Healthy Start

# Celebrating
## GATHERING TOGETHER

Annual Report 2025-2026

# HEALTHY START

Reaching out to expectant and new families in big and small ways

# *Land* ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Healthy Start acknowledges that we are on Treaty #1 territory and that the land on which we gather is traditional territory of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Anisininew, Dakota and Dene Peoples, and the homeland of the Red River Metis Nation. We also acknowledge Shoal Lake First Nation #40 on Treaty #3 territory for the water we use.

We thank all Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island, offering gratitude for the sacred gifts the water and land give us to feed and nurture our children and ourselves.

We acknowledge the harms and mistakes of the past. Healthy Start is committed to reconciliation by honouring, listening and learning from Indigenous peoples and by working in partnership to build a healthy future for all children and families.

## MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

### MISSION

To empower and connect individuals and families in our community by offering pregnancy and parenting information and support.

### VISION

Healthy Pregnancies, Nurture Babies,
Thriving Individuals & Families

### VALUES

WELCOMING:
Community based; Inclusive; Safe

SUPPORTIVE:
Relationship-based; Connecting; Collaborative

EMPOWERING:
Participant-centred; Respectful; Meaningful

# Growing Together:

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It's somewhat counterintuitive, but infants exposed to a variety of foods early generally avoid allergies later in life. Their immune system adapts and learns from being challenged in a safe way, providing long-term benefits. We believe the same principle applies to parenthood.

While every family is unique, the desire for connection during the formative stages of pregnancy and parenting is universal. While our groups provide valuable information and access to outreach staff, dietitians and nurses, the act of gathering at Healthy Start offers something deeper: a necessary, safe "exposure" to the collective challenges and joys of raising a child.

For many, being a new parent is isolating, but there is a unique, quiet strength gained when a parent realizes they aren't alone in soothing a crying baby at three in the morning. By sharing these real-life experiences in a supportive environment, we help individuals transform that isolation into long-term resilience.

***"I came here during my pregnancy and after my baby was born. I had no idea how much I needed people's support... I had no idea that gathering and learning together would make such a difference in my life."*** – Healthy Start Participant

Our team provides the welcoming space and evidence-based information, but our participants provide the strength. Together, we are building a more resilient foundation for the next generation.

Our success is a direct result of enthusiasm, commitment, and a shared belief in our mission. We extend our deepest gratitude to our staff, Board of Directors, team members, volunteers, government funders and donors.

Thank you for being part of our gathering circle,

Tedda Sandercock
*Chair of the Board*

Davorka Monti
*Executive Director*

**HISTORY** This year marks Healthy Start's 29th year. In 1995, we started a community development process funded by the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program; it yielded a model for outreach via our neighbourhood sites and personnel contributions from public health nurses and dietitians. A 1996-1997 peer outreach training program developed by Red River College and Taking Charge trained our first 3 outreach staff. Prenatal groups were phased into 8 neighbourhood locations starting in January 1997. Manitoba provincial funding in 1999 enabled the launch of postnatal "Baby Steps" groups. Dietitians of Canada sponsored us at the beginning. Healthy Start incorporated in 2004 and became a registered charity in 2005. Mothers who lived in poverty were involved in the planning process gave us our name, Healthy Start for Mom & Me and in 2020, we updated our operating name to Healthy Start.

# Highlights

## FROM OUR PROGRAM THIS YEAR

## HEALTHY OUTCOMES FOR FAMILIES

- Average birthweight 7.4 lbs (Canadian average is 7.25 lbs, 2024 StatsCan)
- 96% babies delivered at full term (>37 weeks)
- 4.7% low birthweight rate (average is 7.2% according to StatsCan in 2024)
- 92% breastfeeding initiation rate (Manitoba avg is 82%, Manitoba Health 2024)

