



# GRATITUDE REPORT 2024



Five Oaks

1 BETHEL ROAD  
PARIS, ON N3L 3E3  
519-442-3212  
[WWW.FIVEOAKS.ON.CA](http://WWW.FIVEOAKS.ON.CA)

# 2024 YEAR IN HIGHLIGHTS

## FIVE OAKS PROGRAMS

In 2024, we offered 54 programs, including outdoor education like owling and birding, curriculum-based retreats for schools, and a range of seasonal and specialty programs. Attendance continued to grow, with strong guest engagement throughout the year.

## ACORN ADVENTURE CAMP

We welcomed 541 campers in 2024 across PA Day, Winter Break, March Break, and summer sessions—including a sold-out summer camp. A new Leader-in-Training program launched, giving 19 youth hands-on experience and mentorship.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

*Brave Waves* offered spring swimming lessons and lifeguard training at our pool, while *Grand River Rafting* launched 9,750 guests for river journeys from our banks. The *Grand River Bookstore* saw an increase in visitors seeking their unique resources.

## OFFICIAL NAME CHANGE

In 2024, we officially adopted the name *Five Oaks Centre*—a meaningful change that reflects who we are today. While our purpose remains the same, this new name aligns more fully with our evolving mission as an affirming, interfaith space for renewal, reflection, connection, and community.

## HOSTED GROUPS

Hundreds of hosted groups experienced Five Oaks this year. Highlights included Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, Atlantic Council for International Cooperation, (Re)Generate: Moderator's Leadership Program, Rainbow Chorus (WW) and Hamilton Children's Choir.

# MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

## *COME. BE. BECOME.*

In a world which is increasingly complicated, complex and cataclysmic, it is harder—and more necessary—than ever to find balance. Five Oaks' tagline "COME. BE. BECOME." is about stepping away to rest and recalibrate in order to re-engage differently in our lives and communities. The invitation is to COME—to see the beauty in nature, ourselves, and our neighbours. The gift is a place to BE with others, to learn to navigate those complexities and differences. The blessing is to BECOME readier to offer balance and hope in this complicated world.

Many Indigenous nations know living things as "All My Relations", in Mohawk "Akwe Nia'Tetewá: neren". At Five Oaks we strive to

live in and foster right relations with the natural world and among peoples of various cultures, faiths, colours and identities. Programs for adults, school groups and day camps uphold these values and teachings in the labour of meeting, connecting, and conversing across differences to build respect and community.

In overseeing the Centre, the Board also upholds this vision. We strive for balance: of budgets, of space for programs and rentals, of staffing needs and workloads. Last year, we had 207 donors to Five Oaks—a significant increase over the past couple of years. Thank you to those who've continued to give, to those who've returned, and to those who donated for the first time. In addition, grants are

essential to our work. Of course, with more resources we could do more. For instance, there are ideas for increasing the amount and functionality of the spaces. In the meantime, the Operations staff constantly refresh and repair what we have. The Board continues to look for ways to grow and nurture the dreams.

Our thanks to Maggie Dieter, Martha Pedoniquotte, and Maya Landell who have concluded their time on the Board. I am grateful for the wisdom, support and care they have offered. Thanks also to the staff who give above and beyond expectations to make the Centre a hospitable place to COME, BE, BECOME.



**PEGI RIDOUT**  
BOARD CHAIR

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Barbara William:** Treasurer

**Ruth Noble:** Secretary

**Peter Wall:** Chair, Human Resources and Governance

**Amira Ayad:** Member of Partners Team

**Ted Reeve:** Member of Partners Team

**Mark Laird:** Corresponding Member, Executive Minister of Horseshoe Falls Regional Council of the United Church

**NOTICE OF AGM**

**Sunday June 22nd 2025 | 2:30pm-5:00pm | In-Person + Virtual**  
**>>> Registration Required @ [www.fiveoaks.on.ca](http://www.fiveoaks.on.ca) <<<**

The Five Oaks Board of Directors warmly invites you to attend the **Annual General Meeting** for the 2024 fiscal year. Join us as we reflect on a year of growth, share updates, and look ahead together. The AGM will be followed by an optional celebratory dinner for \$33. Gather around the table, enjoy a delicious meal, and continue the conversations of the day. Members unable to attend may appoint a proxy.

