

Heart Niagara *Executive Director* Report

Heart Niagara Stone Mill Inn 8:00a -9:30a *Keynote address Bonnie Giampa*
September 25, 2025

Over the past year, Heart Niagara has advanced its mission to strengthen cardiac health and community safety through a combination of innovation, collaboration, and resilience. Our programs have continued to serve thousands of Niagara residents, with particular emphasis on diagnostic services, the Healthy Heart Schools' Program, and HeartCORE. We expanded capacity with new Holter monitors supported by the David S. Howe Fund, while also maintaining one-on-one supervised training, fitness and nutrition classes that keep health care service accessible and cost-effective, to support personal health.

Internally, we focused on building alignment across staff and board members, developing a common language to communicate our impact, and ensuring financial transparency so that our community understands the real cost of programming. Externally, we strengthened professional partnerships and re-engaged health providers to showcase our value in post-pandemic care.

The year also brought renewed focus on social enterprise. Plans for the Crowded Table Café, a “pay it forward” model at the MacBain Community Centre, represent our next step in combining community nourishment, education, and sustainability.

Reflecting on the year, our greatest strength remains the trust placed in us by the Niagara community. With a foundation of proven results and committed leadership, Heart Niagara is poised to broaden its impact in 2026 and beyond.

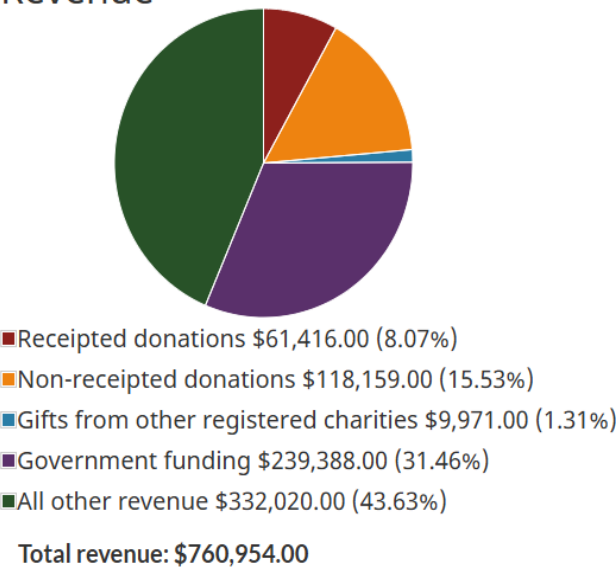
Karen Stearne

Heart Niagara STRATEGIC DIRECTION

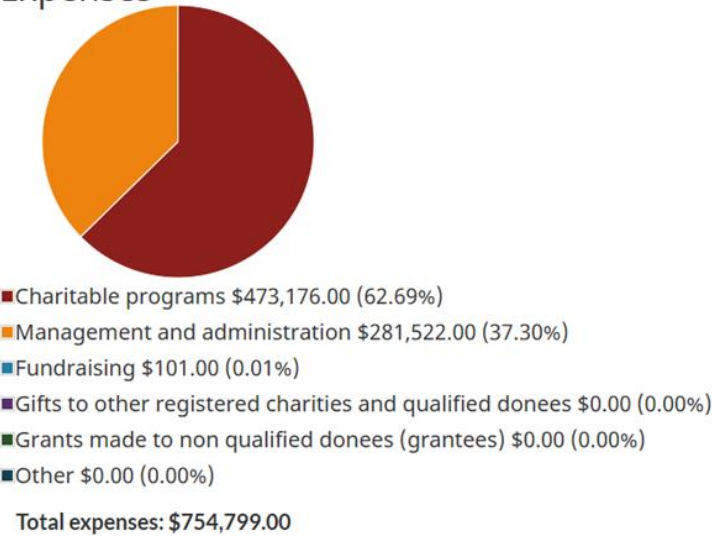
Reduce Health Risks within the Community • Increase health behaviours • Improve digital footprint • Offer bi-annual community forums • Follow-up with family health teams • Increase HN profile related to heart disease prevention • Engage researchers to secure funding • Increase organizational uptake of AED maintenance	Reduce Health Risks in the Workplaces • Assess feasibility and needs of Workplace Wellness Programs • Support the community's ability to respond to an emergency through AED use, and use of HN AED registry • Work towards promoting having AEDs included in building code
Individual Program Analysis Commitments • Secure two new community partners for office space • Explore creation of new social enterprise aligning with mission and vision • Increase financial support of hands-on education and training • Secure financial partners to support education and training • Examine business case, HR needs, and sustainable funding	Recruitment and Succession Planning • Inspire and empower staff, Board of Directors, and volunteers to connect to mission and improve impactful community outcomes • Attract, develop, and retain talent to deliver HN goals • Foster culture aligned with values • Benchmark HN against the best in the industry • Facilitate connections with stakeholders, specifically those who champion HN