## OUR REACH IN THE COMMUNITY

- 523 community groups hosted
- 23 public health and community health nurses, 10 dietitians, 8 outreach staff made up 20 teams offering community support throughout Winnipeg
- 1,041 individuals participated this year
- 1,900 people attended during their pregnancy
- 3,090 parents/caregivers and babies attended groups
- 467 participants received personalized 1-on-1 support

*"I struggled to get support for breastfeeding from my family. I came here and got the information and encouragement to keep going."* – Healthy Start Participant

# Nutrition & ESSENTIAL SUPPORT

## FOOD COUPONS

Distributed 4,379 coupons, providing over 17,000 litres of milk and over 4,300 cartons of eggs

*I went straight to the store after group with my coupons. I bought milk and eggs and made a real meal for myself. Thank you, I hope you know how helpful the coupons are and I can't thank you enough for all the support you have given me.* -Healthy Start participant

## VITAMINS

Filling critical nutritional gaps for moms and babies.

Provided 260 bottles of prenatal vitamins and 450 bottles of Vitamin D drop supplements for breastfed babies.

Thank you to Winnipeg Goldeyes Field of Dreams Foundation for their contribution towards vitamin purchases.

## MEAL BAGS

2,100 meal bags assembled 7 different recipes to help families cook healthy meals at home. 71 volunteers dedicated 310 hours to help assemble our meal bags—we couldn't do it without them! We sold 436 meal bags to participants.

## MEALS

6,800 nutritious meals/snacks shared at groups.

## VOLUNTEERS

37 volunteers provided 2400 hours of food prep, childminding and drop-in support this year.

# Learning & GROWING

**LITERACY:** 500 board books were distributed to participants and their babies, setting the foundation for lifelong reading. Faith Lutheran Church donated 150 board books – thank you.

**VIRTUAL CONNECTION:** online "Sing & Rhyme Online" group reached 256 parents and 277 little ones, keeping families connected even from afar.

**NEWCOMER OUTREACH:** 1,357 newcomers to Canada attended our specialized newcomer group. We provided support in 21 different languages through our dedicated interpreters.

*We came from a refugee camp and our journey in Winnipeg was less difficult because this group made a huge difference. Thank you for all the knowledge and resources you shared with us.* -Healthy Start participant

## GATHERING – COMMUNITY GROUP LOCATIONS

*Hope Centre and one of our Freight House groups (newcomer group remains at Freight House) closed as of Jan 31, 2026

# Supporting Parents
## WITH NEW RESOURCES

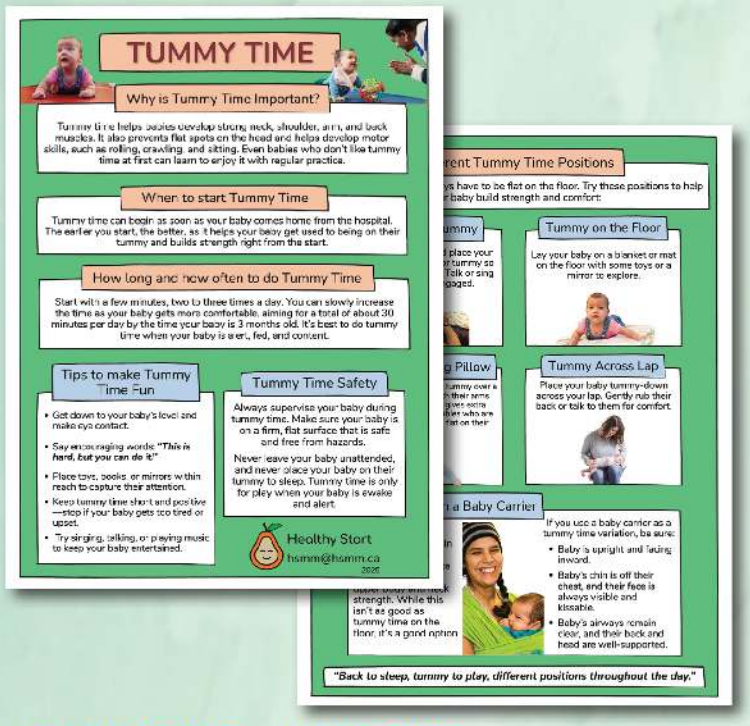
### YOU'RE MY FIRST AND FAVOURITE TEACHER - BOOKMARK

