



Annual Report

2024-2025

Message from the Board Chair and the Executive Director

The Bernard Betel Centre helps older adults live healthy, active, and creative lives in a safe and supportive environment. In 2025, we celebrated our 60th anniversary and reflected back on our history, dating back to 1965 when we were founded by the National Council of Jewish Women, Toronto section.

As a centre rooted in Jewish culture and values, we have worked hard to ensure security and access for our diverse community. Equally important has been maintaining a place for Jewish celebrations and traditions, including Shabbat programs and holiday gatherings. Meanwhile, we maintain our focus on health and wellness by offering a wide variety of programs to nourish the body and soul. We continue to be an active community hub where we create meaningful relationships and connections that keep the community strong.

With the generous support of donors and funders such as UJA Federation of Greater Toronto and the Azrieli Foundation, we have sustained our Meals on Wheels program, which feeds over 600 people who would otherwise be unable to access nutritious, culturally appropriate food. The dedication of our funders, donors, volunteers, and staff continues to be a critical lifeline to the recipients and we are immensely grateful.

The Bernard Betel Centre's membership is close to 2,000, which is approaching our pre-pandemic numbers. So many of our members have returned, and we have also attracted so many new ones, which speaks to the community's need for our breadth of recreational, cultural, health and wellness, and trips and travel programs where all members and participants feel like they truly belong.

We invite you to read through this year's Annual Report and join us in celebrating our achievements and the creativity of our members, staff, volunteers, and Board of Directors. We are grateful for the continued support from our community and we look forward to further strengthening our partnerships. Together let's continue to enrich the lives of older adults in our community and may we all look forward to future celebrations – to life!

Julie Gilbert
Chair, Board of Directors

Gail Gould
Executive Director



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Chair, Board of Directors



Gail Gould
Executive Director

Bernard Betel Centre *Mission*

Providing exemplary and multilingual educational, cultural and wellness programs in a safe and supportive environment to encourage healthy, active and creative living for individuals 55+.

ORGANIZATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

This year, the Bernard Betel Centre celebrated important milestones and achievements, from celebrating 60 years of services to launching new initiatives like the SOS: Meals on Wheels fundraiser and hosting meaningful community events, such as the annual Community Passover Seder and Chagall Art Evening. We strengthened our team and leadership, enhanced our spaces with a patio renovation, and honoured staff milestones. It was a year that reflected both growth and deep community impact in serving older adults.

Launch of SOS: On April 15, 2024, launched our new Meals on Wheels fundraiser: Supporting our Seniors (SOS): Meals Initiative.

Chagall Art Evening: On May 31, 2024, an intimate evening featured the beautiful art of Marc Chagall, along with an elegant wine reception and hors d'oeuvres prepared by the Bernard Betel Centre's Food Services Department. The exhibit was generously provided by the E.J.B. Steinberg Family Foundation.

Heartwarming Community Passover Seder: On Sunday, April 13, 2024 we hosted the 52nd Annual Community Seder at the Bernard Betel Centre, which was generously sponsored by the Anne Tanenbaum z'l Passover Seder Fund at the Jewish Foundation of Greater Toronto, and in partnership with Association of Jewish Seniors, CIJA, and UJA Federation of Greater Toronto.

New Manager, Volunteer Services: On July 22, 2024 Robin Rakowsky joined the Bernard Betel Centre team as the new Manager, Volunteer Services.

Back Patio Renovation: In late July 2024, the Centre unveiled its newly renovated back patio—a cozy outdoor space for members to enjoy coffee, lunch, reading, or socializing. This upgrade was made possible by a \$60,000 Government of Ontario Inclusive Community Grant.

New Board Chair: After 5 years of dedicated service, Marcus Staviss, stepped down from the role of Board Chair, and Julie Gilbert stepped into the role on September 17, 2024.

Celebrating a 40 Year Career at Betel: On September 17, 2024, our beloved Betel staff, Irina Shulgin, celebrated an incredible milestone, 40 years of employment with the Bernard Betel Centre.

60 Years of Service: The Bernard Betel Centre celebrates its 60th anniversary in 2025, marking six decades of dedicated service to older adults in Toronto and York Region.

King Charles III Coronation Medal: On March 12, 2025, Gail Gould, Executive Director, received the King Charles III Coronation Medal from the Government of Canada in recognition of her outstanding professional service and impact within Canadian communities.

