



## Celebrating the 2025 CharityVillage Award Recipients

**Mary:** Hi, I'm Mary Barroll. Coming up on CharityVillage Connects, we'll celebrate outstanding individuals and organizations making extraordinary impact in the nonprofit sector and meet winners of our fifth annual CharityVillage Awards. But first, here's a word from our podcast partner:

**Sponsor's message:** Today's podcast is brought to you by WUSC. For more than 50 years, WUSC has been working alongside communities around the world to drive positive education and economic outcomes for young people.

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**SFX: Pre-show audience sounds, music and drum roll**

**Male announcer:** Ladies and gentlemen, it's once again time to celebrate the outstanding individuals who make a meaningful difference in the nonprofit sector and support communities across Canada.

**Music**

Welcome to the fifth annual CharityVillage Awards Gala!

**SFX: Applause**

**Male announcer:** Tonight, we're shining a spotlight on the incredible individuals who are driving real change across their organizations and the nonprofit sector. We're also applauding the organizations that are raising the bar for employee well-being and community impact. And now, let's get the celebration started! Please welcome your host, the President of CharityVillage, Mary Barroll!

**SFX: Applause and music**

**Mary Barroll:** Thank you! And welcome to this special edition of *CharityVillage Connects*.

With 2025 coming to a close and 2026 on the horizon, we're honouring the remarkable volunteers, professionals, and organizations whose energy and commitment strengthen

our sector every day. Today, we proudly celebrate the recipients of the 2025 CharityVillage National Awards!

## Music

**Naomi Low:** It's been incredible thing for all of us to be recognized by Charity Village. We're thrilled as an organization to be honored with this.

**Mercy Lawluvi:** Oh, my goodness, you can see me smiling, so broadly. Winning the award for diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace feels incredibly rewarding and validating.

**Patrick Doyle:** I am so proud of what we do. I love being part of this project. I love what we've accomplished in this community. So, seeing it recognized is really a beautiful thing and we tremendously appreciate it.

**Kerry Cavers:** I did not expect to be a winner in this organization and just looking at all of the amazing organizations that were nominated and became semi-finalists, I was so honored to be amongst the list. And then when we won, I sent a message out right away, on our chat channel, saying we won, we won. And everyone was just so excited.

**Ashid Bahl:** It feels good because you can have people following your footsteps as well. And that's a good thing because people can get encouraged to see what you're doing and then they can follow suit.

**Ashlyn Koebel:** I firstly felt very incredibly honored that my organization even nominated me. I had no idea. And then of course, I feel very flattered to have won in the category that I'm sure is filled with a lot of impactful individuals that care as much as I do.

## Music ends

## SFX: Applause

**Mary Barroll:** You've just heard how our 2025 CharityVillage National Award recipients reacted when they learned they'd been recognized by colleagues from across the country—moments filled with pride, gratitude, and genuine surprise. In today's episode, you'll meet each of these remarkable individuals as they talk about their work, the lessons they've learned along the way, and what continues to motivate them. Their stories are full of insight and inspiration for nonprofits of every kind. But before we hear from them, I want to take a moment to share what makes the CharityVillage National Awards so meaningful.

## Music

These awards were designed to spotlight excellence in the areas that help nonprofits thrive: innovative fundraising, strong DEI leadership, thoughtful volunteer engagement, meaningful collaboration, outstanding individual impact, and more. Together, these efforts reflect the heart and resilience of our sector.

To keep the competition fair and inclusive, each category is divided into two groups: organizations with over 20 staff, and those with fewer than 20, ensuring that achievements are recognized equitably across different sizes and capacities of organizations.

Our winners are selected by an independent panel of expert judges who volunteer their time and knowledge, helping us honour truly outstanding work happening in communities across Canada.

When we unveiled this year's award recipients at the CharityVillage National Conference and Awards on November 19, 2025, the reaction across the sector was immediate: messages of congratulations and a real sense of pride in what nonprofit professionals are accomplishing nationwide.

Tonight, we'll share more about some of our winners' journeys. You'll hear what inspired their work and how they navigated challenges to find success. So, get comfortable and enjoy, there's a lot to celebrate.

## **Music**

**Male announcer:** And now, it's time to kick off celebrations in earnest. Our first honour of the evening recognizes excellence in fundraising, specifically, a standout campaign led by a nonprofit with fewer than 20 staff members. To announce the winner, here's our host, Mary Barroll.