Inspired by one of our most beloved posters, we developed these bookmarks to foster deeper parent-baby connections. Our goal is to encourage families to embrace screen-free moments - whether through reading, talking, or simply gazing into their baby's eyes. These bookmarks serve as a gentle reminder of the power of presence and the joy of shared company. Thank you Celia Rodd for the idea!

### BASIC EGG - RECIPES BOOK

To complement our bi-weekly egg coupons, we developed a beginner-friendly recipe book. For many participants, this represents their first step into the kitchen. This book is more than just recipes; it's a tool for building confidence, encouraging healthy home cooking, and providing a great start for participants to build their skills.

*Healthy Start helped spark interest in cooking, I need to come and see what's cooking.*
-Healthy Start participant




### TUMMY TIME - HANDOUT

Tummy time is important for a baby's physical development, yet it can be a challenge as many babies are not happy to play on their tummies.
To help prevent common issues like flat spots, we developed a simple guide. This resource builds a caregiver's confidence and is anchored by our favorite jingle: "Back to sleep, tummy to play, different positions throughout the day."

These resources and hundreds more are available on our website: www.hsmm.ca

# In Their Own Words:

## THE IMPACT OF HEALTHY START

Something magical happens when we gather. As participants build trust and let their guard down, we are able to create deeper connections. The faces and words shared here reflect the spirit of our groups and the life-changing support Healthy Start provides.

*I was at a low point, and I didn't even know it. Thanks for discussing postpartum depression at the group. It really helped put the pieces together and thank you for connecting me to services that helped me. You guys saved me.*

*I'm a single-parent and I was worried about so many things: how will I find a safer place to live, how will I find daycare and how will I make it with the food that I have until the end of the month. At every group, Healthy Start helped me find other services in my community and it's made a huge difference in my life.*

*Thank you for giving me the time and always offering me support until I was ready to leave an abusive relationship. I'm a different person now – thank you for your consistent and caring support.*

*My house has a lot of chaos and when I'm here at the group, it's peaceful and I feel like I can relax and learn.*

*I came because every time I had questions about starting solid foods for my baby, they were answered. I appreciate the patience and guidance.*

# FINANCIAL REPORT 2025-2026

These are excerpts from statements reviewed by Magnus Chartered Professional Accountants and cover the major operations of Healthy Start from April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026 (unaudited). A complete report is available upon request.

## Statement of Operations

| **Revenue:** | **2026** | **2025** |
|---|---|---|
| Public Health Agency of Canada - Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (Schedule 1) | $ 490,377 | $ 490,377 |
| Province of Manitoba, Department of Families Healthy Baby Program (Schedule 2) | 440,500 | 440,500 |
| Donations (Schedule 3) | 58,654 | 55,124 |
| Other contributions (Schedule 4) | 7,315 | 4,842 |
| | 996,846 | 990,843 |
| **Expenses:** | | |
| Public Health Agency of Canada - Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (Schedule 1) | 490,377 | 490,377 |
| Province of Manitoba - Department of Families Healthy Baby Program (Schedule 2) | 440,500 | 440,500 |
| Donations (Schedule 3) | 31,050 | 43,553 |
| Other contributions (Schedule 4) | 11,448 | 8,090 |
| | 973,375 | 982,520 |
| Excess of revenue over expenses for the year | $ 23,471 | $ 8,323 |