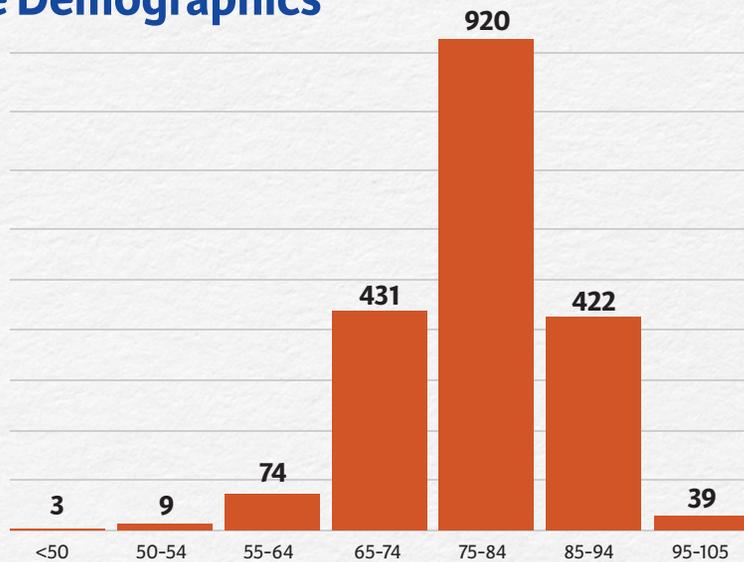
BERNARD BETEL CENTRE STATISTICS

Serving seniors in the community for *60 years*

1,898 active members

53 countries of origin 

Age Demographics

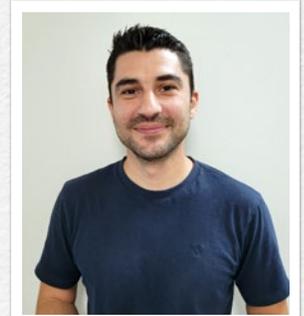


6,000 seniors took part in 7 online and 75 on-site programs and services each week



STAFFING AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

38 full-time and 3 part-time staff
15 Board Directors



CREATIVE LIVING DAY PROGRAM

Arts, music, computers and digital media classes, intergenerational events, games, discussion and support groups, language programs, lifelong learning programs, library, writing programs, health promotion and wellness, and special events.

7 online and **60** on-site Creative Living Day Program programs

4,000  participants in online and on-site programs

200  Holocaust Survivors attend our monthly Café Europa program

883  Chiropody patients accessed needed foot care services



Program Impact

93%

of participants see the Bernard Betel Centre as important for their overall wellbeing.

90%

of participants experienced an improvement in at least one key area of their life including their physical, social and mental wellbeing.

88%

have gained new knowledge and/or improved their skills since participating in programs at the centre.

73%

feel more connected to others and the community since participating in programs.

Testimonials

“The staff at the centre do an excellent job of helping and improving the lives of seniors. It is a real treasure for the community! I am so very thankful to have this excellent community centre in my life.”

“The Bernard Betel Centre is a lifeline for many members. It is a very welcoming place. The programs and activities are varied and very in tune with the times. Lectures and concerts are interesting and very informative. I enjoy my time at Bernard Betel Centre where I met new friends and interesting people. I also loved having coffee, cabbage rolls, and blintzes in the Café with newfound friends. The camaraderie is endless, and of course chiropody is a bonus!”

“The connection I feel to others and the expertise guiding the programs has been outstanding. It is the highlight of my week.”



RUSSIAN GOLDEN AGE CULTURAL PROGRAM



Arts, music, computers and digital media classes, library, educational lectures, workshops, and special events.

15

programs and services
each week



1,500

participants in online
and on-site programs

90%



of participants experienced an improvement in at least one key area of their life including their physical, social and mental wellbeing.

Program Impact

85%



85%

have gained new knowledge and/or improved their skills since participating in programs at the centre.

feel more connected to the community since taking part in programs at the centre.



Testimonials

"I look forward to the programs every week. The performances, lectures, and discussions are not only entertaining but also incredibly educational, keeping my mind active and engaged."

"This program has been a true gift. I've been able to reconnect with my culture through music, literature, and art, and it's brought so much joy and community into my life. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to share these moments with old friends and new ones."

"My grandmother's face lights up whenever she talks about the Bernard Betel Centre. It has provided meaningful social connections for her and has helped her stay connected to her culture, which is so important to her and to us."

MEALS ON WHEELS

Delivered

116,487

meals to the community

94

Meals on Wheels
volunteers

85%

of Meals on Wheels participants reported improved quality of life, reduced hunger and food insecurity, improved access to community resources and services, feeling less isolated and lonely, improved physical and mental well-being, and an increased sense of belonging and inclusion in the Jewish community.