HEART NIAGARA FUNDING SNAPSHOT

Revenue



Expenses





Heart Niagara empowers our community by providing the education, training and tools necessary to take control of their heart health. Heart Niagara is guided by an autonomous volunteer Board of Directors, working alongside staff and community volunteers to build a heart healthy

Staff 2024-2025

Karen Stearne Executive Director
Don Gibson Nurse Practitioner
Syed Masroor Bookkeeper
Ally Kerr Program Development Manager
George McCleary Caretaker
Kim Height HeartCORE Coach
Emily Hawthorn HeartCORE Coach
Daniel Cousins HeartCORE Coach
Frank Mio HeartCORE Coach
Diane Corkum Fitness Class Instructor
Trisha Athoe Cardiac Diagnostic Technician
Jen Ptasinski Sonographer
Alyssa Pressley Sonographer
Karen Acuri Sonographer
Anita Fiorentino Lead CPR/AED First Aid Instructor
Mary Homorodean CPR/AED First Aid Instructor
Deralyn MacKenzie CPR/AED First Aid Instructor
Skylar Retsinas CPR/AED First Aid Instructor
Cori Thompson CPR/AED First Aid Instructor
Chelsea Clark CPR/AED First Aid Instructor

Board of Directors 2024-2025

Fran Gregotski, She/her **Chair**
Helga Campbell, She/her **Past-Chair**
Chris Haynes-Remy, He/him **Vice Chair**
Sue Forcier, She/her **Treasurer**
Josh Bieuz, He/him
Dianne Munro, She/her
Laurel Overing, She/her
Cathy Crabbe, She/her
Paula Milot, She/her
Karen Stearne, She/her, Staff Secretary to the Board
Gurpreet Gill M.D., F.R.C.P.C Internal Medicine Physician

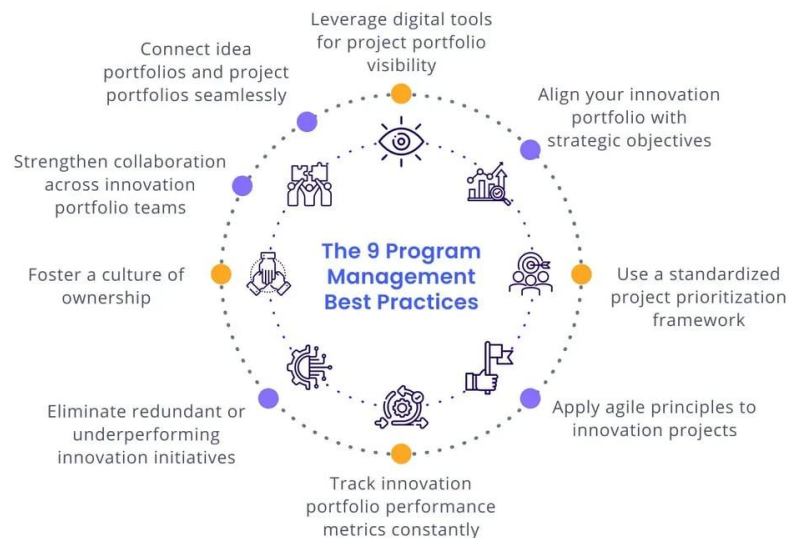
Community Advisors

Dr. Doug Munkley
Medical Director *Community Preparedness*
Dr. Gurpreet Gill
Medical Director *Diagnostic Service*
Mr. Don Gibson NP-PHC
Program Director *Heart Niagara*
Dr. George Zimakas
Internal Medicine
Mr. John Carter
Community