## **SFX: Applause**

**Mary Barroll:** Fundraising has always been at the heart of meaningful community impact. It takes creativity, persistence, and a deep understanding of what inspires people to give. The organizations leading the way are those that build genuine connections and spark generosity in fresh and compelling ways. This year's award for Best Fundraising Campaign in the under-20-staff division goes to ...

## **SFX: Drum roll**

the Cowichan District Hospital Foundation!

## **SFX: Cheers and applause**

Accepting the award is Naomi Low, Chief Executive Officer, who will share a closer look

at the Foundation's work and the thoughtful approach behind their award-winning campaign. Congratulations, Naomi!

**Naomi Low:** Thank you so much. We're thrilled to be here and thrilled to be awarded with this honour.

**Mary Barroll:** Well, tell us about your organization and the work that you do.

**Naomi Low:** We are the Cowichan District Hospital Foundation. We're located in North Cowichan, on Vancouver Island, in British Columbia. We've been in the community for 41 years and we're servicing our local hospital, which has been the Cowichan District Hospital, as well as our long-term care facility, which is called Cairnsmore Place. So, we raise money in the community to purchase equipment for both of these sites.

**Mary Barroll:** What do you think made your nomination stand out to the judges?

**Naomi Low:** Right now, as we speak, we're having a brand-new hospital that's being built for our community and for our surrounding areas, which will service approximately close to 100,000 people. So, it's been a long time coming with this hospital. Through our innovation and through our campaign, we have been raising 20 million dollars to help support equipment at the new hospital. It's been a very community-based project. We've worked with our local First Nations communities, local government, service clubs, donors. We have an incredible board of directors that has opened a lot of doors for us.

In this process, we've really engaged our entire community around this project, as well as thinking outside of the box as far as some of our fundraising opportunities. One of the things that we did is we have a construction site where they're building this big, beautiful, new hospital. We actually leased a food truck as a foundation, and we decided to feed all the workers. So, we've got our lunch truck on site. All of the workers are able to stay on the site and get more work done quicker. And then the funds that we raise go back into supporting the project as a whole. So, it's been a labor of love for all of us.

**Mary Barroll:** Well, some really creative ideas. Clearly, you've done some remarkable things, or you wouldn't have been recognized by our panel of experts as being an award winner. Do you have any advice to other organizations wanting to improve in this area?

**Naomi Low:** I've been in the fundraising world for many, many, many years. I would just say it's okay to take some risks and don't be scared to reach out because you never know who's on the other end. One of the things that we did is we reached out to the Jim Pattison Foundation that actually decided to work with us on a \$10 million goal. It was a \$5 million match campaign. Just don't be scared to make the phone calls, right? Reach out in your community. There's a lot of people that are there that would love to help. I just wanted to say thank you to all of you. And I know there's independent people who are making those choices. But thank you, for everything that you're doing, in this

nonprofit sector, and for supporting organizations and uplifting. We hope to be a part of the organization for many years to come.

**Mary Barroll:** Congratulations again to the Cowichan District Hospital Foundation on winning the award for Best Fundraising Campaign for an organization under 20 staff.

**SFX: Cheers, applause and music**

**Male announcer:** For our next category of the CharityVillage Awards, we turn to the Awards for the Best Non-Profit Employers' contribution to DEI in the workplace! Here's Mary to announce the winner.

**Mary Barroll:** Nonprofits exist to serve their communities, but the most impactful organizations understand that their internal culture must embody the same values they promote outwardly. Creating an environment where diverse voices are welcomed and supported isn't just good practice, it's essential to meaningful, lasting change.

This award recognizes employers who've embedded equity, inclusion, and accessibility, into the core of how they operate. Their commitment shows up in their policies, their teams, and the sense of belonging they cultivate. In the category of Best DEI Program for a Nonprofit Employer with More than 20 Staff, this year's award goes to...

**SFX: Drum roll**

Immigrant Women Services Ottawa.

**SFX: Applause and cheers**

Accepting the award is Executive Director Mercy Lawluvi. Congratulations, Mercy! We'd love to begin by hearing a little about your organization.

