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Summer
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WINS News



Want to Learn More About Social Enterprise?

There are a number of organizations in our city and in Canada exploring the concept of Social Enterprise and how non-profits could—or even should—incorporate it into their revenue stream.

Check out the links below to learn more about Social Enterprise:

[Perspectives of the Business Sector on social enterprise](#)
(Daniel Lai, U of C)

[Money and Mission Accelerating Social Enterprise](#)
(Calgary Foundation)

[Social Enterprise Survey Alberta](#)
(Peter Elson/Peter Hall)

WINS: In Business for the Community

You may be surprised to know that WINS runs one of the largest **Social Enterprises** in Calgary.

What is a Social Enterprise? A social enterprise is an organization that applies commercial strategies to maximize improvements in human and environmental well-being, rather than maximizing profits for external shareholders. They can be structured as a for-profit or non-profit, and may take the form of a co-operative, mutual organization, a disregarded entity, a social business, or a charity organization.[1]

WINS' Thrift Stores: For more than 20 years, WINS' Social Enterprise—our Thrift Stores—have been a staple for many Calgarians, providing places to shop for affordable clothing, housewares, and furniture. We have evolved significantly through these two decades, growing from

only one store, to four stores. These stores now support: our six Family Resource Centres; our Free Goods Referral Program; and WINS' Employment Program.

Our Thrift Stores help to fulfill WINS “social purpose” which is to provide:

- an affordable place to shop for quality goods for Calgarians;
- employment opportunities for Calgarians looking to improve their job skills, entering the job market, or gaining employment experience in Canada; and,
- a sustainable source of funds for WINS Community Programs.

When you shop at WINS Thrift Stores you can shop knowing that your dollar helps women and families in your community.

1. Ridley-Duff, R. J. and Bull, M. (2011) *Understanding Social Enterprise: Theory and Practice*, London: Sage Publications

Recently, we asked Kerrie, our Free Goods Referral Program Facilitator, for highlights from her work. She mentioned the following:

“One of my favourite things about my job is that I get to meet people from many different places in the world. I enjoy learning about them and how their lives may have been before they moved to Canada.

Well this story is actually about one of those clients who had recently come to Canada. She didn't know many people and didn't know how to speak any English. She came to meet with me. Despite the language barrier, we communicated as best we could given the situation. One of the things we were able to do was to refer her to our Family Resource Centres to take English classes.

One day, this woman took time to come back to see me. She said, “Kerrie thank you for being so patient and kind to me. We had a language barrier when we first met; however, we figured out a way to communicate. I just want to thank you for all you did.”

DID YOU KNOW?

WINS partners with **over 70 community agencies** to meet our social purpose, including shelters, immigrant serving agencies, community resource centres, health agencies, and other social service agencies.



It's a WINS win for Our Community

WINS' social purpose is to help move women and families out of poverty and into self-sufficiency.

We focus on helping people who are in low-income situations, specifically:

- women entering or coming out of shelters;
- single mothers and their children;
- women in transition and needing support;
- new immigrants;
- the working poor; and,
- those on income assistance.

Free Goods Help Set Up Homes:

In June alone, our **Free Goods Referral Program**—which helps women and families access basic needs items through our stores - supported:

- 93 Single Women without Children;
- 118 Single Mothers; and,
- 212 Families in need.

This meant that we assisted **657 adults**, spouses and adults living in their households as well as **602 children**.

While furniture was the biggest need for these clients, they were also able to access kitchenwares,

clothing, and even bedding to help them set up their home and support their families.

Family Resource Centres Offer Information and Support:

WINS operates six Family Resource Centres (FRC's) in all four quadrants of the city.

The FRC's offer a place for individuals to come together, share, and learn information and skills to help them become empowered and self-sufficient.

The FRC's provide access to community resources for women and their families in low-income situations. For example, over the past year, many families were able to access school supplies and summer camp opportunities for their children in addition to basics through the food bank.

We also offer ongoing programs:

- Literacy and Parenting Skills
 - Life Skills Workshops
 - Family Engagement Programs
 - Kids Clubs
- Since January, our Family Resource Centres provided over

700 services for over **600** women and their families. The top services accessed were:

- referrals to basic needs resources such as the Food Bank;
- gathering information;
- compassionate listening;
- using the phone, fax photocopier, and printer
- public computer access; and,
- connecting to other agencies



We Always Sort it Out

In any given week, WINS receives **thousands** of donated items. We have so many items that we have our own sorting facility with its own staff.

It takes 10 full-time staff members, and many volunteers, to go through all of the donations we receive. In addition to a handful of repeat volunteers, over 40 corporate groups also come at different times each year to assist with the sorting process.

We sort all items into two basic categories – soft goods (clothing, linens, etc.)

and hard goods (housewares and furniture), and we check each item for damage and cleanliness.

Good quality soft items are hung, priced and then sent to stores for sale. Furniture and household items are inspected, sometimes cleaned, and priced before being sent to our stores.

If items are not appropriate for our stores, they are put aside to be recycled. Unfortunately, anything soiled or with significant damage must be thrown out.

WINS has a varied

customer base, including many antique collectors and sellers looking for their next treasure.

When we receive an antique or collectible—sometimes from estates of people who have passed away — our staff will take time to research the item to determine its value. Just recently we unearthed an antique pocket watch, valued at over \$1000!

Sales of these items increase our store revenues even more, enabling us to channel more funds into our programs.

Kerrie explains that it is not always easy for clients to reach out, even when in a difficult situation.

“I had a client at the beginning of the year who was feeling terrible about having to ask for help. She was in tears because she felt so bad. We talked for a while and I explained to her that we are here to help. I tried to re-assure her that it was okay. At the time, this woman was homeless due to some addiction issues.

She came in recently to see me and to tell me that she is doing much better. She said, ‘I want to thank you for everything you said and everything you do. If it wasn't for you and WINS I wouldn't be where I am today. So thanks again.’ She told me she got the help she needed at a treatment centre and is now living with a friend.

These stories make me so happy. WINS is doing many good things in our community. I wish our donors could see what great things the Women in Need Society is able to do because of their support. “

Waste? Not!

WINS receives generous donations of goods from our community members, which come in many forms. One can imagine that while most of the items we receive may be great for our stores, there are items we receive that cannot be sold.

What do we do with things we can't sell? Clean, but unusable clothing is sold to a recycler, and either made into rags, or sent overseas. We also send metal, paper products, electronics, purses and shoes for recycling if they are not appropriate for our stores.

Recycling items we aren't able to use is another social enterprise for WINS, raising funds which benefit our community through the programs we offer.

Of course, saving these items from the landfill is an added bonus! Did you know that WINS processes over 1 million kilograms of goods each year?