Volunteers 2024-2025

Matthew Aiello, John Albanese, Ken Bedard, Mo Bedard, Ron Charbonneau, Joan Crawford, Carey Dupuis, Anita Fiorentino, Debbie Hoople, Paul Kent, Madison Legacy, Candice Legacy, Deralyn MacKenzie Laurel Overing, Patti Pasco, Rebekah Pasco, Jenny Pasco, Terra Pasco, Kevin Ridgeway, Helen Runciman Carlos Neto Sachi, Carmen Sauer, Cliff Sexton, Teresa Sexton, Emily Watson





Program development

inherently requires a significant time investment to move through its lifecycle stages.

Collaboration is crucial, bringing diverse expertise and resources together to fuel innovation and increase productivity beyond individual capabilities.

Innovation is the engine that drives the creation of new ideas, solutions, and technologies, giving programs a competitive edge.

Finally, the existence of multiple possibilities is essential, providing the creative freedom and diverse paths necessary for novel approaches and the ultimate success of a program. Here is how we are embracing these possibilities

FOOD-FRIENDS-COMMUNITY-ACTIVITY

Advisors Café

Karen Stearne

Ally Kerr

Terra Pasco

Sue Forcier

Anita Fiorentino

City of Niagara Falls

Our focus is on reaching individuals and families facing food insecurity and addressing the growing issue of social isolation in our community. We are moving forward with our plans to expand; we are thrilled to announce that with our community's generous support we are opening the **Crowded Table Cafe** at the MacBain Community Centre.

At the Crowded Table, we believe food is more than nourishment - it is connection, dignity, and community. With Heart Niagara securing space, we are ready to create a thriving social enterprise that serves healthy, affordable meals and snacks while bringing people of all ages together. We are launching a dignity-focused social enterprise designed to ensure no one in our community is left behind. Operating on a pay-it-forward/pay-what-you-can model, the café will provide healthy, nourishing foods for everyone while fostering generosity, access, and inclusion.

Now, we are ready to grow, and we need your help. The café will be **more than a place to eat**, it will serve as a **community hub**, offering nutrition workshops, wellness education, and social opportunities that reduce isolation and build meaningful connections. Seniors, newcomers, and low-income families will benefit most directly, but the café will remain welcoming to people of all ages and backgrounds. To deliver high-quality service, we will integrate a volunteer model to augment paid staff, ensuring that everyone involved feels supported and valued.

Together, we can create a stronger, healthier, and more connected Niagara Falls.

Call or email and hear more, there are donor opportunities, volunteer opportunities and resources that will be available to assist folks with food insecurity, to reduce isolation and build a connected community. **Our target date to open is November 1, 2025.**

CAREGIVER RESPITE

Intent To increase respite services and support for caregivers who are striving to keep their loved ones at home, through a strong volunteer-driven respite program.

What Develop and deliver a program where trained volunteers provide companionship, engage in daily living activities, and offer respite for caregivers—helping seniors remain independent and connected to their communities.

Heart Niagara was invited to help galvanize a group of retired professionals into a collective movement focused on increasing access to **caregiver respite**. The design and pilot of this program come directly from the lived experiences of the group within their communities. Their vision is to see respite and supportive relationships offered at no cost to clients, particularly those facing adversity, so older adults can age at home with dignity and connection. We recognize that similar initiatives may already exist in some Niagara communities.

Over the past 14 months, our collective has been engaging with stakeholders to explore how a coordinated strategy could both improve access and strengthen funding opportunities. We see Heart Niagara's role as helping to reduce silos, broaden access, and shine a light on the excellent work already underway.

Why

- Enable vulnerable and at-risk older adults to live safely at home.
- Reduce isolation and improve health outcomes through companionship.
- Reduce avoidable ambulance and emergency service use.
- Improve accessible support, reducing ER visits for non-life-threatening concerns.
- Delay or reduce the need for critical care hospital stays or long-term care placements.

How By building a strong volunteer program rooted in a grassroots approach, with training and education provided to volunteers to better support caregivers and navigate the system.