**Mercy Lawluvi:** Thank you for that wonderful introduction. And I am just thrilled for IWSO to be the winner of the DEI Award. So, Immigrant Women's Services Ottawa, popularly known as IWSO, is a community-based organization dedicated to supporting immigrant and racialized women. Our agency was founded in 1988. That's 37 good years ago and continues to provide opportunities for women to rebuild their lives, free from violence, integrate into a new society, and pursue their personal goals and aspirations.

So, in addition to our core services, which are culturally responsive and trauma-informed programs, such as crisis intervention and counseling for women fleeing gender-based violence, also settlement and integration services for newcomer women, and language interpretation and translation services, as a frontline organization working directly with vulnerable women, we also respond to emerging needs, identified by the women we serve. For example, we initiated the Healthy Directions program, but it became very clear to us that there was a need for more mental health supports for

immigrant and racialized women.

Similarly, we initiated the Client Accompaniment Program, where trained volunteers accompany survivors of violence to important appointments and meetings, which they would otherwise not attend on their own. We also initiated the Industrial Sewing Machine Training Program and the Culinary Entrepreneur Program, providing technical and practical skills that empower immigrant and racialized women, with those skills, to monetize their talents and build sustainable livelihoods.

Each year, our wonderful, committed staff and volunteers assist more than 3,000 women and children in achieving safety, stability and success. Let's not forget our board. We have a 15-member board of directors. The majority of whom are racialized women themselves, ensuring that governance reflects the communities we serve.

**Mary Barroll:** The work that you've described is so impressive and sounds so important for the lives of these women. I'd like to know a little bit more about your DEI program.

**Mercy Lawluvi:** Yes, absolutely. We embed DEI into every aspect of our organization. Every day, we practice DEI every day within our organization. To begin with, our staff members come from all over the world, bringing diverse perspectives and experiences that shape how we work and support the women we serve. We foster an inclusive environment where each and every voice is heard and valued. And we create a safer and more equitable pathway for immigrant women to thrive and fully participate in their communities.

How do we do this? Through innovative and empowering programming. We consistently address and strive to break down the multiple barriers faced by immigrant to racialized women. Barriers such as language, cultural stigma, economic vulnerability, gender-based violence, which is huge, systemic discrimination, to name a few. So, each client, for us, is considered unique with unique experiences and differing needs and situations.

So, with this in mind, we ensure that each client has the resources and is exposed to the opportunities necessary to obtain their full potential. And to ensure equity and access, by providing enabling support such as language interpretation, childcare, transportation, and so on. We're very conscious of women being able to access services. As a women's organization, we are also committed to closing the wage gap for our staff. So altogether, this DEI approach strengthens our programs and models equity, collaboration, and respect in the workplace.

**Mary Barroll:** Do you have any advice for other organizations wanting to improve in this area, in helping to make their DEI programs more impactful?

**Mercy Lawluvi:** Yes, if I may, from my experience, I think it's important to integrate DEI into every aspect of an organization, from staff engagement to program development. I feel that it's important to value and learn from the diverse perspectives of a team and

also the communities that we serve. Equally important, I feel, is to be actively engaged in addressing the barriers that limit inclusion. By making DEI practices an ongoing focus, through listening, reflection, learning, and collaboration, equity and inclusion are practiced every day. That is what we do. We're very good at listening to our clients. What are their needs? What are the obstacles? What are the barriers that they're facing? And we try to break those down and also listening and making the environment inclusive and respectful of all.

So, all of this ensures that both services and the workplace culture are welcoming and inclusive and free from discrimination. I'd also like to say that it's important for staff to have ongoing cultural competency, anti-racism, trauma-informed practices training, and these foster understanding and empathy and meaningful inclusion.

We are truly honored to be recognized by CharityVillage. This award highlights the importance of creating inclusive and equitable workplaces, and also it validates the hard work of everyone at IWSO. More importantly, it brings attention to the women we serve, and the positive change organizations can make when they commit to DEI in meaningful ways. So, it's an honor and a pleasure to be here, and to be the recipient of this year's DEI award. So, thank you most sincerely.

**Mary Barroll:** Well, on behalf of Charity Village, we want to say congratulations, Mercy, for this really impressive win and the contributions that you're making to DEI, both within the workplace and within the communities that you serve.

**SFX: Applause and cheers.**

**Music**

**Male announcer:** For our next category of the Charity Village Award, here's the Award for the Best Nonprofit Collaborative Project, featuring two or more organizations! Here's our host to announce the exceptional winner!

