

city*i*kidz

2025

IMPACT
REPORT



city*i*kidz



Message from the Executive Director & Chair of the Board of Directors

Dear Friends,

In a year marked by uncertainty, change, and growing need, one thing became even clearer: strong foundations matter.

They matter for children who need safe places to belong. They matter for families looking for support, stability, and encouragement. They matter for volunteers and staff who show up week after week. And they matter for the long-term work of helping children to dream boldly and grow fully into who they were created to be.

In 2025, CityKidz continued advancing Strong Foundations, our three-year strategic plan focused on strengthening the programs, people, systems, and resources needed for lasting impact. This year was not only about reaching more children, it was about deepening engagement, improving how we work, and learning more clearly how transformation happens.

Our 2025 Program Model Assessment and Evaluation gave us important insight. 97.1% of children and youth reported feeling safe at CityKidz, and 87.7% said they would recommend CityKidz to a friend. The evaluation also showed that relationships are central to impact. Children and youth who experienced stronger inclusion, participation, and care from leaders also tended to report stronger confidence, positive behaviour, and future aspiration.

That finding affirms something we have always believed: consistent, caring relationships can change the trajectory of a child's life.

Since 2023, enrollment has increased by 29.2%, progression through the program has increased by 28.3%, and retention has grown from 68% to 74%. Families also continue to experience CityKidz as a meaningful source of support, with 96.0% of caregivers reporting that CityKidz has made a positive impact on their family.

At the same time, we are continuing to learn. The evaluation showed us where more attention is needed, especially in strengthening the CityYouth pathway, supporting older youth in confidence and future aspiration, and helping families build wider circles of connection beyond CityKidz.

To every volunteer, financial supporter, partner, and friend who made this work possible, thank you. Strong foundations are built one relationship at a time. Because of you, children across our city are discovering that they are known, valued, and never alone.

With deep gratitude,



Rev. Todd Bender
Founder & Executive
Director



David Marks
Chair, Board
of Directors

Where Big Dreams Begin

Every child deserves the opportunity to feel safe, valued, and empowered to dream beyond their circumstances. At CityKidz, we help children build resilience, discover their potential, and believe in a future filled with faith, hope and love.

Mission

We exist to increase resiliency and inspire BIG dreams for children living in low-income communities by providing inspirational experiences and nurturing personal relationships, one child at a time.

Vision

Our BIG dream is that one day, in the not so distant future, we will see an end to child poverty in Canada and every child will have equal opportunity to thrive, to dream big and to reach their full potential.

Values

People of Faith

Our Christian faith compels us to respond to the needs of our children with a focus on those who experience the highest levels of adversity with the least amount of resources.

Community of Hope

We have a confident expectation that each child will rise to their full potential and realize God's purpose for their life. This inspires us to bring hope to children and to ignite their dreams.

Servants of Love

Because of God's love for us, we love all children regardless of race, creed, religion, ability or economic status. We believe that to increase resiliency and inspire dreams we must demonstrate unconditional love through nurturing personal relationships one child at a time.

Who We Serve

CityKidz serves over 900 children and youth in grades 1 - 12, along with their families, in Hamilton, Ontario.

We focus on neighbourhoods experiencing the highest levels of need and the fewest available resources.

Our unique delivery model organizes children into neighbourhood routes to ensure every child is reached where they are.



Our Program Model

Through consistent relationships, inspiring experiences, and long-term support, CityKidz helps children and youth build the confidence, skills, and resilience they need to thrive from childhood into young adulthood.



Love & Acceptance

We begin by showing up week after week, with consistency. Kids are welcomed into spaces where they feel safe, seen, and deeply valued.

1

Dream & Develop

With fun, faith-filled experiences and inspiring role models, children discover their strengths and belief in a brighter future.

2

Plan & Pursue

We equip kids with the skills, guidance, and encouragement to turn their dreams into actionable goals.

3

Achieve & Succeed

Young adults take confident steps toward independence, education, and meaningful community impact.

4



Programs That Change Lives

Children and families in the communities CityKidz serves often face poverty, isolation, food insecurity, and limited access to safe, supportive environments. In the midst of these challenges, CityKidz provides consistent care, trusted relationships, and spaces where children feel seen, valued, and safe.