Over 75%

of recipients are food insecure, most of whom are marginalized seniors and Holocaust survivor, with over 80% living off less than \$15,000 per year.



Meals on Wheels Testimonials

“My wife and I wouldn’t be able to survive without the meals and the overall care and support we receive from the staff and the volunteers who deliver the food. We are both elderly and in poor health, and we live in deep poverty with no close family nearby. Because we don’t speak English, we are completely isolated. These meals, and the kindness that comes with them, mean the world to us. We are forever grateful.”

“I feel more confident since getting the meals, and they make me less dependent on my children. Very grateful.”

“I was hungry, lonely, and invisible. Now I have warm meals, a smile at the door, and someone who talks to me like a friend. Thank you for giving me hope when I thought there was none left.”



COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES

1,400 Healthy at Home participants took part in in-person social, health promotion, and recreation programs across 12 community locations.

With food baskets provided by National Council of Jewish Women-Toronto, Community Support Services staff contacted 1,300 Jewish seniors and Holocaust survivors, coordinated logistics, and delivered over 1,000 baskets.

Supported the wellbeing of over **60** English-speaking members through mental health groups creating safe spaces for sharing and healing.

Over **670** vulnerable seniors and Holocaust survivors accessed Service Navigation Clinics and the Safe Option Program (Elder Abuse Program).

Facilitated access to a broad range of community resources for over **3,000** seniors, offering support both in person and remotely.

Reached more than **4,100** older adults, making **25,500** caring phone calls in English and Russian to reduce isolation and provide assistance.

Testimonials

“Healthy at Home brings me back to a world of joy, songs, and friendship. It reminds me of my childhood Shabbat gatherings and makes me feel that I am not alone, and that my life has meaning.”

“Before joining this program, I struggled with motivation and rarely exercised. Now, I’ve built a habit of staying active, even at home! What really stands out is the sense of community, it’s so important at our age. After a session filled with exercise, music, and interesting lectures, I go home feeling recharged, uplifted, and forgetting about getting older. Thank you for everything!”

“I lost my husband six months ago, and since then, I’ve been trying to find reasons to get out of the house. This program has been a lifesaver—it helps me feel less alone and gives me something to look forward to. Just being around kind people gives me strength. I only wish we could meet more often.”

Program Impact

96% of Healthy at Home participants feel more cared by and connected to the Jewish community.

88% reported improved physical and mental health after participating.

74% of participants met new friends while attending.



VOLUNTEER SERVICES

266 volunteers

19,775 volunteer hours

Volunteer roles include Board of Directors, Members' Council, committees, program leaders and instructors, program support and assistants, Meals on Wheels packing and drivers, friendly visiting, administration, and many more.

Impact of the Volunteer Program

- The Bernard Betel Centre Volunteer Services program provided volunteer support for programs and services and recruits skilled volunteers to facilitate new and innovative programs, including Pickleball, art therapy, and wise aging.
- 102 program volunteers in recreation, wellness, computers, Russian Golden Age Cultural Program, Café Europa, and the Bernard Betel Centre Café supported members and visitors to create, learn, and enhance their physical, emotional, and mental well-being.
- As part of Community Support Services, 94 Meals on Wheels volunteers completed 43% of the total volunteer hours carried out. Volunteers prepared, packed, and delivered meals to over 600 vulnerable seniors and Holocaust survivors, providing nourishment, wellness checks, and alleviation of social isolation.



"Our volunteers fulfill our mission"

VOLUNTEER SERVICES

Volunteer Testimonials

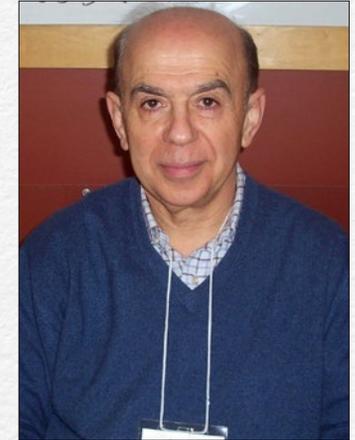
Janita Cleary

"Volunteering at the Bernard Betel Café every Tuesday morning has been an incredible experience. Not only do I get to serve coffee and tea, but I also get to connect with people and see the positive impact it has on their day. It's a truly uplifting feeling that motivates me to continue to volunteer."



Arnold Gilis

"It is my pleasure and a privilege to be a volunteer at the Bernard Betel Centre. My parents enjoyed being members of the centre. As I was getting ready to retire from full-time work about 8 years ago, I decided to join Bernard Betel Centre's volunteer team as a lecturer in two languages, English and Russian. It is very rewarding to see that Betel's members like and show interest in the various topics I choose to present."