**Mary Barroll:** The Best Nonprofit Collaborative Project award shines a light on nonprofit partnerships that are truly working together to make a difference. It celebrates teams that centre the needs of the people they serve and shows how collaboration can create real, measurable change in communities.

**SFX: drum roll**

The award goes to ... The Mobile Food Market!

**SFX: Cheers**

This project was made possible by a host of partners, including Fiddlesticks, Alison Neighbourhood Community Centre, the Cambridge Food Bank, YWCA Cambridge, House of Friendship, Hospice Waterloo Region, Community Living Cambridge,

Forward, Langs Community Health Care, Temple, St Vincent Du Paul, Preston Heights Community Group, Knox United Ayr, Kinbridge Community Association, Greenway Chaplin Community Centre, Hespeler Village Neighbourhood Association, St Andrews, and RARE. Accepting the award on behalf of this group of collaborating organizations is Patrick Doyle, the Mobile Food Market Coordinator at the Cambridge Food Bank. Patrick, can you tell us about this project?

**Patrick Doyle:** Yeah, absolutely. Our project is a mobile food market. It's something that we started almost five years ago, coming out of the pandemic and really just trying to get more fresh fruits and vegetables into the community. We're a food bank. We have our emergency hampers. It's the basis of everything we do. But we were trying to look upstream and ways that we could keep people out of the food bank and ways that we could help people that are using the food bank. And one of the things we heard from a lot of our participants was that they wanted more fresh fruits and vegetables. They were willing to buy fresh fruits and vegetables. They just couldn't afford them at the grocery store, or they couldn't get to a grocery store. So that's where this project came from.

We started with four host locations. We now have 18 regular weekly markets, as well as some bi-weekly and monthly and ad hoc. We go out into the community. We sell fresh fruits and vegetables, at discounted prices, and pay what you can, to encourage everyone to come out. If people with more means can pay a little more money that helps us keep the program running for people that are struggling. But we've really built this program through collaboration, through working with other organizations in our community, and we're really proud of the way it's grown.

**Mary Barroll:** Well, it certainly does sound like it's grown. What do you think made your nomination stand out to the judges?

**Patrick Doyle:** Well, I mean, I'm biased. I think our project's amazing. I love what we do and I'm so proud of what we do. But I think what really stood out in this category is the breadth and the depth of our collaboration. We have 18 different host sites that we go to every single week. These are almost exclusively other nonprofits, be they churches, mosques, community centers, whatever the case may be. We set up in these spaces, we work with their volunteer groups, we work with our volunteer groups. We work together. Another thing that we're really proud of with this program is that we've had the opportunity to develop further connections with other organizations seeking to reach the public. In our markets in the summer, we'll have the Cambridge Public Library come out and they'll hand out books to kids and have activities. We work with the YWCA. We work with all sorts of different organizations to make the market fun, to make it interesting, to make it a worthwhile trip for people.

And then also, again, because we're going into communities, we're going into community centers, it's an opportunity for people to find out about opportunities, in their environment, that they might not otherwise learn about. So, they come to us, they're learning about their community center or their church or their mosque or what have you.

They're also learning about other organizations that are with them. And then the other thing that I'm really proud of, in terms of our collaboration, is the way that we've developed relationships with local farms. Local farms and greenhouses have been really incredible in helping to supply us with fresh produce. So that's depth, right? We're collaborating with different organizations on multiple different levels to really build community here in Cambridge.

**Mary Barroll:** Well, it sounds like a great project. From your perspective, do you have any advice for other organizations wanting to develop a collaboration in terms of how they deliver on their mission?

**Patrick Doyle:** The biggest advice I would say is to be brave, to be comfortable asking other organizations what things we can do together. A big part of what we've developed here is cold calling. We ascertain certain neighborhoods where we wanted to have markets and we started calling churches, community centers, whoever the case may be and saying, hey, would you like to work with us on this? We didn't have to have a preexisting relationship with them. And that's one thing I find a lot with organizations is that you have your other organizations that you know, the people you trust, and that's incredibly valuable. But it's also valuable to meet new people and to go out of your way to create connections where they weren't already there.