Every CityKidz program is intentionally designed to help children and youth build resilience, develop confidence, and discover hope for their future. From mentorship and leadership development to family support, camp experiences, and educational encouragement, CityKidz walks alongside children and families through every stage of their journey, helping them dream bigger and believe in a brighter future.

CityKidz

Grades 1 – 6

Weekly, faith-based programming that fosters potential, imagination, and fun.

300+ children were welcomed into our programs for the first time

8,800+ nutritious meals shared

Every child's birthday was celebrated

On average, 330 children attended each CityKidz Saturday session

CityYouth

Grades 7–12

Mentorship for youth that is focused on identity, purpose, leadership, and life skills.

On average, 95 youth attended each Wednesday CityYouth session

36 youth graduated, now alumni or moving on to our Roadmaps to Dreams program

63 Junior Leaders gave back as volunteers

Hosted our first ever CityYouth Open House to welcome new youth

Connects & Cares

Grades 1–6 + Families

Connects visits: Each family across our 13 routes is visited regularly, building relationships with children and caregivers.

21,000+ visits made across 32 weeks

CityKidz Cares: Families receive tangible support like grocery gift cards if they're experiencing extra need. A critical source of support in neighbourhoods with the fewest resources.



Gift of Christmas
Grades 1 - 6 + younger siblings

Personalized Christmas gifts delivered to each child's home, as well as a festive party and meal.

3,238 toys were delivered to CityKidz families

428 children and 136 youth attended Christmas parties

311 volunteers gave 954 hours of their time to support the program

Summer to Remember
Grades 1-12

Day and overnight camp experiences that produce life-changing moments and long-lasting memories. It is a time of adventure and discovery, of growth and curiosity.

113 kids experienced unforgettable memories at Camp CityKidz

9 Jr. Leaders volunteered their time to support Camp CityKidz

Education Fund
Grades 11, 12+
Post-Secondary

Investing in bright futures beyond high school.

14 Encouragement Awards were given out to grade 11 & 12 students

26 bursaries of \$1,500 were awarded to post-secondary students



Scan to learn more about our programs



Why CityKidz is Needed – And Working

This year, CityKidz took an important step forward in how we listen and learn. Building on last year's evaluation, we refined how surveys were collected from children and youth, making the process more accessible, age-appropriate, and connected to their actual program experience. Because the method changed, this year's participant results establish a stronger new baseline rather than a direct year-over-year comparison.

The most important finding was not simply what children and youth reported, but how the outcomes connect. The evaluation showed that participants who experienced stronger inclusion, participation, and care from leaders also tended to report stronger confidence, positive behaviour, and future aspiration. In other words, relationships are one of the primary ways CityKidz helps children grow.

The evaluation also confirmed that children and youth experience CityKidz as a safe and engaging place. These conditions matter because children are more likely to stay connected, participate fully, and grow when they feel safe, welcomed, and known.

97.1% of children and youth reported feeling safe at CityKidz

87.7% said they would recommend CityKidz to a friend

96.0% of caregivers reported that CityKidz has made a positive impact on their family

Attendance-to-enrollment has improved from **40% to 51%**

Retention has grown from **68% to 74%**

Since 2023, enrollment has increased by **29.2%**

Progression through the program has increased by **28.3%**

CityKidz is also strengthening long-term engagement. The growth in enrollment, progression, attendance, and retention shows that CityKidz is not only reaching more children and youth but helping more of them stay connected over time.

The evaluation also showed us where more attention is needed. Older youth reported lower levels of confidence and future aspiration than younger children, pointing to the need for a stronger and more intentional CityYouth pathway. Families also reported stronger support from CityKidz than from the broader community, reminding us that part of our future work is helping children and families build wider circles of connection and support.

For children and families facing instability or isolation, consistent relationships matter. The evaluation confirms this work is making a meaningful difference and gives us a clearer path for making that difference even stronger.



Story of Hope: Jackson

A Place to Belong

On Saturdays, Jessica and her three kids keep things simple. Slow mornings, board games at the table, and time spent together at home.

But for her son Jackson, the world outside of home felt harder to step into.

Jessica saw it in the quiet hesitations, in the way stepping into new environments could feel overwhelming. She wanted him to have a place where he could build confidence, make friends, and feel comfortable being himself.