Warren Cooper

"I joined Bernard Betel Centre as a member about 6 years ago for chiropody services and became entranced with the programs and services offered, so I joined the walking club, too. After retirement, I was looking for meaningful volunteer opportunities to commit to for about a year at a time. When I was accepted as a Meals on Wheels volunteer, the program spoke to me and continues to nearly 2 years later. In terms of my continued volunteering, my thoughts are "ask not what Bernard Betel Centre can do for you, but what you can do for Bernard Betel Centre!"



Alissa Herman

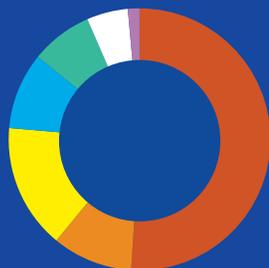
"Bernard Betel Centre has been so good for me, providing all kinds of fun and interesting lectures and classes. As a Meals on Wheels volunteer for nearly 2 years, I was excited to begin volunteering with Bernard Betel Centre's PollinatorTO garden, which allowed me to show my appreciation for these opportunities and help beautify the outdoor space for people, bees, and butterflies. It also gave me a chance to do some outdoor gardening, which I have always enjoyed."



2024-2025 FINANCIALS

Revenue from External Sources

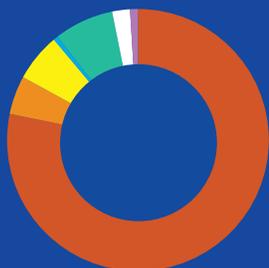
Total:
\$2,008,459



Ministry of Health (Ontario Health):	\$1,024,390
UJA Federation (Core Funding):	\$199,600
UJA Federation (Meals on Wheels):	\$309,820
United Way Greater Toronto:	\$190,215
City of Toronto (Community Services Partnerships):	\$153,246
Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility:	\$102,274
City of Toronto (Toronto Social Services):	\$28,914

Revenue from Internal Sources

Total:
\$1,993,531

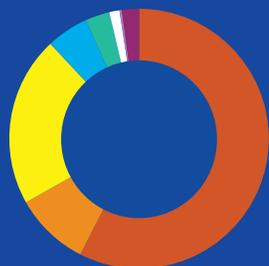


Fees from services:	\$1,558,967
Membership fees:	\$94,831
Fundraising and donations (excluding Meals on Wheels donations):	\$118,659
Rental:	\$10,920
Investment income:	\$146,968
Amortization of deferred capital contributions:	\$43,896
Other revenue:	\$19,290

TOTAL REVENUE:
\$4,001,990

Expenditures

TOTAL EXPENDITURES:
\$4,178,453



Salaries and wages:	\$2,401,531
Employee benefits:	\$391,017
Direct program delivery costs:	\$885,628
Building occupancy:	\$219,387
Administration:	\$126,651
Publicity and promotion:	\$63,057
Support for Elderly Person Centre:	\$2,274
Amortization:	\$88,908

Unrealized gain
on investments \$183,686

**TOTAL EXPENDITURES NET
of Unrealised Investment Gain:**
\$3,994,767

DONORS AND FUNDRAISING

Thank you to all our generous donors and supporters!

\$203,386.07 in donations.



Many more exciting fundraising events to look forward to in 2025-2026!

GRANTS

Grants received from:

- Anne Tanenbaum z'I Passover Fund
- Canada Summer Jobs Grant (Gov. of Canada)
- Edward Bronfman Memorial Fund (Jewish Foundation of Greater Toronto)
- Joseph Lebovic Charitable Fund (Jewish Foundation of Greater Toronto)
- Mazon
- OACAO Senior Fair Grant
- Ontario Anti-Hate Security and Prevent Grant
- Ontario Seniors Community Grant
- ParticipACTION
- PollinatoTO (City of Toronto)
- The Azrieli Foundation
- The Joseph Lebovic Charitable Foundation
- The New Century Foundation Grant
- Suka Fund

Grants funded the following programs/projects:

- Community Passover Seder
- Community Pollinator Gardens at Betel
- Community Sport Program
- Enhanced Security Measures
- Food for Meals on Wheels Program
- Fund Development
- Funding to Hire Summer Staff
- Healthy at Home
- Meals on Wheels Program
- Russian Golden Age Cultural Program
- Seniors Active Living Fair



Total amount of grant money received in 2024-2025:

\$766,282



Thank you!



bernard betel centre

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