I just wanted to thank you so much for having me on and for giving us this opportunity. CharityVillage is an incredible resource, especially for smaller charities like us, smaller nonprofits to be able to use the CharityVillage website for job listings, for e-learning. It's a really incredible resource for smaller nonprofits to have an opportunity to work at a level maybe above what they would naturally be capable of. So, we're so appreciative to everything that you guys do. And thank you so much for this honour and this award and just for taking the time to learn about us.

**Mary Barroll:** Let's give a warm congratulations to Patrick Doyle and all the team who came together to create this new project!

**SFX: Cheers, applause, music**

**Male announcer:** And now, we're excited to announce the Winner of the Best Volunteer Program by a Nonprofit Organization with Less Than 20 Staff! Here's Mary to tell us more.

**Mary Barroll:** Our next award recognizes organizations with under 20 staff who are finding exceptional ways to recruit and engage their volunteers. Volunteers play a vital role in our sector and contribute greatly to an organization's success, but this past year saw continuing challenges in recruiting and retaining volunteers, and this award is dedicated to those that found ways to overcome the obstacles and maintain a strong volunteer program.

## **SFX: drumroll**

And the winner for the Award for the Best Volunteer Program is ... Moms Against Racism!

## **SFX: Applause and cheers**

Here to accept the award on behalf of Moms Against Racism, we have Kerry Cavers, Founder and Board Chair. Kerry, please tell us about your organization.

**Kerry Cavers:** Thank you so much, Mary. Moms Against Racism Canada, we're a community-driven nonprofit that equips caregivers, educators, and community leaders with the tools and learning spaces and support that they need to be able to raise children in anti-racist, justice-oriented, identity-affirming environments. And we do this work through programs like anti-racism workshops and healing-centered groups. We have a diverse book baskets program, do lots of youth programming, community learning events, and then we have a very new digital village ourselves. So, at its core, our work is really about transforming relationships because we believe that real systemic change begins with the grownups who surround children every day.

**Mary Barroll:** So, tell me about your volunteer program.

**Kerry Cavers:** We currently have 45 volunteers. We're a newer nonprofit. We've been around for just five years. We had our fifth birthday in June. And part of what makes our volunteer program stand out, I think, is just the way that we build those relationships with our volunteers. It's very important for us that we have that reciprocity and that shared leadership in our organization, so that when people are coming in, the organization is not only benefiting from the talents and the skills that people are bringing, but that we, as an organization, are also benefiting our volunteers. So, we're not just assigning tasks, we're really doing our best to help nurture the people who've come into our village.

And we want to create spaces where our volunteers can bring their whole selves to contribute and that they can also be growing their skills and then also rest when they need to. So, we do have a lot of volunteers who will take a pause, and they know that we are standing behind them, with whatever family things that come up. And then I think part of the biggest thing is our volunteers feel that they're part of a community that genuinely cares about them. So, being a tiny organization that we are, we run national-scale programming because our volunteers feel connected to the mission and empowered to lead. And so, really that relational community-centered approach is what makes MAR really unique.

**Mary Barroll:** From the perspective of your organization's work in volunteer management, do you have any advice for other organizations wanting to improve in this area? So first off, what made you stand out, do you think? And secondly, what advice

do you have for other organizations who want to improve?

**Kerry Cavers:** Yeah, I think what made us stand out is just the success that we've had with retaining and growing our volunteer base. One of the things that we do that I think allows us to do that well is that we're listening to our volunteers. Always taking their feedback and being able to pivot.

One of the things that I think we do really well is, sometimes a volunteer will put their hand up for a role and want to do a task and then get into that task and find that it's not really for them or it's not aligning for them or it's not lighting them up. And so, we're constantly having those conversations with our volunteers to make sure that what they're doing is feeling purposeful for them, that they're feeling connected and driven. And if they're not, we take that time to move them into something that does. And so, there's always the ability to feel like people are contributing and that they're learning and that they're growing.

And so, I think that would be one piece of advice that I would have for folks is really spending that time to hear what your volunteers are saying, because oftentimes, they might see things that you don't. As an organization, over the years, we've implemented things like a volunteer recognition program. We recognize volunteers at our all-volunteer meeting. And then we've also created smaller groups of volunteers that can feel connected and build that relationship. And then just this weekend, we had our first annual volunteer retreat. So, we took 24 of our volunteers away to a remote location where everybody could decompress and just have fun. And it was again, really that relationship-centered way of bringing all of our volunteers together.