Who Heart Niagara, a not-for-profit charitable organization with over 45 years of experience incubating programs and services to fill health system gaps and respond to emerging community needs.

When The program will roll out in four phases, each focused on building best-practice solutions for Niagara caregivers.

Advisors Senior Health

Tom Hodges

Nancy Popp

Fran Gregotski

Dave Cheperdak

Ron Gayadeen

Ray Archer



DEVELOPING CYCLING EDUCATION PROGRAM

This initiative will develop and launch a province-wide cycling education program inspired by the British highly successful *Bikeability* model.

Purpose: This addresses the critical need for accessible, professional **cycling education** in Ontario. Many Ontarians want to cycle more but are held back by concerns about road safety. By equipping residents, especially children and new cyclists with the knowledge and skills to ride confidently and safely, we reduce injury risk, increase participation, and unlock broader benefits for all: reduced traffic, cleaner air, improved public health, and more connected communities.

Designed to influence a societal approach to normalize cycling, this program will build a generation of confident, capable, and safety-conscious cyclists, featuring three progressive levels of training from basic bike handling skills to navigating complex traffic environments.

Training will be delivered by certified instructors in partnership with elementary and secondary schools, community organizations and municipal recreation departments, ensuring widespread accessibility across urban, rural, and underserved communities.

Key program pillars include:

- **Early intervention**, ensuring every child could participate before completing primary school.
- **Alignment with provincial priorities**, including public health, active transportation, road safety, and climate action.
- **Cross-ministerial collaboration**, drawing from the successful interdepartmental approach used in the UK (e.g., Education, Health, Transportation, and Environment).
- **Knowledge-sharing and adaptation**, using best practices from British Columbia's Bikeability-inspired work and drawing direct support from UK Bikeability experts.

By embedding cycling education into the lives of Ontario residents, it will reduce road conflict, encourage lifelong healthy habits, and support a cultural shift toward safe, sustainable transportation.

During the pilot phase, **Share the Road and Heart Niagara** will:

- Conduct an **environmental scan** of existing programs.
- Develop a **made-in-Ontario Bikeability framework** tailored to local needs and contexts.
- Create **instructor training resources, curriculum materials, and promotional tools** based on proven UK templates.
- **Pilot the program in Niagara**, representing a range of geographies and demographics.
- Conduct **evaluation and refinement** to inform a future **province-wide rollout**.

Our approach is guided by a commitment to **inclusivity, sustainability, and flexibility**, ensuring the program is responsive to the unique needs of communities across Ontario.

Advisors Cycle Safety

Eleanor McMahon

Jackie Gervais

Ally Kerr

Karen Stearne

Share the Road

Start Me Up Niagara

Bike Me Up Niagara

Bike Niagara

Broken Spoke

Sport Niagara

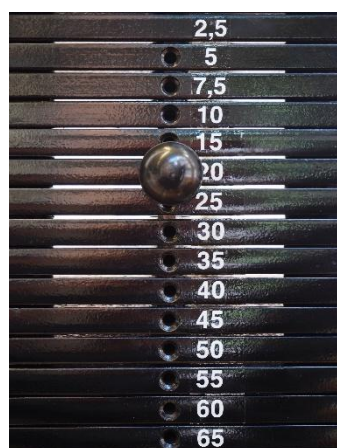


QUEERFIT

Thank you to Quest Community Health Centre, Matthew Aiello for working on the concept and Steven Athanasas for collaborating with HeartCORE to increase access **safer space hours** for clients working on their physical health through strength and resistance training. These services positively impacted the lives of 42 clients and their supporter with 1929 appointments in a safer space.

Quest Referral Profile	Apr-Aug	Sept-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-Aug	Total	Note
Clients referred	37	16	9		60	
Active clients	24	27	31	24	42	42 clients have maintained 3month or more membership
Intakes booked	32	14	8		54	
Sessions attended	398	606	527	398	1929	one-one session with a coach
Classes attended	17	11	5	17	50	Transportation and timing were barriers to participation
Progress assessment	2	9	3	2	16	optional offering
Late cancels	14	2	15	14	45	booked and not cancelled less than 24 hr
No-shows	16	37	22	16	91	appointment is booked and not cancelled

Capturing Comments Just saying ...