## Schedule 1 — Public Health Agency of Canada - Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program: Revenue and Expenses

| **Revenue:** | **2026** | **2025** |
|---|---|---|
| Public Health Agency of Canada - Funding | $ 490,377 | $ 490,377 |
| **Expenses:** | | |
| Equipment | 503 | 456 |
| Materials, food and supplies | 68.774 | 95,826 |
| Personnel | 342,559 | 317,313 |
| Rent and utilities | 48,677 | 46,583 |
| Travel - Mileage and participant bus tickets | 12,141 | 13,546 |
| Other - General and administrative | 17,723 | 16,653 |
| | 490,377 | 490,377 |
| Excess of revenue over expenses for the year | $ - | $ - |

## Schedule 2 — Province of Mantioba, Department of Families (Healthy Baby Program) Revenues and Expenses

| **Revenue:** | **2026** | **2025** |
|---|---|---|
| Province of Manitoba - Funding | $ 440,500 | $ 440,500 |
| **Expenses:** | | |
| Materials, food and supplies | 49,944 | 36,190 |
| Office and equipment | 4,178 | 5,839 |
| Personnel | 328,472 | 339,474 |
| Rent and utilities | 36,136 | 34,928 |
| Travel - Mileage and participant bus tickets | 10,799 | 13,326 |
| Other - General and administrative | 9,649 | 8,793 |
| Other - Interpreter fees | 773 | 1,320 |
| Other - Training and development | 549 | 630 |
| | 440,500 | 440,500 |
| Excess of revenue over expenses for the year | $ - | $ - |

| **Statement of Changes in Net Assets** | **Unrestricted** | **Internally Restricted** | **2026** | **2025** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Net assets, beginning of year | $ 170,004 | $ 75,000 | $ 245,004 | $ 236,681 |
| Excess of revenue over expenses for the year | 23,471 | - | 23,471 | 8,323 |
| Transfers (Note 6) | (25,000) | 25,000 | - | - |
| Net assets, end of year | $ 168,475 | $ 100,000 | $ 268,475 | $ 245,004 |

# Moments
## IN A HEALTHY START YEAR

*I came from across town to be here today. I don't have a lot of people in my life who let me talk and just listen. I knew that I would have a good meal and that staff would be here to listen to me.*

*Coming to Healthy Start keeps me strong and encourages me to keep going even when things are difficult.*

*Everyone nurtured me as a parent, so then I can in turn nurture my baby.*

*I'm coming to "build a village" for my baby!*

# Thank you

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS** Tedda Sandercock (Chairperson), Kendra Vanbeselaere (Treasurer), Coralee Hill (Secretary), Adam Prokopanko, Darlene Girard, Justine Zidona, Linda Uhrich, Melanie Duncan and Davorka Monti (ex-officio). Completed June 2026: Amanda Anderson-thank you for your years of service to the community.

## HEALTHY START STAFF

**OUTREACH STAFF** (by years from longest serving to newest) Ashley Lofthouse, Noreen Janzen, Vivian Sawatzky, Amrita Sidhu and Taylor Rae Kostiuk (on maternity leave) and Diana Correa. New this year: Claudia Camino

**COMMUNITY DIETITIANS** Cheryl Oliveira and Lisa Skromeda. Left this year Tara Hawking-Kreller and Jennifer Shearer

**CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF SERVICE** Ashley Lofthouse, Lisa Skromeda and Nancy Khrabchuk

**CELEBRATING 5 YEARS OF SERVICE** Noreen Janzen (actually 8 years over two times)

**PROGRAM COORDINATORS** Karen Deeley (Prenatal Program Coordinator & Registered Dietitian) & New this year: Isabel Cisneros (Program Coordinator). Left this year: Valeria Santermer

**SING & RHYME ONLINE FACILITATOR** Noreen Janzen

**ADMINISTRATIVE** Davorka Monti (Executive Director), Nancy Khrabchuk (Office & Data Manager), Kennedy Legault (Administrative Assistant). New this year: Melanie Dorrington (Data Assistant). Left this year: Catalina Diaz Calderon

**BOOKKEEPER** (fee for service): Maryon Grant (for 28 years and counting)

## PARTNERS IN PROGRAM DELIVERY

**WINNIPEG REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY (WRHA) PUBLIC HEALTH NURSES** - Amrit Bharj, Brieanna Mckimm, Chantal Mackenzie-Trepanier, Dana Pickering, Jamila Rempel, Joleen Epps, Justine Zidona, Kaitlan Knowles, Karen Strome, Kasarah Daley, Martha Mboya, Marusia Kachkowski, Melanie Penner, Rachel Axford, Rejean LaBelle, Ucha Subedi and Ulrike Bakaswa.

