

The Ozanam Centre

Initially opened in 1989, the Ozanam Centre was organized by the St Catharines Central Council of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, a lay organization of Catholics. Initially, it was set up as a drop-in centre with coffee and fellowship. The original location was on Geneva St, but later moved to the Knights of Columbus Hall on Church St.

Over the years, the format changed to a lunch service for anyone in need, and that continues to this day, with the Centre open for lunch only, five days a week. Start-Me-Up-Niagara has taken on the role of drop-in centre, and also serves a lunch on weekends.

In 1998, the Centre was set up as a conference (unit) of Society of St Vincent de Paul in its own right, although remaining under Central Council. We became the St Frances of Rome Conference of SSVP. In 2001, in order to be able to issue tax receipts for donations, the Centre was granted charitable status, allowing donations directly to the Centre to support operations. We have our own charity registration number and report independently to the CRA annually. As a charity, we must report our income sources, and report what we do with the funds.

There are many generous sources of funding in the community. The Centre is blessed to receive funding from several churches, via their SSVP groups, or the Catholic Women's League. As well, a number of local service clubs, notably Rotary and May Court, have been helpful. More recently, the Centre has applied successfully to volunteer at the Delta Bingo, and has been significantly supported by the charitable distribution of Ontario Charitable Gaming Association funds. We are particularly grateful for the contributions from OCGA in support of ongoing operations.