That's when she found CityKidz.

Jessica first heard about CityKidz from fellow parents at school, then began noticing it online. "It was like CityKidz was popping up everywhere," she says. "It felt like God was trying to give me a sign."

For Jackson, it became something he couldn't wait to be a part of.

At seven years old, Jackson is thoughtful and observant, with a remarkable mind for patterns and details. He loves logos—drawing them, memorizing them, cutting them out of boxes—and has a growing fascination with cars.

But new experiences don't always come easily. Around the same time his anticipation for CityKidz was growing, his family was also navigating his potential autism diagnosis, bringing both clarity and uncertainty as they learned how best to support him.

While his older siblings already attended CityKidz, Jackson watched from the sidelines. He noticed everything from the bright red bus, the route number in the window, and the rhythm of it arriving each Saturday in his neighbourhood. He knew the details by heart.

So when he was finally old enough to join, the excitement was immediate. During a weekly Connect Visit, when a CityKidz volunteer spent time with his family and connected with him one-on-one, Jackson was given a sheet of countdown stickers to track the days until his first visit. **His face lit up.**

On his iPad, he even designed his own version of the CityKidz bus, proudly pointing to it and saying, **"I'm going on that!"**

When the day finally came, Jackson climbed aboard, nervous but ready. He chose a seat at the front of the bus, close to the prize pail. Small details like that help him settle in and feel safe.

And then, something began to change.



"He came home so happy," Jessica says. "He kept saying how nice everyone was."

At CityKidz, Jackson has found comfort in both people and routine. Each week brings familiar joys he looks forward to, like croissants and pizza, his seat on the bus, and choosing a prize from the prize pail.

More than anything, it is the people who have helped him feel secure. Volunteers meet him with patience and encouragement.

Through these intentional, nurturing personal relationships, Jackson is building resiliency. He is growing in confidence, learning to navigate new environments, and discovering that he is capable.

For Jessica, the impact extends far beyond Saturdays. CityKidz has become a stable force of love and support, helping her children grow, build friendships, and see their own limitless potential.

By the time the bus drops them off, the impact of the day is clear. "They're pooped!" Jessica says with a chuckle.

Jessica hopes Jackson continues to grow in confidence and build friendships through CityKidz, carrying those experiences with him as he learns to dream big and step into the world with greater courage.

"And who knows," Jessica says, "maybe one day Jackson will be a volunteer too, and give back to the community that he's benefited from."

For a child who once watched from a distance, waiting and wondering, **CityKidz has become a place where he belongs:** A place where he is known, supported, and inspired to dream big as he grows into his full potential, one small step at a time.

The People Behind The Mission

To every volunteer who gave their time, energy, and heart to CityKidz this year: thank you. Whether welcoming children on Saturday mornings, leading bus routes, mentoring youth, preparing meals, or supporting behind the scenes, your presence made a lasting impact. You help children feel safe, valued, and deeply loved.



Volunteers like Deanna reflect the power of long-term commitment and care. For more than 12 years, she has faithfully served on the same bus route, building relationships with children as they grow from shy kids into confident Junior Leaders. Through her involvement with connects visits, she continues to encourage and support children and families beyond Saturdays.



Lisa's story is another beautiful example of the CityKidz community in action. After first learning about CityKidz through a local toy drive, she became involved nearly 10 years ago and now faithfully serves as Saturday Support. She says what she loves most is the people, the kids, staff, and fellow volunteers who make CityKidz such a special place.

To each and every volunteer: thank you for showing up with kindness, consistency, and joy. You are the heartbeat of CityKidz, helping children dream bigger and build brighter futures.

Our Supporters: Partners in Possibility

To every supporter, monthly giver, and community fundraiser who supported CityKidz in 2025: thank you.

Because of you, children and families across Hamilton are experiencing encouragement, stability, and hope. Your generosity helps create safe spaces, meaningful relationships, and opportunities for children to grow in confidence and resilience.

From meals and transportation to mentorship, leadership development, and family support, your gift impacts every part of the CityKidz experience. Most importantly, it reminds children and families that they are known, valued, and supported by a community that believes in them. Thank you for helping create brighter futures for generations to come.