**WRHA PUBLIC HEALTH DIETITIANS** – Chinweoke Asagwara, Ginette Le Gal, Louise Oakley, Michelle Molinski, Jill Anderson and Megan Burnett

**MOUNT CARMEL CLINIC STAFF** – Nurses: Chelsea McLeod and Denae Côté. Registered Dietitian: Avery Penner

**INTERPRETERS** – Abshiro Jama, Anna Soloviova, Bietelihem Teckle, Clarisse Bugera, Consolata Kampire, Fadumo Warsame, Feruz Teklit, Feven Luulay Gebretatios, Haben Yohannes, Habibah Mohammad, Hafsatu Abdul Aziz, Jamila Noodrat, Mediatrice Umubyeyi, Merhawit Araya, Mireille Noël, Nafisa Pameri, Saido Warsame, Viktoriia Sen and Xiaowei Yu.

## VOLUNTEERS

**CHILDMINDING VOLUNTEERS** Eunshin Yoo, Fatima Zahrae-Laou, Frecebelle (Belle) Estayo, Gagandeep Kaur Mattar, Kathy Shurvell, Kristy Wyndels, Lourdes Morales, Molok Al-Hebshi, Oksana Ozymkiv, Sara Lopes Labiapari Dias and Shahida Luman.

**FOOD PREPARATION & DROP-IN VOLUNTEERS** Alanna Funk Osland, Angela Sabu, Ariana Hueston, Austyn Dawydiuk, Belle Estayo, Brooklyn Shearer, Carla Plummer, Gaganpreet Kaur, Havilah Usuwa, Heather Quinn, Isabella Deeley, Jordan Stewart, Juliana Santos Pezzi Dullius, Katie McGibbon, Kristen McGregor, Kulwinder Kaur Bassi, Laurel Gardiner, Mireille Noel, Nicole Gaitho, Nicole Jillian Salvador, Panashe Rwezuva, Pat Lachance, Pearl Verma, Taiwo Akinbolusere, ThyHao (Hailey) Le, Twinkle Sharma, Umai Abazganova, Vasudha Kalia, Victoria Warszycki and Yuqi Sun.

**2025 MEAL BAG ASSEMBLY** 71 new and long-term community volunteers helped assemble thousands of ingredients for meal bags. Thank you to Winnipeg Foundation YiP students, IBEX Payroll staff, Westgate Mennonite Collegiate students and teachers spent a day with us assembling the final meal bags. Thank you all

# FOR ALL OF YOUR SUPPORT!

*Everything I learn here I take home and try to make my life better.*
– Healthy Start participant

## GOVERNMENT FUNDERS

**CANADA PRENATAL NUTRITION PROGRAM**, Public Health Agency of Canada

**HEALTHY BABY PROGRAM**, Department of Families, Government of Manitoba

We are deeply grateful for the support of every individual and corporate donor who contributed to our work this year. Your generosity, at all levels makes a tangible difference

## CORPORATE & GROUP DONORS

CIBC Wood Gundy investment advisors: Hart Pollack & Martin Watts and the Miracle Day committee

Ola Ogunniyi - Sutton Group-Kilkenney Real Estate

Dr. Sen - Zarine Alexander Medical Corporation

Red River Messenger Courier

Goldeyes Field of Dreams Foundation

South Osborne Xchange

Glen Rawluk-Meyers Drug Store

John Taylor Collegiate YiP (Winnipeg Foundation)