**AGM Guest Speaker, John Bell**

John is an ordained Presbyterian minister, lives in Glasgow and is a member of the Iona Community. He has been actively engaged in church music for over forty years as an animateur, composer and author.





# OPERATIONS SUMMARY REPORT

2024 was a year of meaningful growth and steady improvement at Five Oaks Centre. Across the property, we worked to create a more welcoming, comfortable, and sustainable environment for all who come here. From thoughtful renovations to eco-conscious upgrades, every project aimed to support the well-being of both people and place.

One major highlight was the completion of the new Chalet dining room. This bright, refreshed space has quickly become a favourite gathering place, supported by other upgrades to the Chalet including fresh paint, new lighting, and a septic system update. The Upper Room also saw the installation of a new door to the balcony, increasing the flexibility of that space.

Other key projects included a thoughtful gender-neutral renovation of the pool washrooms, updates to the Hermitage washroom, and a fresh coat of paint in the Summer Centre Dining Hall. We also installed new landscape lighting along key paths and decks, and purchased a Blink security system to support safety, visibility, and peace of mind across the site.

At the end of the year, we officially transitioned to our new legal name: *Five Oaks Centre*. This small but meaningful change better reflects the organization we've become, while staying rooted in the spirit and story of Five Oaks.

I'm proud of all we accomplished in 2024—not just because of what was done, but how it was done. Every project was made possible by the care, creativity, and commitment of our staff and community, along with the support of several key grants. We're building something lasting here, and I'm grateful to be part of it.

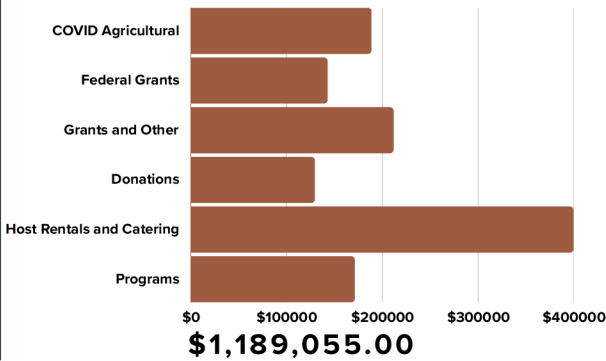
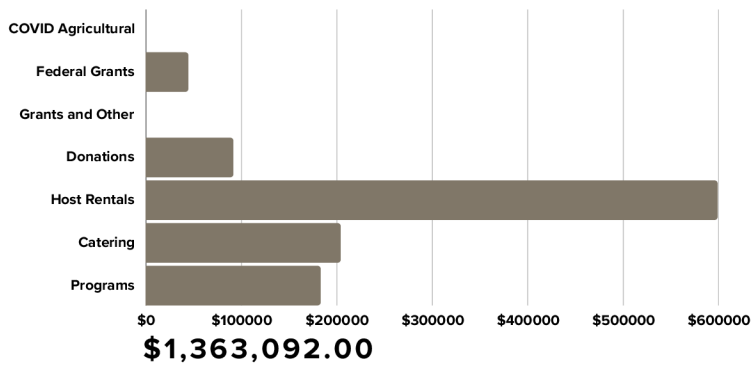
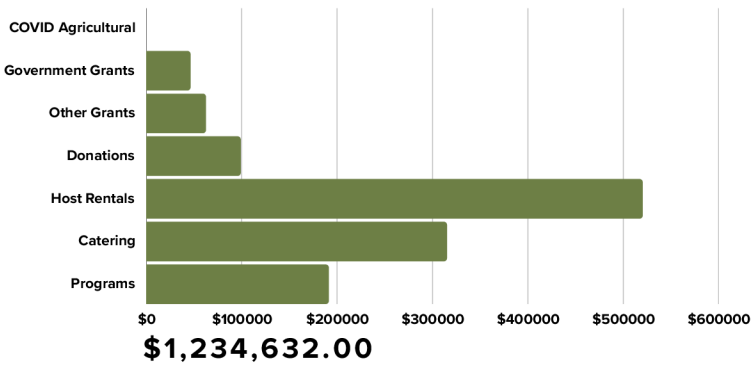