“I am feeling stronger every day”

“I think I have already lost a couple of kilos”

“The program makes it easy for me to get 2-10k rides in a week in a safe and cool environment using the cardio equipment bike”

“I definitely feel much stronger and look forward to coming here”

“Even when I am tired, I come because I know I will have more energy after”

“It is worth the 90 minutes on the bus each way to come to QueerFit, everyone is so nice”

“I am going away to school and the tools I learned will help me stay fit and do better at school”

To Heart Niagara and the HeartCORE staff:

I am impressed on how successful this initiative has been and how many 2SLGBTQ+ individuals that have truly benefited from the program. As we all should be aware, it is much more difficult for 2SLGBTQ+ individuals, especially trans folks to attend a gym due to fear, stigma and history of trauma. We also know that cost can be a major barrier to accessing a gym program.

I have heard firsthand from clients who have reported increased strength, endurance, increased levels of happiness with a higher drive to improve their physical health. We were extremely fortunate to have received government funding for this program for 2024. I am aware that we have not received this funding again, but I am hoping there are other opportunities or ways we can try to fund and support this program for 2025 through our CHC and our community. I am hoping we can come up with some ideas on how to make this happen.

Steven Athanasas Registered Nurse Quest CHC

HONOURING A LEGACY: THE JOHN AND LILLIAN CLARK FUND AND ITS LASTING IMPACT ON HEART NIAGARA



In 2015, Heart Niagara was proud and deeply grateful to announce a transformative \$1 million donation to support the Healthy Heart Schools' Program. This remarkable gift was made possible through the establishment of the John and Lillian Clark Fund, created by their daughter, Deb Allerton, to honour the enduring legacy of her parents.

Dr. Lillian Clark, a beloved and respected paediatrician in the Niagara Region, was a passionate advocate for the prevention of metabolic and cardiovascular disease

(CVD) through early intervention. From the program's inception in 1985, she supported Heart Niagara's vision of primary prevention beginning in the early years, especially within schools. Her husband, Dr. John Clark, a highly esteemed surgeon and dedicated community volunteer, served as a Cardiac Rehabilitation Physician with Heart Niagara, offering his time and expertise to support local health initiatives.

This landmark donation created a meaningful opportunity to commemorate the lives and contributions of two extraordinary Canadians who made a profound impact on both the medical field and the social fabric of the Niagara Region. Now, ten years later, their legacy continues to inspire.

The John and Lillian Clark Fund, administered through the Niagara Community Foundation, was established as a capital investment whose annual distributable earnings directly support the Healthy Heart Schools' Program. This initiative is grounded in the understanding that cardiovascular disease often begins in childhood and adolescence. By identifying risks early—such as family history, obesity, elevated blood pressure, poor nutrition, inactivity, and other lifestyle factors—the program aims to prevent chronic conditions before they begin. The program works closely with families and schools to raise awareness of these risk markers and encourage proactive follow-up with healthcare providers. Additionally, all participating students receive CPR and AED training, reinforcing key health messages through experiential learning—an approach that reflects Niagara's strong commitment to practical education and community empowerment.

Deb Allerton's generous contribution stands as a testament to her parents' unwavering belief in Heart Niagara's unique and impactful approach. The fund provides ongoing, annual support to the Healthy Heart Schools' Program, ensuring that thousands of children and families continue to benefit from this vital preventive health initiative for generations to come.

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HEART NIAGARA'S VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

Today, we shine a light and celebrate the people and families who remind us of what community truly means. Our volunteers, supporters, and community partners are the backbone of Heart Niagara. Each of you has given your time, energy, and heart and because of that, we've been able to deliver education, training, and resources that save lives.

In 2016, Heart Niagara had the good fortune of securing a location on Queen Street, thanks to the



generosity of local entrepreneur Phil Ritchie, and the City of Niagara Falls. It was during this time that Heart Niagara was introduced to **Ron Charbonneau and his wife, Candice Legacy**. Together with the support of their daughter, **Madison Legacy**, they created an opportunity for us to raise funds annually through *Cruising on the Q*.

