



Safetynet Children and Youth Charities

1317 Speers Road

Oakville, Ontario L6L 3X2

phone: (905) 845-7233

email: info@safetynetservices.ca

web: www.safetynetservices.ca

Facebook: @SafetyNetclothingdonationprogram



SafetyNet Children and Youth Charities

482 South Service Road East, suite 203

Oakville, Ontario L6J 2X6

phone: (905) 845-7233

email: info@safetynetservices.ca

web: www.safetynetservices.ca

Facebook: @SafetyNetclothingdonationprogram



History

Bill Shields states:

"I started the Charity in 2007. After 22 years of social service in Toronto, we moved to Oakville. I always wanted to start a charity, and give back to the community where I live. Over the years in social service I developed a philosophy, and ideas, of programs that could assist families who are struggling with poverty. I put those ideas into Safetynet, which I started in my spare time. Over the 10 years it has grown steadily, and I now spend over 50 hours a week here. I am lucky to have a number of dedicated volunteers who assist daily."

Recent changes

Safetynet moved to this new facility in fall 2017, tripling the floor space, embarking on new services: furniture and household items, bicycles.

This facility has been set up by volunteer carpenters with supplies scrounged and adapted, donations from Tamarack, Home Depot, special volunteer groups from several schools.

Racks provide space for new services and also storage of high quality off season clothing - second from top, row of boxes is 800 cubic feet of brand new summer clothing from Gymboree. Safetynet, due to lack of space in our previous location, would have had to reject this top quality clothing. Large influxes of clothing do happen several times a year, this allows us to store them for weeks as they get used, or even months until the appropriate season arrives. Private donations of off-season clothing is also now possible to keep rather than sell to a rag factory.



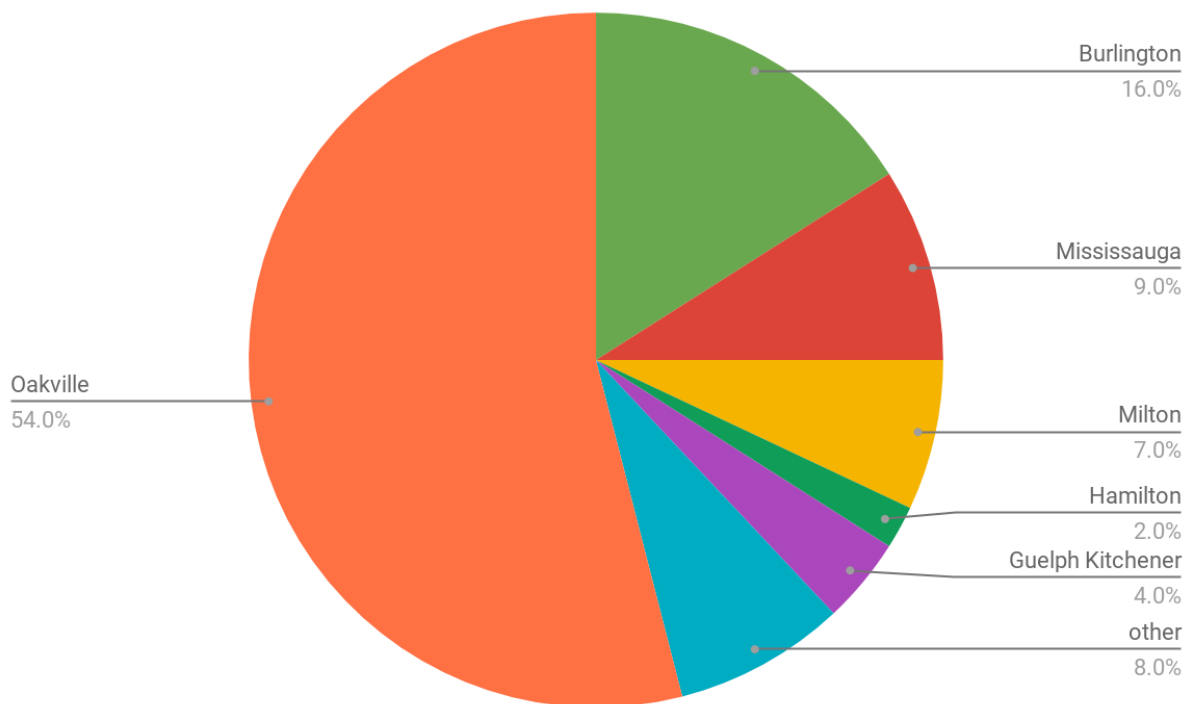
Statistics

Records have been kept since 2012. In the last five years Safetynet has provided assistance to 10,000 people comprising 2500 families. Some totals of items provided include:

- 7,000 items of clothing to infants, 27,000 items to children, 7,000 to women and 5,000 to men
- 39,000 diapers
- 11,000 hygiene items
- 3,000 items of food
- 120,000 total items

Distribution by Cities

Clients of Safetynet come from a number of cities, distributed as follows:



Demographics

Nearly 40% of our clients are single mother families.