**JEREMY STEWART**  
ACTING GENERAL MANAGER

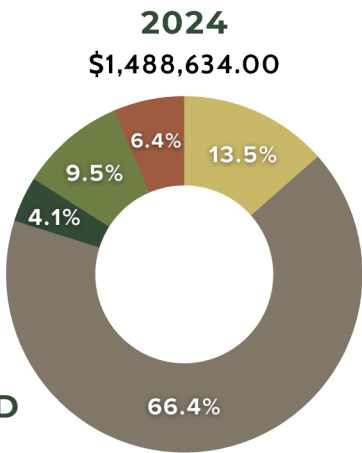
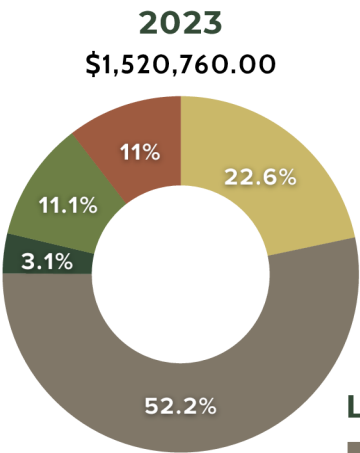
# 2024 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

2024  
2023  
2022

## OPERATING REVENUE



# OPERATING EXPENSES



## LEGEND

- Wages
- Host and Site
- Administrative
- Taxes, Insurance, and Utilities
- Programs

# MAKING IT COUNT



## STAFF RETENTION

We experienced strong staff retention across full-time, part-time, and seasonal roles, supported by **Canada Summer Jobs** funding for **5** summer staff.



## IMPROVED VISIBILITY

New pathway and deck lighting was installed, and a camera system purchased to support safety—made possible by the **Ontario Anti-Hate Security and Prevention Grant**.



## FIVE OAKS GUESTS

We welcomed **6,330** people through **254** retreat bookings and **54** programs—offering **13,438** meals and **8,695** guest nights across a vibrant and fulfilling year.

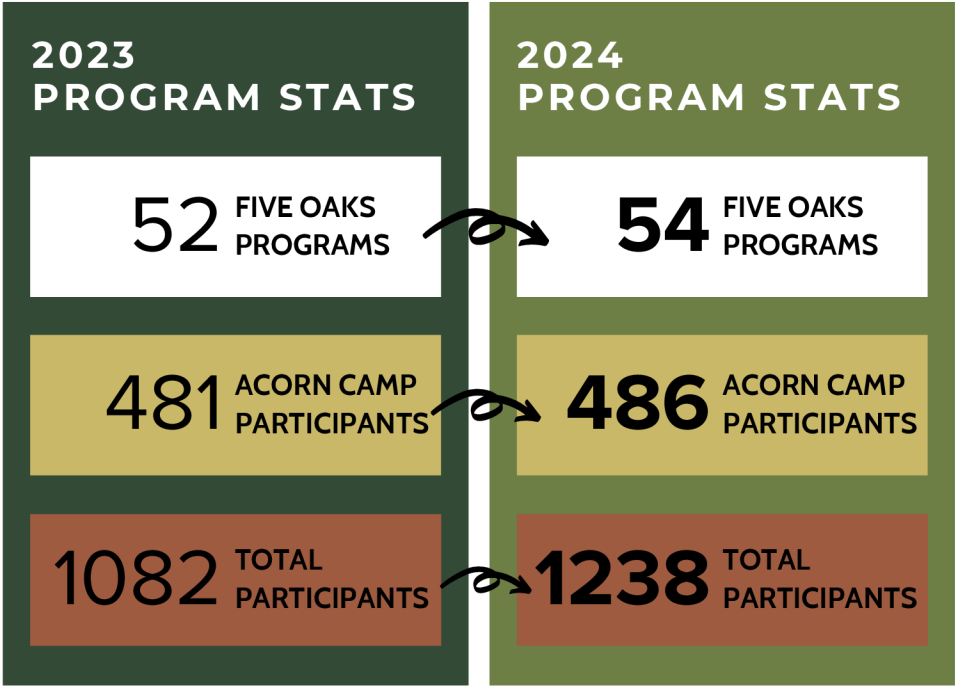


## INCLUSIVE WASHROOMS

Thanks to a grant from the the **County of Brant**, we renovated the pool washrooms and changerooms to offer a more inclusive, gender-neutral space for summer guests.

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS AND GROWTH

This year, Five Oaks programs flourished. With growth across every area, we welcomed more people into spaces of reflection, learning, and meaningful connection—rooted in the changing rhythms of nature and community.