What an experience this has been. This year we proudly celebrated the **10th anniversary** of this incredible event. For over a decade, this family has worked side by side, sharing their talents and their commitment to building a better community. Under their leadership, more than **\$55,000 has been raised** to support CPR training in schools. This is volunteerism at its finest, and on behalf of Heart Niagara and our community, we extend our deepest thanks to Ron, Candice, and Madison for their unwavering dedication.

We also want to recognize one of our newest champions of community spirit, **Uwe Natho**, whose creativity and leadership has turned wine and beer bottle returns into a powerful fundraising tool. Each year, he raises more than **\$10,000** by collecting bottles and returning them to support local causes. In 2025, Heart Niagara was fortunate to be a recipient of his generosity. While his wife may occasionally wonder why the garage smells like a brewery, we know it is because of his big heart and commitment to paying it forward. If you have bottles to donate, you now know who to call! uwe.natho@sympatico.ca



We would like to thank Dr. Joanne McKinley Molodynia and her supporters Kim Sauder and Angela Kelly for sharing the benefits of a royal combination of flavor and healthy benefits. Organo gourmet **coffee** is infused with a triple mushroom blend to give your day an unmatched boost.

When you are having coffee, why not a cup of coffee with health benefits!

Since the early 1990s, Heart Niagara has also been blessed with the support of **Delta Bingo**, City of Niagara Falls and the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation, which have provided us with an avenue to raise vital funds. Thanks to the leadership at Delta Bingo in Niagara Falls, and the dedication of our own volunteers, this program continues to thrive raising over \$20,000 each year for Heart Niagara.



We particularly want to acknowledge the incredible leadership of **Debbie Hoople**, whose commitment has been unmatched. I still remember meeting Debbie years ago while I was volunteering elsewhere, and she offered to help at the Heart Niagara bingo. I don't think she realized that seven years later she would still be with us fostering new volunteers and ensuring our success. A heartfelt thank you also goes out to **Ken, Moe, Laurel, Syed and Joan**, who faithfully show when called on Sunday mornings for their bingo shifts. Together, they are the backbone of this effort, ensuring that Heart Niagara can continue its work in the community.

People cross our path for a reason. Sometimes they bring a lesson, sometimes a moment, sometimes a shift in perspective. Some stay for years; others are gone before we even realize they were there.



We don't always get to decide who enters our life. What we do get to decide is what we take from that encounter. Every person we meet whether they stay or go changes the direction of our journey in ways we may not understand until much later.

And what can I say? Some people cross your path early in life, and their presence stays with you for decades. That has been my experience with the **Kent family and Paul Kent** a friendship and partnership lasting more than 40 years.

Kent Heritage Farms has always found ways to pay it forward and remain deeply connected to the community. Since 2000, they have been steadfast supporters of Heart Niagara this year marking a **25-year anniversary of continuous commitment**.

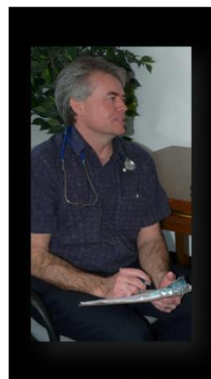
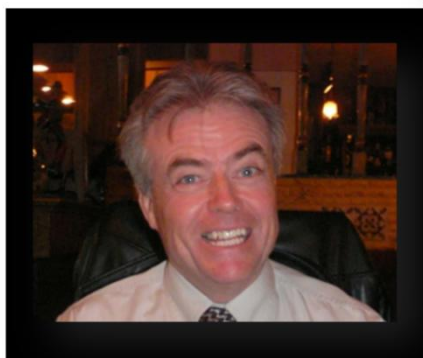


From donating food, to providing space, to attending our events, to supporting education and communication about sustainability and community farming, Kent Heritage Farms has been there every step of the way. No matter when I call, Paul's first answer is always: "*Yes—how can I help make it better?*" Today, we extend our heartfelt thanks to **Paul Kent**, his community family, the Kent Heritage Farms staff, **his wife Wendie**, and their children for 25 years of generosity, partnership, and making Heart Niagara stronger.

To each of our volunteers, community partners, and supporters your time, energy, and heart make everything possible. Heart Niagara is stronger because of you, and we are deeply grateful.