Recently many of our donations go to the ongoing influx of newcomers (registered refugees and border crossers); Mississauga has been receiving 700 new registered refugees per year since Justin Trudeau was elected

There are a lot of homeless living in Oakville, believe it or not. Many have been coming to Safetynet over the last decade, for clothing, warm winter protection, and hygiene items.

Other families are simply below the poverty line; disabilities and sickness and job related issues lead to poverty everywhere.



Finances

Funding has not been a focus for Safetynet in the past. In fiscal year ending May 2017 the total income was nearly \$79,216 from private and corporate donations, and grants. Expenses were \$86,421, of which \$45,641 was salary of the one employee. This is remarkably low for a charity of this size and client base. \$44,000 of the donations were receipted, \$9,000 came from other charities and \$25,000 from non receipted donations. Since all items are provided free, revenue is entirely from fundraising and donations.

There are approximately 50 active volunteers.

The following expenses will be added in 2018:

- **Transportation:** Safetynet needs a truck for the new services. We are trying to get one donated but have to rent in the interim. In any case there will be gas and running costs.
- **Rent:** In fall 2017 Safetynet moved from a 1600 square foot facility to this 4200 square foot warehouse. This requires an additional \$3200 per month in rent. Additional services - particularly vehicles for furniture transportation - will add significant expenses.
- **Salary:** Bill Shields answers about 100 phone calls per day. It would make sense to hire a receptionist for the busy hours during the day. It also a goal that this year, Bill will be able to draw every pay cheque; this would be a first. We will probably eventually need to hire a truck driver.
- **Parts:** Minor furniture repair, and bike repair replacement parts will be required
- **Storage Racks:** if we are able to we will get donated racks to increase our storage capacity further, however we may have to purchase them. We would obtain wholesale pricing on used racks. Supplies for racking are donated.
- **Grants:** we will pay for help in obtaining grants; professionals have great in-depth knowledge of grant foundations and their procedures. Of course, this item should ultimately result in an influx of funds, but grant cycles take a long time.

In all, 2018 projected expenses should grow to roughly \$150,000, which is still a low number for a charity of this client base. We will work with what we get as we grow to a larger budget.

The time has come to fundraise in earnest. Safetynet is embarking on a much more ambitious funding initiative: private donations, grants, and corporate sponsorships will all be actively solicited in a set of initiatives that emphasize ongoing donations to secure a stable future. The good news is there is a clear path forward that will achieve these increased revenues, as has been demonstrated by other charities.



Clothing Bank

Safetynet carries a variety of clothing to assist the entire family unit. The clothing bank includes clothing for infants, children, youth, adult, and business suits for men and women re-entering the work force. All clothing is provided to families free of charge. Clothing bank hours are Monday till Friday, 9:30 till 1:00. Families must call ahead to arrange an appointment.

Safetynet accepts:

- All used clothing, footwear, handbags, belts and fabric
- New diapers and wipes

Any clothing that is torn, worn, or cannot be given away, any other fabric like curtains, towels, blankets that are in bad shape are all sold to a fabric recycling centre; the more you give us the better.

Donate clothing 24 hours a day in the drop boxes, or for larger amounts call for pick up, alternatively deliver to our loading dock.

Families can visit seasonally.

In the more recent years many families of newcomers, refugees and border crossers, are provided entire wardrobes. Mississauga residents form the majority of this group as the government settles about 700 newcomers per year there.



Suits and Business Attire

To help break the cycle of poverty, Safetynet provides business attire toward job interviews.

The relatively small footprint of the clothing area belies a very large amount of clothing that is provided each week. Whole families can require many large bags of clothing in one session, and several families a day are facilitated. The volunteers are constantly restocking.



Volunteer Opportunities

It takes a network of people to outfit a family with clothing

- All donated clothing has to be sorted, accepted items must be hung or shelved, and the clothing area has to frequently be reordered and maintained
- clients have to set up an appointment so we can arrange a volunteer to give them help through the visit
- Interpreters have to help schedule appointments, provide directions, and during their visit explain the rules and educate them on appropriate winter clothing



Case Study: Volunteer to Workforce

Refugee newcomers arrive with a one year sponsorship, then they are given the same opportunities as other residents, same welfare and tax rules etc. In fact the second year is often the most difficult one financially.

