

NEWS RELEASE

**PenFinancial Credit Union Announces Recipients of Its Truly Local Grant Program for 2024
Six Local Non-Profits Awarded a Total of \$25,000 to Support Community Initiatives**



Welland, ON – [November 26, 2024] – PenFinancial Credit Union is proud to announce the recipients of its Truly Local Grant Program for 2024. In its second year, the program has once again awarded a total of \$25,000 to six outstanding non-profit organizations that are making a meaningful impact in our local communities.

The Truly Local Grant Program, launched in 2023, is designed to support community-driven initiatives that align with PenFinancial’s commitment of improving lives and strengthening communities. This year, a panel of judges from PenFinancial’s Truly Local Grant scoring committee reviewed numerous applications from a variety of organizations, selecting six recipients whose work stands out for its dedication to the following three United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: 1) No Poverty 2) Zero Hunger and 3) Good Health and Wellbeing.

Each of the selected organizations will receive a grant to support ongoing programs, projects, and initiatives that make a difference for the people in their respective areas. The six recipients were chosen based on the strength of their proposals, their proven impact, and their commitment to sustainable, positive change.

"We are thrilled to continue supporting the incredible work being done by non-profits in our community," said Shari Sekel, CEO at PenFinancial Credit Union. "The Truly Local Grant Program is a way for us to give back and invest in the future of Niagara and Haldimand, and we are proud to partner with these organizations to help them further their missions."

The following organizations have been selected to receive funding through the Truly Local Grant Program for 2024:

1. Open Arms Mission, \$10,000 towards their Food Rescue Project

Open Arms Mission is a volunteer-driven organization, meeting the physical and spiritual needs of Welland and the surrounding community. They started as a small food bank in the late 1980s and have grown to a multifaceted

ministry. “Thanks to the PenFinancial Truly Local Grant, our Food Rescue Project is advancing the goals of no poverty, zero hunger, and good health and well-being. By rescuing surplus food and distributing it to those in need, we are reducing food waste and ensuring that more families have access to nutritious meals. Together, we are creating a healthier, more resilient community!” said Josh Walsh, Executive Director.

2. Positive Living Niagara, \$6,500 towards their Migrant Agricultural Workers (MAW) Mobile Health and Wellness Clinics

Lauren DeNapoli, MAW Mobile Health Clinic Coordinator at the Welland McMaster Family Health Team is grateful for this grant. “Rest assured, with the support of this funding and through continued collaborative efforts with our community partners, Positive Living Niagara, Niagara Migrant Workers Interest Group, Welland McMaster Family Health Team, REACH Niagara and the Welland Heritage Council and Multicultural Center, we will continue to support the healthcare needs of Seasonal Agricultural Workers. We appreciate the value they bring to our community and farmers, and promote their social integration, well-being, and overall quality of life.”

3. Strong Fort Erie Neighbourhoods, \$2,000 towards their Holiday Boost Program

Strong Fort Erie Neighbourhoods is a community-based volunteer organization that offers food security community meals, a personal care and hygiene bank, and connections to social and health supports to the greater Fort Erie community. "We are honoured to have been chosen as one of the 2024 recipients and the funds will greatly increase our capacity to have an impact on our community’s food security through our unique Post Holiday Emergency Food Boost Program. This year we anticipate that we will provide a variety of nutritious food items to 400+ neighbours, on two different occasions, during the time when people are especially struggling with food security.” said Theresa Murphy, President of SFEN.



4. Comfort Bears, \$2,500 towards Comfort Kits

Comfort Bear's mission is to provide support bears as a symbol of well-being for children experiencing treatments for serious illnesses or trauma in a time of need or crisis and to lessen anxiety and stress. "We have been supporting thousands of children in Niagara experiencing challenges that no child should ever face. Our Niagara partners have shared the look of calm on the child's face as they give their support bear a warm hug for the first time. If even for second, the child forgets their crisis and experiences one moment of happiness, we have succeeded. Thank you PenFinancial Truly Local for ensuring hundreds of Comfort Bears will support our community's most vulnerable children." said Lena Bassford, Board Chair.

5. Bethlehem Housing and Support Services, \$2,000 towards a new stand-up freezer

Bethlehem Housing and Support Services is a multi-service organization serving the diversified needs of Niagara residents by offering support for individual growth through housing and other focused services. Victoria Vahrmeyer, Community Support Worker at Bethlehem shared, "PenFinancial's \$2,000 grant will make a direct impact on our food security programs at Bethlehem Housing, helping us bring more nutritious, culturally relevant food to our residents. With this grant, we're installing a new freezer to store donations, making fresh food accessible to more families and building an even stronger community."

6. The Royal Canadian Legion – Welland Branch, \$2,000 towards the Christmas for Veterans program

The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 4 of Welland is dedicated to supporting veterans in the Welland community who have sacrificed so much to enable us to have the opportunities of today. The \$2,000 will fund their Christmas for Veterans program, which will provide twenty local veterans a gift card of \$100 to help with the rise in food costs. "This hits our most vulnerable the hardest, and we want our veterans to not have to worry about being able to afford a Christmas dinner. The gift of food may seem like a small gesture, but will make a huge impact on a veteran's life" said Peggy Horton, Secretary. "It will remind them that the community of Welland is here for them and they are not alone."

PenFinancial Credit Union is committed to building stronger, more vibrant communities across Niagara and Haldimand. Through initiatives like the Truly Local Grant Program, PenFinancial continues to demonstrate its dedication to supporting the people and organizations that make a difference every day.

About PenFinancial Credit Union

PenFinancial Credit Union is a truly local values-based credit union committed to improving the lives its nearly 20,000 members and businesses. PenFinancial delivers a full range of financial services digitally and through a network of six branches across Niagara and Haldimand. Through their Truly Local Commitment, the credit union is a proud Certified B Corporation and Living Wage employer who invests a portion of their pre-tax profits into the

communities it serves. PenFinancial is also proud to choose 100% renewable energy with Bullfrog Power as part of their commitment to environmental sustainability. For more information visit penfinancial.com.

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