Thank You Supporters and Partners

We are deeply grateful to our partners and foundation supporters for their generosity and shared commitment to children and families in our community. Your investment helps create lasting impact through programs that build resilience, inspire BIG dreams, and empower children to overcome barriers and pursue brighter futures.

Premier Supporters



Platinum Corporate Partners



Gold Corporate Partner



Silver Corporate Partners



Bronze Corporate Partners



Special Thanks:



- Albarrie Foundation
- Arbor Memorial Foundation
- Canadian Metal Buildings
- Charity of Hope
- City of Hamilton Enrichment Fund
- D. Joanne Olmsted Family Charitable Fund
- Doane Grant Thornton Foundation
- Golder Trust For Orphans Canada
- H2H Co. Foundation
- Hamilton Bulldogs Foundation
- Hamilton Community Foundation
- Hamilton Spectator Summer Camp Fund
- John & Ellie Voortman Charitable Foundation

- Leggat Auto Group
- Mary & Rino Monaco Charitable Foundation
- McCarthy Tétrault LLP
- McKeil Family Foundation
- Muriel Kassimatis Charitable Fund
- Poetz Family Foundation
- R&K Fund at the Niagara Community
- Raymond James Foundation
- RBC Communities Together Fund
- RBT (Fred F Stone) Charitable Account
- Sam & Roma Mercanti Foundation

- Starbucks Foundation Charitable Fund
- TD Bank Group - TD Community Engagement
- The Allen & Milli Gould Family Foundation
- The Altruly Foundation
- The Hamilton Spectator
- The Johnston Family Foundation
- The Schwenger Family Foundation
- Tim Hortons Holiday Smile Cookie Campaign

Financial Summary

2025

Revenue

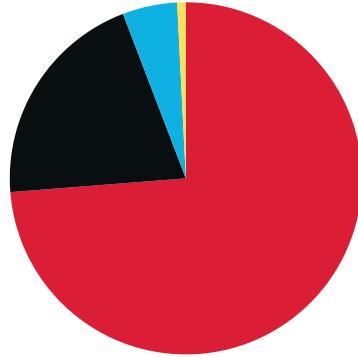
\$2,726,128

Donations
73.75%
\$2,010,631

Other
5.02%
\$136,927

Grants
20.43%
\$557,034

Government
0.79%
\$21,536



Expenses

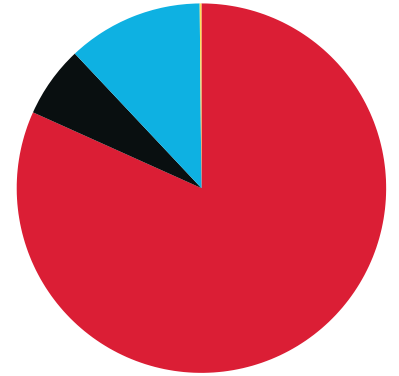
\$2,631,114

Programs
81.73%
\$2,150,411

Fundraising
11.86%
\$312,154

Administration
6.25%
\$164,549

Gifts to Other Charities
0.15%
\$4,000



2024

Revenue

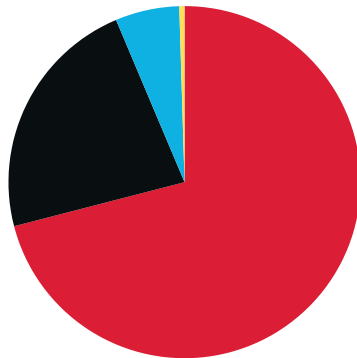
\$2,604,040

Donations
70.97%
\$1,848,199

Other
5.88%
\$153,077

Grants
22.67%
\$590,260

Government
0.48%
\$12,504



Expenses

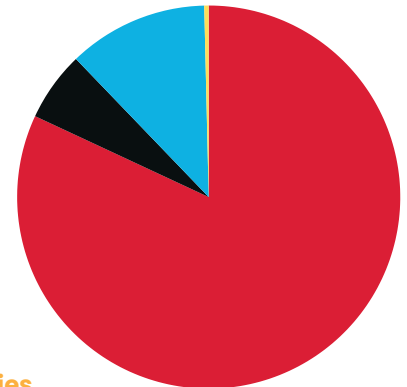
\$2,514,316

Programs
81.95%
\$2,060,285

Fundraising
11.81%
\$297,030

Administration
5.87%
\$147,626

Gifts to Other Charities
0.37%
\$9,375



Our annual revenue grew by nearly 5% from \$2,604,040 in 2024 to \$2,726,128 in 2025, continuing our progress toward long-term financial resiliency. This growth enabled us to expand our programs and deepen our impact while maintaining a strong commitment to sustainability. These results reflect the continued trust and generosity of our supporters, who believe in the mission and future we are building together.