Don Gibson, BScN, NP-PHC

For 25 years, you have been a cornerstone of Heart Niagara development and innovation. Your commitment to advancing health services through program development has touched countless lives.



your work as a Nurse Practitioner has gone far beyond the clinic you have delivered programs that empower individuals, families, and communities to live healthier, more confident lives.

As we celebrate our 25 years of service, we are deeply grateful for the creativity, and resilience you have brought to this work. Your legacy is written in the lives you've improved and the programs you have worked in.



A Heart Healthy Future to the Youth of Niagara!

Your generous donation will continue the empowerment of the youth in the Niagara Region through awareness, education, training & research.

- ✓ Support education to over 7,000 adolescents in schools with individual teaching on how to prevent heart disease
- ✓ Inspire more families to live a healthier lifestyle together
- ✓ Increase access to heart health services in the Niagara Region
- ✓ Provide prevention research for heart disease and many other chronic diseases which include stroke, diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and obesity.
- ✓ Provide early identification and referral for students who are at high risk for heart disease through Heart Healthy Schools' Program

Increasing healthy lifestyle awareness... one student at a time!



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Follow prompts to the department of choice
Email: info@heartniagara.com
Web: heartniagara.com



RESEARCH AND HEALTH PROMOTION INITIATIVES ARE POSSIBLE THANKS TO:

ACT Foundation, Bike Me Up Niagara (BMUN), BCM grant, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Brock University, City of Thorold, District School Board of Niagara, Employment and Social Development Canada, Hospital for Sick Children, John and Lillian Clark Fund, Lincoln Active Age Friendly Advisory Community, Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, New Connections Counselling, Niagara Catholic District School Board, Niagara College, Niagara Community Foundation, New Horizons Seniors, Niagara Student Transportation Services, Niagara EMS (NEMS), Niagara Region Public Health (NRPH), Ministry of Health, Ministry of Transportation, University of Toronto, Niagara East PROBUS, Patterson Funeral Home, Quest Community Health Centre, Start Me Up Niagara (SMUN), SHARE THE ROAD, Sport Niagara, Welland Centre de Sante

Take the steps!
Know your own health

Check out
heartniagara.com



AED, CPR & FIRST-AID Training
 TAKE ACTION - Smoke Cessation Program
 HEALTHY HEART SCHOOLS' PROGRAM
 HeartCORE - Circuit training - effective, safe for everyone
 DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES - Stress, Echo - Holter and Loop Monitors
 HEART DISEASE PREVENTION RESEARCH in the Niagara Region
 COOKING FOR A HEALTHIER YOU / FOOD FOR LIFE
 BUILDING COMMUNITY ASSETS, CAPACITY & RESOURCES TO IMPROVE HEALTH IN NIAGARA



Heart NIAGARA

Making Niagara Heart Healthy Since 1977

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 Charitable Registration Number 107473316RR0001 www.cra-arc.gc.ca



**In the Niagara Region
 Our Programs
 Reach
 More than 15,000
 people annually!**

**Empowering Niagara to take the steps
 to a healthier lifestyle since 1977,
 through programming
 and strategic partnerships.**

Community Preparedness
 CPR Training
 AED Placement and Training
 First Aid Training

Diagnostic Program
 Echocardiography

Holter and Loop Monitors

Healthy Heart Schools' Program
 CPR and AED Training
 Family Education
 Cardiovascular Risk Assessment

Health Professionals Education

Healthy Daily Living Program
 Cooking for a Healthier You
 TAKE ACTION - Smoke Cessation Program
 Food for Life

HeartCORE
 Weekly Health and Fitness Programs

Investigator Initiated Research

Corporate Services
 Safety, Health and Wellness Programs

"Every act of generosity—whether \$10 or \$10,000—builds the heartbeat of our community. Together, we transform individual contributions into life-saving programs, education, and care for thousands of Niagara residents."

On behalf of Heart Niagara, we extend our deepest gratitude to every donor who supported us in 2024–2025. Your belief in our mission sustains the programs that prevent illness, save lives, and strengthen families across Niagara. Whether through a modest gift or a major contribution, your support ensures that accessible cardiac care and health education remain within reach for all. Thank you for standing with us and for helping create a healthier, more connected community.

Karen Stearne, Executive Director