It typically takes several years for a refugee family to get solidly on their feet in the community. English, retraining, and years of climbing up the job ladder are required. Volunteer work is encouraged to help with this process.

1. One example is an individual who arrived with his wife and three children. He had excellent English skills and a sales background. Living near Safetynet, he helped translate at the clothing facility as much as he could. During this time he obtained clothing, diapers for his children, and bicycles.

Eventually contacts through some of the companies that help Safetynet met him and he landed a job with one of them. While still entry level work, he is likely to move up well over the next few years. To this day he still helps out at Safetynet.

2. Other newcomers are helping Safetynet as well. One of them is particularly helpful with the new moving initiative, having a penchant for warehouse work from jobs in other countries. Surely he will land a warehouse job soon - and we will be delighted for him - but it will leave a hole to fill!
3. Another example is a family in Mississauga whos father - a construction worker - is having a hard time finding work due to poor English. For some people the challenge of language is much harder. After 1.5 years here, they had a fourth child, born 2 months premature. The baby remained on the other side of Toronto in Sunnybrook for three months. Safetynet, and the community connected to it on Facebook, provided all the things they needed - clothes, drawers, change table, diapers, some extra money, and also (privately¹) a car seat and crib. Later they also brought the rest of the family to Safetynet for seasonal clothing. They ended up arriving late and missing their time slot but - as Bill is often known to do - simply couldn't say no under the circumstances. They went away very happy that day.

¹Safetynet's insurance precludes distributing cribs or car seats. However, private individuals are allowed to legally exchange them provided measures are taken as outlined on the government web site. Many have been arranged through Oakville Moms, Halton Families for Syrian Families, and Safetynet's Facebook groups.



Furniture Bank

There is a disconnect between used furniture supply and demand:

- Low income families, single moms in particular cannot afford solid quality furniture, nor can they transport it.
- Newcomers frequently have issues with low quality furniture breaking, landlords removing it, or losing it as the result of moving. Many refugee newcomers are placed in Mississauga and Halton each year, creating an ongoing demand. These families generally cannot speak English and don't know how to ask on social media. But they do connect with each other as a community and can obtain contact with informal helper networks
- Conversely, residents in Oakville, and Milton and Burlington have shown a strong interest in donating good quality used furniture, to avoid landfill. They often find it hard to transport large items or find the families in need.

Starting in 2016 Chris Gabe began his own initiative to help refugee newcomers. Over time this grew with social media groups, to find those who could donate and others who could help communicate with recipients. Soliciting others to use their own vehicles, and often renting trucks, people primarily in Oakville and Milton were able to help many families primarily in Mississauga where a large ongoing stream of newcomers are placed.

This mechanism though sometimes effective is inherently problematic; requests get lost, items that are promised don't always materialize, items at times get promised to more than one, and there is little choice without a storage facility, leading to suboptimal matches to people's needs. It also requires private money without charity status, to run the truck.

To address the issues, and to expand to larger numbers, people are now working with Safetynet in the new warehouse space to provide furniture, household and kitchen items, and bikes. Volunteers will now be able to request items and deliveries in a more organized and reliable mechanism.

Safetynet can, if requested, provide charitable donation in kind receipts for some items of higher value and quality.



Pictured below is the furniture space at the new facility.



Volunteer Opportunities

- Pick up and delivery helpers are required during day time and/or off hours as necessary.
- A truck driver (small - G license only) is needed.
- Warehouse help with both heavy items, and sorting smaller items
- Photos and documentation of furniture quality for valuation on tax receipts



Household items

Many kitchen and household items have been requested in the past. Safetynet is now formally adding this to its services! These include

- Dishes, cups
- Cutlery
- Pots and pans
- Small appliances: blender, coffee maker, toaster, microwave
- Vacuum cleaners
- Flat screen televisions
- Computers

Only complete dish sets are accepted. Appliances must be in full working order. No tube TVs will be accepted.

Computers and televisions are in demand and will be provided where possible. Even a low end computer provides access to the web, which gives families access to bus routes, banking, city and private program information, social media and entertainment.

Any electronics that are not suitable will be provided to an electronics recycling disposal service. A drop box is available beside our clothing drop boxes!

Volunteer Opportunities

Items need to be sorted and checked for completeness and functional aspects. Shelving and organization is required. Clients need assistance selecting and boxing their items.



Bicycles

Safetynet has received bicycles in small numbers for years. With the new facility this will increase in capacity.