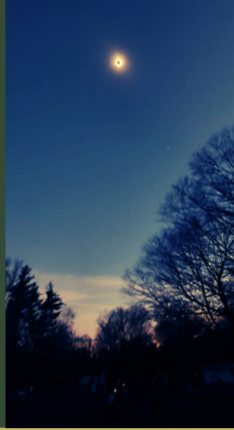
**TANYA DYCK  
STEINMANN**  
WILDSCAPE SOUL

Tanya Dyck Steinmann spent the first half of the year on staff at Five Oaks as Partner Program Coordinator. She has since stepped into her independent work as a Spiritual Director and founder of **Wildscape Soul**. Now, Tanya returns to Five Oaks as a valued Program Partner, facilitating retreats throughout the year. Tanya has shared her reflections on a few of the year’s programs, included on the next page.



# A MOMENT TO REMEMBER: SOLAR ECLIPSE

On April 8, 2024, Five Oaks had the rare privilege of being in the path of totality—an unforgettable day. Over 120 visitors streamed in with solar glasses, lawn chairs, and picnic baskets. Families, friends, and skywatchers of all ages gathered to share in the experience. As darkness fell at 3:12pm, the birds grew quiet, bats appeared briefly, and the awe-inspiring halo—or “diamond ring”—of the sun left many speechless. As time felt suspended, we were reminded of our shared place in the universe, and the beauty that can arise when a community comes together to witness something extraordinary.



## SIMPLY BEING AMONG THE TREES

On a beautiful weekend in late September, a small but deeply reflective group gathered in Peace House to **Simply Be** with the forest and with each other. Tanya, along with Forest Therapy Guide Tim Oaks, gently invited the group to slow down, listen, and notice through guided meditation, embodied spiritual practices, heartfelt circle sharing, and ephemeral art based on the Honorable Harvest teachings (Robin Wall Kimmerer’s *Braiding Sweetgrass*). A highlight was a guided Forest Therapy experience with Tim, culminating in a traditional Cedar Tea ceremony. The retreat coincided with Orange Shirt Day, a national day of remembrance for the children who never returned home from residential schools, and for Survivors and their families. In honour of this day, participants wore orange shirts, holding space in quiet solidarity and reflection.

## A CIRCLE OF WOMEN+, SPIRIT, AND STORY

In October, 26 women+ came together for **Weaving Our Stories: Interfaith Women’s+ Conference**, Rooted in eight diverse spiritual traditions and learnings, we intentionally built a sacred space grounded in the shared values of **Peace, Respect, Kindness, and Openness**. A highlight of the weekend was the keynote address by **Dr. Amira Ayad**, who led us through the transformative “7 I’s” Journey toward Joy and Healing. Our stories flowed—shared in small groups, on sunlit patios, around campfires, and through hands-on fabric journaling exploring our unique calls to adventure.



# THE HEART OF HOSPITALITY

From long-time guests to first-time visitors, and from the youngest day campers to our most seasoned retreat-goers, Five Oaks offers something for everyone. We are deeply grateful to all who pass through our doors — whether for a single event or year after year. It is your presence, your stories, and your connection to this land and community that breathe life into our work.

Hospitality at Five Oaks means more than just a warm bed or a well-cooked meal — it's about creating a sense of belonging. Whether you're here to reconnect with nature, to grow spiritually, to gather with community, or simply to rest, we are honoured to be part of your journey.

Here's what some of our guests had to say:



*"I have a long and loving relationship with Five Oaks. Walking the trails, the labyrinth, and along the shores of the Grand and Whiteman's Creek have brought me peace in times of turmoil. I've marveled at the beauty and wildlife and created artwork and writing in retreats and my own time... Five Oaks is part of the reason why I moved to Paris from Toronto ten years ago... it's a sanctuary!"*

