Betsy Witteveen retired after having fostered babies, children, and youth for more than half a century. After such an extraordinary legacy of love and caring, the FACS team, Betsy's family, and community leaders came together to say thanks and congratulate her for the positive difference she's made in the lives of young people. You can read more about Betsy on page 14 of this report.

From L to R: Anna Bozza, FACS Niagara CEO, Betsy Witteveen, Foster Parent, and Sam Oosterhoff, MPP for Niagara West.

What we do

FACS Provides



**CHILD
WELFARE
SERVICES**



**FOSTERING
AND KINSHIP
SERVICES**



ADOPTION



**INDIVIDUAL
AND FAMILY
COUNSELLING**



**DAYCARE
PROGRAMS**



6,730

Number of referrals about children who may be in need of protection

3,422

Families served (Investigation and ongoing)

3,365

Child protection investigations conducted



6,686

Children & youth served

Children in care (monthly average)

438



96%

Children served in their own homes

20

Completed adoptions

193

Youth under 18 participating in New Outlooks and Beginnings programming

176

Adult Protective Service Clients

Childcare Programs in St. Catharines Children attending Bunting

38



72

Children attending Western Hill

500+

Families accessing ongoing services at any one time

FACS Volunteers



831,739

Total number of kilometres driven

14,781

Number of hours dedicated

186

Total number of volunteers

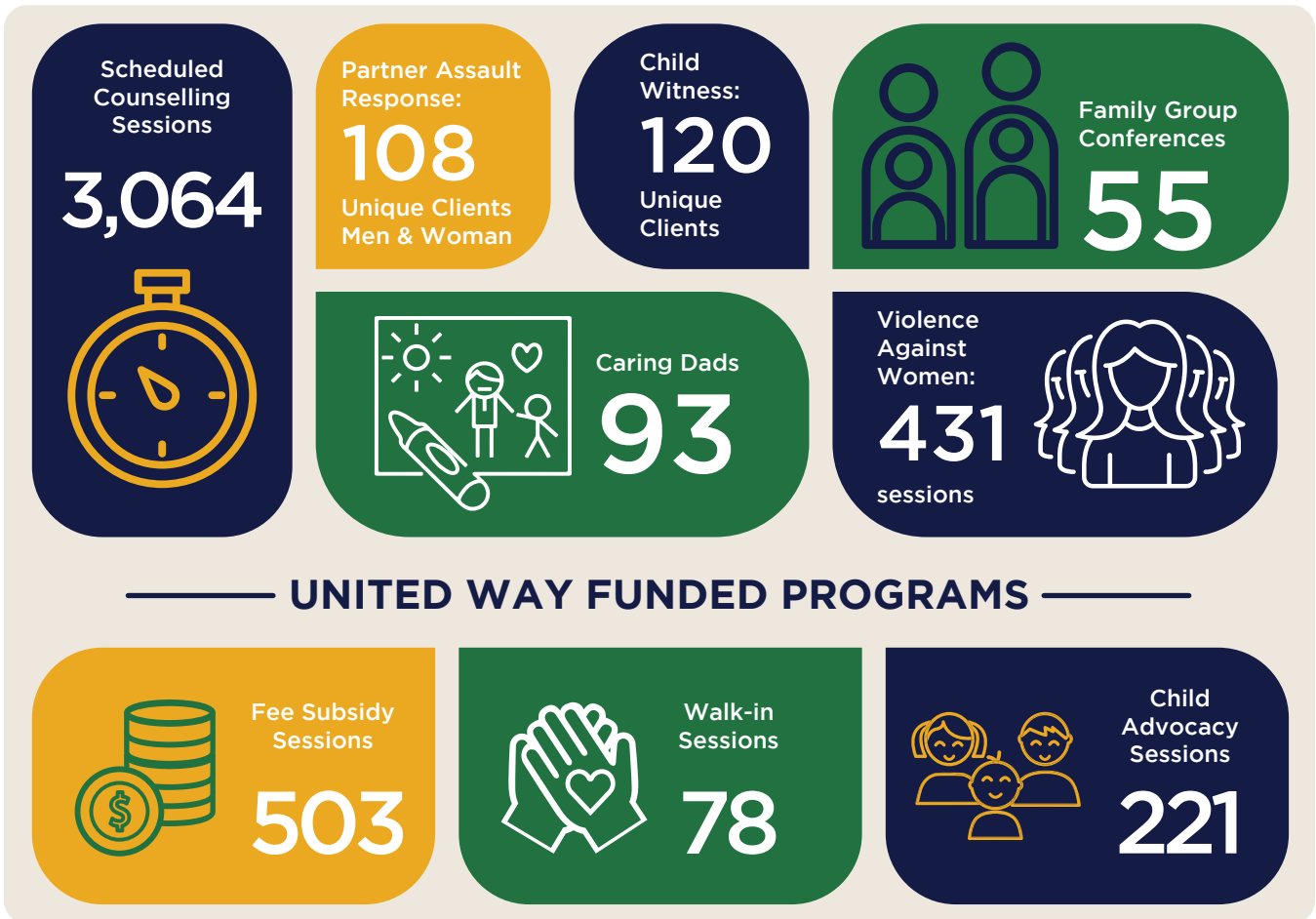




FCC 2025-26 DATA

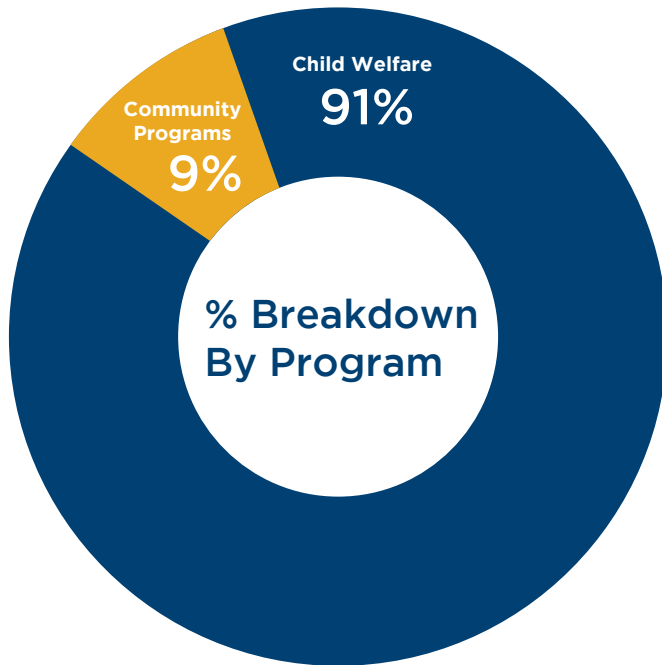
Family Counselling Centre
Centre de counseling familial

The Family Counselling Centre (FCC) has been offering quality counselling services to individuals, couples, and families in the Niagara Region since 1964. In addition to counselling services, the FCC offers a variety of special groups and programs designed to address specific issues and concerns. The FCC believes that wellness is in reach and they're able to support you on your journey.

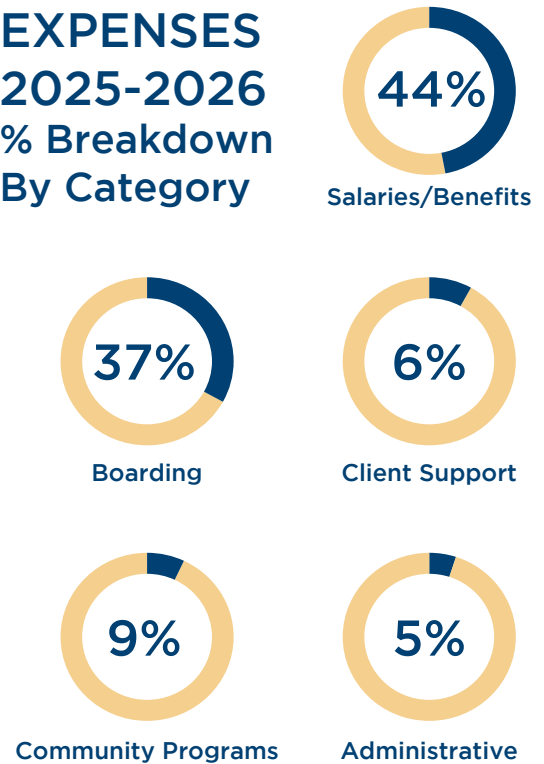


UNITED WAY FUNDED PROGRAMS

REVENUES 2025-2026



EXPENSES 2025-2026 % Breakdown By Category



Summary \$000s

	Child Welfare	Community Programs	Total
Revenues	\$54,120	\$5,649	\$59,768
Expenditures	\$59,085	\$5,509	\$64,594
Surplus/(deficit)	\$(4,966)	\$140	\$(4,826)

Tilling's Safe Landing

In March 2026, FACS Niagara acquired the former Nightlight Shelter from BGC Niagara (formerly the Boys and Girls Club of Niagara) to continue its legacy of serving young people in the region. The property, a duplex located at 5519 Ontario Avenue in Niagara Falls, will become a home for youth living with complex needs in the care of FACS.