In 2016 Chris Gabe and a volunteer Arabic translator were delivering furniture to a family with 8 children, four of whom have severe hearing problems. Just as the truck was departing an 8 year old boy waved it to stop, and asked for a bicycle. He explained how he couldn't enjoy music, take advantage of sounds in computer games, and really wanted a bike. Chris found Bikes Without Borders and obtained bicycles for the family. The newcomer community help each other a great deal, and so word spread and more and more requests came in. Over the next year 100 bikes were donated to newcomers in Mississauga, Oakville and Milton.



The first bike shipment. On the left is the boy who started it.

The newcomer families are *a/ways* extremely thankful for the donated items they receive. This one provided an extra glow.

Later that year two other large families of young men received bikes. One of the boys added Chris to his Facebook friends and soon after he posted this picture.

All of these bikes were donated to them. They live far apart, and half way across Mississauga from this ravine.

This demonstrates how bikes truly empower young people as they explore their community.



A truck load of bicycles ready for shipment to Mississauga, courtesy Bikes Without Borders.

A lot of bikes are obtained from abandoned stockpiles, as well as private donations. This service diverts them from the landfill.



A group of four sisters who just received their new bikes. This Syrian newcomer family moved from their original placement in Alberta to seek more relevant work.

This family arrived with four children, the oldest very ill. Unfortunately she passed away soon after. A few weeks later, the other three children were overjoyed to receive bicycles, in seeming defiance of their grief. The easiest of gestures can have such impact.

And yes, that girl learned to ride!



Volunteer Opportunities

Some donated bikes require only simple maintenance that can be done in house. Pick up and delivery help is also required.



Diapers

One of the most difficult financial stressors of young families in need is the cost of diapers. Safetynet has been providing weekly allotments of diapers to many families since the charity began. Over 39,000 have been provided in the last five years. Each week another 300 diapers are distributed.

Recipients are given 15 to 20 diapers per child per week, depending on supply. This amount, though not always the total they require, offsets costs significantly.



Tutoring

Through the use of volunteers, Safetynet provides free tutoring to children and youth experiencing difficulties with their academics.

Safetynet believes that assisting children and youth with their educational needs is key to breaking the cycle of poverty.

Tutoring takes place at the Charity office and is provided one-to-one with each student. After an education assessment is completed, a plan will be enacted that will include a strategy as to how to best assist the child/youth with their educational needs.

Tutoring hours are Monday-Friday from 4:00 pm until 7:00 pm, Saturday 9:30 am till 2:30 pm

Volunteer Opportunities

All tutors must commit to a full school year of tutoring, during which time they will work with the same set of students. Most tutors are in college or later; grade 10 is the minimum. Of course all volunteer hours qualify for the high school volunteer program.



Music Lessons

Safetynet Children & Youth Charities feel that money should not be a barrier to enhancing and child's musical talent. We offer free one to one music lessons to children/youth whose families cannot afford musical instruction. Lessons are provided weekly at our Oakville location, and consist of piano, guitar, violin, drums, and vocal instruction. Music lessons are offered daily for half hour sessions, and are held on Monday-Friday from 4:00 - 7:00, Saturdays 9:30 am - 2:30 pm.



Volunteer Opportunities

Safetynet always needs more music tutors. Students range in ability, many are just beginning so a high level of music ability isn't always required. We particularly need guitar teachers. Again, Safetynet provides certificates for school volunteer hours.



How to Help

To follow up on any of this later, visit our web site at www.safetynetservices.ca

Volunteers

Consider volunteering any time and way you prefer. We have weekday time morning through early evening and Saturday time slots. Or perhaps you know a student who can use some volunteer time.



Donations

The two things that separate Safetynet from other charities is the high quality of the items we provide, and the fact that it's provided for free. Naturally it costs us to do so, and we need financial donations to continue. If you are interested in donating, please consider a recurring amount. You can donate by:

- Visiting our website safetynetservices.ca
- Providing donations here: we accept cheques, visa, cash
- Providing a corporate donation, which can receive acknowledgement

Tax receipts for charitable donations will be issued on request.

Safetynet will also need a truck for more efficient delivery (larger orders / delivery to multiple dwellings in Mississauga). A nice cargo van would be very useful as well, to do smaller runs. Any leads or thoughts? Old truck that still runs well in your yard at work? Know someone at a company that uses a lot of 16 foot trucks? Please let us know!

Communicate

We hope you can help spread the word about us. Look up Safetynet Clothing Donation Program on Facebook and share our posts. Like one post and you will get notifications. Tell your friends and neighbours about us. They can come here any time to see what it's about.