St. James Collegiate YiP (Winnipeg Foundation)

Dan Mortimer - Onyx Financial Group

**INDIVIDUAL DONORS** We extend our sincere gratitude to 62 generous individual donors for their support this year. The following donors contributed $200 or more:

Penelope Scurfield

Gail Wylie & Dave Wright

Lauranne Matheson

Mary Shum

James & Marilyn Stewart

Sheryl Bates Dancho

Coralee Hill

Joyce Pressey

Ginette LeGal

Shari Green (in memory of Lisa Green)

Maryon Grant

Joanna Thich

Ted Bock

Celine Nadon

Gail Marchessault & Morley Walker

Marni Brownell & Stephen Sandstrom

Nina Kudriakowsky

Susan Slobodian

Jean Skromeda

Jennifer Fischer

Hawking family

Corinne Eisenbraun

Val & Charles Arklie

Lynne-Anne McFeetors

Dr. Robert Sanders

Maureen Perlmutter

Marlene Kendall

Mireille & Jean-Pierre Noel

Dr. Jennifer Frain

Sheelagh Smith

Anonymous donor

***35 donations were made in memory of Lori Smelski, former board member of Healthy Start and community champion.***

## COMPANIES, COMMUNITY GROUPS & INDIVIDUAL IN-KIND DONATIONS

Thank you to the following organizations and individuals who have provided items and support to our families, many for several years:

ABC Quilting Group of Manitoba Prairie Quilters – 100s of handmade quilts

Faith Lutheran Church congregation 66 baby layettes, baby books

MAKEHEROES.CO – 100's of baby wraps and carriers

Thelma Wynne Project of St. Matthews Maryland – 100s of baby layettes

Trinity United Church Sew and Sews quilting group – dozens of quilts

SERC – supplies

Blanketing Manitoba – handmade quilts

Koats for Kids

Manitoba Children's Museum passes

Assiniboine Zoo passes

Joanne Dyck-quilts

Laurie Flaherty – homemade items

Julie Dixon – hundreds of knitted hats

Govinder Kaur Khosa – knitted items

Anne Mulaire – clothing

Just Like New To You thrift store

Thank you to all who donated baby clothes, strollers, children's books and toys - they are all greatly appreciated.

## BUSINESSES & ORGANIZATIONS THAT OFFER IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS OR SUPPORT

Meyers Drugs, Red River Messenger, McNally Robinson Booksellers, City of Winnipeg for use of 4 community centres, Hope Centre Healthcare, Maples Community Centre and St. Boniface Access Centre. Redeeming food coupons: Safeway, Sobeys, FreshCo, Zeid's Food Fare and IGA on Main St.

## CONTRACTORS

Maria Lourdes Morales (cleaning) and Katie Anderson (newsletter)

## MULTIMEDIA & DESIGN

Small Creek Studio – Cyndi Wiebe (annual report and resource development), DCO Digital – Darnell Collins for photography (photos in this report and videos) and Waterloo Design House (website).

# WHAT WE DO

Pregnancy and parent & baby groups (up to 1 year) offered year-round at eight Winnipeg community facilities

Reaching resilient individuals & families seeking information on having and nurturing a healthy baby

Team includes outreach staff, dietitians, and nurses, supported by childminding, food prep, and drop-in volunteers

Practical and concrete topics discussed

Nutritious and low-cost food demonstrations to build cooking skills

Interpreters translate information for newcomers to Canada groups

Practical support offered at groups: milk & egg coupons, prenatal vitamins, vitamin D drops for babies, food, meal bags, resources, handouts and so much more

One-on-one support for families needing connections to other services

Positive impact on the health and nutrition of individuals and families

Healthy Start is a non-profit, charitable organization

Funded by the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program
(Public Health Agency of Canada)
and Healthy Baby, Government of Manitoba
and supported by grants and donations

Donations are appreciated and tax-receiptable

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Healthy Start