“The need for residential placements continues to increase, particularly for young people requiring more intensive supports,” said Anna Bozza, CEO of FACS Niagara. “Purchasing this property is an important step in enhancing the services we provide to children and youth in our care. Tilling’s Safe Landing for Youth will offer a nurturing home and the right supports for youth to grow and stay connected to our community.”

“At BGC Niagara, we believe every young person deserves the opportunity to feel safe, supported, and hopeful about their future. As the needs of youth continue to evolve, what remains constant is the importance of strong community supports that help young people overcome barriers and provide the stability they need to thrive. We are encouraged to see the property continue to play a role in supporting youth in Niagara,” said Joe Macoretta, Interim CEO, BGC Niagara.

The purchase of the home was made possible through the influence and involvement of The Canadian Tilling Foundation. A portion of the purchase price was donated by their founder and the remainder was financed by Tilling in the form of a low stress loan.

In honour of this act of philanthropy, the building is being named “Tilling’s Safe Landing for Youth.”

The goal of The Canadian Tilling Foundation is to make impactful donations with a focus on improving human welfare, health, mental wellness, education, poverty, and homelessness alleviation. Funding is directed towards improving individual and community lives, here and now. “We are grateful to the Canadian Tilling Foundation for its generosity and sharing our vision of a community where young people can thrive. By supporting this project, Tilling is further enabling FACS to make a meaningful improvement in the lives of young people with complex mental health, behavioural, and developmental needs,” said Brett Sweeney, FACS Niagara’s Director of Communications and Community Engagement.

Shortly after the purchase of the property, the Mountainview Building Group stepped up in a big way, committing to complete all the interior renovations at the home. Their contribution is valued at more than \$250,000. “Mountainview has a proud track record of building Niagara,” said Rhianon Burkholder, Chair of the Foundation Board of Directors. “This is a significant gift, creating momentum in our campaign to raise the funds needed for our most vulnerable young people.”

To finance the costs of opening the building, including needed renovations and repairs, the Foundation for FACS Niagara is launching a \$1 million fundraising campaign. Needed upgrades to the home include

a new roof and skylights, electrical work, fire safety measures, HVAC and drywall repairs. The building also requires furnishings, accessibility and cosmetic improvements, and technology to truly make it a home for the youth being supported.

The escalating cost of caring for children and youth is one of the biggest challenges placing financial pressure on children's aid societies (CAS). While the overall number of children in care in Ontario is declining, more young people are coming to CASs with complex medical, mental health, developmental, and behavioural needs requiring specialized supports. Tilling's Safe Landing for Youth will allow FACS Niagara to provide high-quality residential care to these young people at competitive rates.

The home is expected to serve approximately 20 youth each year, with the final number determined following conversations with FACS Niagara's partners at the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. The Ministry is responsible for licensing group homes in Ontario.

FACS is engaged in discussions with a number of trusted community partners about providing specialized support and programming to youth with developmental needs.



Tilling's Safe Landing in Niagara Falls will become a home for young people with complex needs.



Neal Cockshutt, The Canadian Tilling Foundation's Founder and CEO, attends the 2026 FACS Gala at Ravine Estate Vineyard.



Celebrating a Half-Century of Caring: **FACS Honours Betsy Witteveen for More than 50 Years of Fostering**

“They fulfilled my life.”

That’s how Betsy Witteveen, FACS Niagara’s longest serving foster parent, characterized the hundreds of children she has cared for in her 50 years of service to the community.

Betsy began her fostering career in Peterborough back in 1966. Originally, aspiring to become a nurse, but the opportunity to care for vulnerable children quickly became her calling in life. Betsy and her family relocated to a farm in West Lincoln in 1978 where she continued her fostering journey with FACS Niagara. In addition to her fostering, Betsy also raised seven children of her own, which includes two adopted sons.

Now, after more than 50 years of caring for well over 200 infants, young children, and teenagers, Betsy’s embarked on a well-earned retirement in 2026. On April 17, FACS Niagara brought together Betsy’s family,





The FACS team says a heartfelt thanks to Betsy Witteveen. From L to R: Michelle Bernard, Director of Service, Michele Goudie, Child Welfare Worker, Betsy Witteveen, David Gill, Child Welfare Supervisor, Anna Bozza, FACS CEO.

friends, and community leaders to say a heartfelt thanks for everything she's done to improve the lives of young people.

“My mom gave her heart and soul to this calling,” said Betsy’s son Albert Witteveen, who also serves as the Regional Councillor for West Lincoln.

“She worked hand in hand with the agency to get the best results for children in care. My mom has and will continue to inspire others to take on this valuable role in society.”

FACS Niagara CEO Anna Bozza also noted the importance of Betsy’s leadership and the example she’s set.