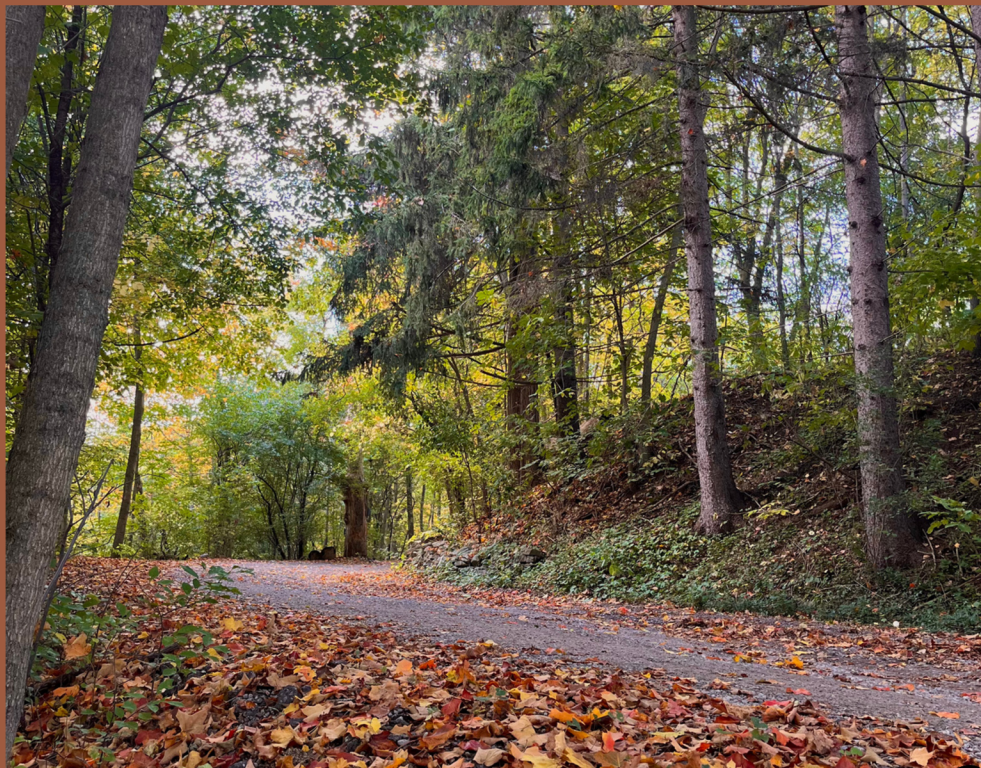
**— Jocelain Hitchcox**

*"Thank you for your support for our first event at Five Oaks! You're a top-notch team: best I've experienced in Ontario. Appreciate the kind and generous responses, quick replies and guidance. See you soon!"*

**— Drew & The Outcon Crew**







## DONATIONS

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_



### DONATE BY MAIL

I am enclosing a cheque **OR**

Please charge my credit card (circle)

VISA                      MASTERCARD                      AMEX

Card #: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry (mm/yyyy): \_\_\_\_\_

CSC (3 or 4 digit code): \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to receive a tax receipt (circle): YES NO

I wish to be added to email list (circle): YES NO

Charity Registration Number: 107 389 108 RR0001

*I wish to make a  
ONE-TIME donation of:*

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ CAD

Five Oaks will be a good steward of the personal information gathered. We do not sell, share or rent this information to a third party, and secure or destroy it accordingly to PIPEDA guidelines.

### **OR** DONATE ONLINE



<https://fiveoaks.on.ca/be-involved>



- OPEN YOUR CAMERA APP
- POINT IT AT THE QR CODE
- TAP THE LINK THAT APPEARS

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Thank you for being part of an incredible year at Five Oaks. Your support—through donations, presence, and participation—makes everything we do possible. Together, we've grown, welcomed more people than ever, and continued to care for this sacred place in lasting ways. As we look ahead, your continued generosity helps us nurture the programs, people, and place that make Five Oaks so special. We hope to welcome you again soon—to rest, reconnect, and be part of what's next.

## FEATURED 2025 OFFERINGS

**SERIES LABYRINTH PILGRIMAGE STARTING JUNE 1**

**COURSE LEADER IN TRAINING (YOUTH) JUNE 14-15**

**RETREAT THE SONG OF THE EARTH WITH JOHN BELL JUNE 20-22**

**CONFERENCE WEAVING OUR STORIES 2 NOVEMBER 21-23**

**PROGRAM DIVERSITY SCHOOL GROUP SESSIONS ONGOING**

**RENTALS HOST YOUR NEXT GATHERING HERE! ONGOING**

[FIVEOAKS.ON.CA/PROGRAMS](https://fiveoaks.on.ca/programs)

**FIVE OAKS CENTRE  
1 BETHEL RD.  
PARIS, ON N3L 3E3**