Financial values are based on approved draft Audited Statements. Our T3010 and Financial Statements will be available in June at citykidz.ca.

Our Strategic Priorities

In 2025, CityKidz continued advancing Strong Foundations, our three-year strategic plan focused on strengthening the systems, people, programs, and resources needed for lasting impact. After launching the plan in 2024, this year was about building momentum with greater focus, improving the way we work, and preparing CityKidz for sustainable growth.

Our work continued to be guided by three priorities: Program Excellence, Operational Effectiveness, and Financial Resiliency.

Program Excellence focused on deepening engagement and strengthening the participant pathway. CityKidz continued to grow enrollment while improving retention, attendance, and progression through the program. We also completed our 2025 Program Model Assessment and Evaluation, giving us stronger insight into how children, youth, and families experience CityKidz and where future refinement is needed.

Operational Effectiveness focused on building stronger internal systems. This included progress in technology, volunteer management, staff development, bus operations, cultural effectiveness, and governance readiness. These investments may not always be visible from the outside, but they are essential to delivering programs safely, consistently, and well.

Financial Resiliency focused on sustaining the mission in a challenging fundraising environment. While economic uncertainty continued to affect donor confidence, CityKidz remained financially stable, strengthened financial supporter retention, maintained healthy reserves, and continued building relationships with long-term supporters.

2025 Progress Highlights

- Enrollment continued to grow, reaching over 900 participants
- Retention improved, with more children staying connected over time
- Progression through the program strengthened, showing movement along the developmental pathway
- Active volunteer engagement continued to grow
- Key technology and data systems were upgraded
- Imagine Canada accreditation readiness advanced significantly
- Bus operations remained safe, reliable, and effective
- Financial Supporter retention improved across key segments
- Financial reserves remained strong

As we move into the final year of Strong Foundations, our focus is clear: protect what is working, strengthen what needs attention, and continue building the foundation required for long-term, generational impact.

Join Our Mission!

At CityKidz, we believe every child deserves to feel safe, valued, and hopeful about their future. Through volunteering and monthly giving, your support helps children build confidence, overcome barriers, and believe bigger dreams are possible. Together, we are creating lasting impact for children and families across Hamilton.

Volunteer With Us

Volunteering at CityKidz is a powerful way to create meaningful change, build enriching relationships, and be part of transformative moments that impact children and youth for years to come. Join our rapidly growing community of more than 260 volunteers serving over 900 children and youth across Hamilton.

Why Volunteer with CityKidz?

Build meaningful relationships with children and youth while being part of a vibrant, purpose-driven community, using your gifts, passions, and skills to create impact and help children feel safe, supported, and inspired to dream big.

Current Volunteer Opportunities Include:

- Community Connects Volunteers
- Bus Team Volunteers
- Bus Driver Volunteers
- Youth Mentor Volunteers
- Theatre Tech Volunteers
- Cast Volunteers
- ...and more.

Ready to Get Started?

Visit citykidz.ca to sign up for an info session or email volunteer@citykidz.ca to learn more.

Become a Monthly Supporter: Join our Community of Hope

Monthly giving is one of the most impactful ways to support children and youth living in low-income communities. By joining the Community of Hope, you provide consistent, reliable support that helps CityKidz create life-changing experiences all year long.

Your Monthly Gift Helps Provide:

Year-round programs for children and youth, along with mentorship, meals, and transportation, creating long-term impact that helps children build resilience, dream bigger, and experience consistent care they and their families can count on.

Start Your Journey of Ongoing Impact Today

Visit citykidz.ca/monthly-giving or call **905-544-3996** to learn more.





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**CityKidz Registered
Charitable No:**
89498 2479 RR0001

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