“At a time when the world can feel quite heavy, celebrating people like Betsy remind us that hope is alive and well in Niagara. For more than 50 years, Betsy

has shown us the meaning of unconditional love.”

Sam Oosterhoff, the MPP for Niagara West and Associate Minister of Energy Intensive Industries, represents Betsy’s home community of West Lincoln. He said that the love Betsy gave to these young people will impact them their entire lives.

“I can’t begin to imagine the amount of lives that you’ve directly touched, but also indirectly, because all of those people who you open your heart and your home to, who you serve with love and with compassion and with the heart of care, those people also seek to emulate that.”

No matter where they go, “they will be carrying a little part of Betsy Witteveen with them,” said MPP Oosterhoff.

West Lincoln Mayor Cheryl Ganann drew on her 34



From L to R: Betty Lou Souter, Vice Chair, FACS Board of Directors, Dr. Karim Ali, Secretary, FACS Board of Directors, Betsy Witteveen, Rhianon Burkholder, Chair, FACS Foundation Board of Directors, Anna Bozza, CEO FACS Niagara

years of experience as an elementary educator to describe the impact that Betsy has had on the children who've been in her care.

“It is that kind of support, the stability that those children are offered by their foster parent that really helps them to be successful in a school setting as well. From that perspective, I really want to offer my thanks to Betsy.”

The Mayor of Thorold has been a consistent supporter of Family and Children's Services Niagara over the years. The city has been involved in the agency's biggest fundraiser, Mountainview LemonAID Day for FACS Niagara, from the beginning. When Mayor Ugulini became aware of this once in a lifetime achievement, he wanted to add his voice to the chorus of well wishers.

“It is my honour to congratulate Betsy Witteveen in

recognition of 50 years of providing compassionate foster care to children with FACS Niagara, with sincere appreciation for your unwavering commitment, dedication, and positive impact.”

Although Betsy's pace of life is changing, she is already finding ways to be helpful in another capacity. “She's already volunteered to assist us with recruiting new foster parents and helping train our team. I know she's taking care of those people in her new community because kindness and giving aren't a job for Betsy. It's who Betsy is. She's such an inspiration,” said Anna Bozza.

While she appreciated that so many people took time to recognize her, Betsy said that she received as much from the journey as she gave to others.

“Those babies really gave me the love. I did my best to give it to them, but they made me feel important and they made me feel like I had a purpose in life.”



Pictured above: Attendees enjoy the annual Foundation Gala held at Ravine Estate Vineyard.

The Foundation

The Foundation for Family and Children’s Services Niagara extends its most sincere gratitude to its community of supporters for its most successful year ever. In 2025, the Foundation raised more than \$1.6 million to support the children, youth, and families served by FACS Niagara.

“Oftentimes, FACS Niagara has to act as the safety net behind the safety net to ensure no one falls through the cracks,” said Rhianon Burkholder, Chair of the Foundation Board. “Donor support is critical to supporting this work. Together, we helped send

hundreds of children to summer camp, provided thousands of dollars in postsecondary bursaries, and supported the redevelopment of a group home in Welland.”

The Foundation also provides funds to support FACS Niagara’s youth programming, including life skills training for youth aged 15 to 23. In 2025, more than 220 youth came “Home for the Holidays” during five special holiday celebrations which included gifts to help youth begin their lives as independent adults.

Foundation Board of Directors 2025

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Rhianon Burkholder, Chair | Anna Bozza, FACS CEO | Jashan Jayan | Nina Jain Sheehan |
| Richard Madume, Vice Chair | Joe DeMan | Dr. Lorraine Jensen | Max Thomas |
| Chris Accursi, Secretary | Rick Dritsacos | Joanne Kedzierski | |
| Yar Diduch, Treasurer | Katie Hutchinson | Robert Miller | |



Mountainview LemonAID Day for FACS Niagara

The sweetest event of the summer served up a super-size amount of good news for children in Niagara. 2025 Mountainview LemonAID Day for FACS Niagara raised more than \$92,000 for the agency’s summer camp program. With this generous support FACS provided 380 children it serves with more than 700 weeks of summer camp.

Children benefitting from this fundraiser may attend day camps within the Niagara region, or overnight camps outside of the region. “Each year, we receive so many notes and drawings from children telling us about the wonderful summer they had, which is so heartwarming,” said Anna Bozza, FACS Niagara Chief Executive Officer.

Congratulations to six-year-old Xavier and family for being this year’s top fundraiser. Their stand, the Citrus Twists, raised more than \$4,200.



Gifts


Some of the largest gifts received in 2025 included:



Estate Gift
\$285,950



St. Paul's Evangelica Lutheran Church
\$225,000



Joyce Family Foundation
\$80,000



DASAKA Foundation
\$80,000

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