**Mary Barroll:** I'm curious, how does it feel to be named as a winner? What did it mean for the people at your organization?

**Kerry Cavers:** We were all cheering. I did not expect to be a winner in this organization and just looking at all of the amazing organizations that were nominated and became semi-finalists, I was you know, like just was so honored to be amongst the list.

**Mary Barroll:** Congratulations to Kerry Cavers and Moms Against Racism for doing this important work!

**SFX: Applause, cheers and music**

**Male announcer:** It's time to recognize exceptional volunteer contributions with the CharityVillage Award for Outstanding Volunteer Impact. Please welcome back your host, Mary Barroll!

**SFX: Cheers**

**Mary Barroll:** Volunteers are the heartbeat of so many nonprofit organizations. Their contributions often happen quietly, behind the scenes and without expectation of recognition, but their impact is profound. Tonight, we're honouring one remarkable individual whose dedication has made a meaningful difference in the lives of many.

### **SFX: Drum roll**

The recipient of this year's Outstanding Impact by a Volunteer Award is ... Ashid Bahl from For the Love of Children Society of Alberta!

### **SFX: Applause and cheers**

Ashid, congratulations on this well-deserved honour! Well, let's start with learning about your organization. Tell me a little bit about it and then about the volunteer work that you do?

**Ashid Bahl:** Yes, the organization was started by myself. Actually, I was only 11 years old when I used to give my toys and my lunch away to less fortunate kids in my school in Africa. And the process of giving never stopped for me. Now, after 46 years, we've helped over 1.2 million children and their families around the world. It's very gratifying. And it's really a privilege to help these children.

A lot of these children come up to me and say, thank you, Mr. Bahl. I said, no, no, no, thank you for giving me that privilege. It's really a blessing. Now, we've got 101 schools and orphanages that we have established as well, around the world. And out of that, around about 6,000 children graduate, each year, from those schools. So that's just great. And you know, for the first time, girls get a chance to go to school, as well. So, we make sure that 50 % of our schools are comprised of girls, which is kind of great.

We do war-torn countries like Afghanistan. I was just in Ukraine as well. We do countries hit with natural disasters as well. I've done all the major disasters, you know, stemming from in Sri Lanka, tsunami to Haiti earthquake to, just more recently in Morocco as well. And the best part of the whole process is that none of us get paid. We just do it at the goodness of your heart. I've got about 2,000 volunteers all around the world and nobody believes that we accomplished that. We're just utilizing volunteers. It's a hard process to go through. Fundraising is always an issue. But you know, having less overheads, we can get away with a lot. And it's not the money that we raise that's important. It's what you do with the money that's more important.

Here as well, in Canada, I've helped over 20,000 immigrants settle in Alberta, and I helped start up the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society and also the Calgary Immigrant Aid Society, when they first started out as well.

And you know, when you look back and even, I'm amazed at how much one person can accomplish. And this is what I wanted to show people that even one person can make a

difference. All it takes is to share and care for each other. I'm trying to teach people that, you know, life is not about us. Life is about making life happen for someone else who's less fortunate than ourselves. In that lies the true significance of living.

**Mary Barroll:** What do you think made your nomination stand out to the judges?

**Ashid Bahl:** I think the fact that even one person can make a difference, in the lives of so many, I think that's where it's at.

**Mary Barroll:** And what are some of the ways in which you find meaning or motivation for the work that you do? What keeps you going?

**Ashid Bahl:** You know, it's very simple. Just seeing smiles on the children's faces, that keeps me going. And that's reward enough for me.

**SFX: Applause and cheers**

**Mary Barroll:** Congratulations again to Ashid Bahl. And now, in our last category, we're also delighted to recognize the winner of the Most Outstanding Impact – Staff Award. This award shines a spotlight on the important work that nonprofit employees do as they show up for work every day, ready to make a difference.

**SFX: Drum roll**

And the winner of this important award is... Ashlyn Koebel, Distribution Assistant Manager of the Greater Vancouver Food Bank. Congratulations, Ashlyn!

**Ashlyn Koebel:** Thank you so much. Thank you for having me.

**Mary Barroll:** I wonder if could start if you could just tell us about your organizations and the kind of work that you do.

**Ashlyn Koebel:** I am the assistant manager at the Greater Vancouver Food Bank. Our core mission is to provide healthy food to those in need. But what we do as a collective whole goes beyond just food.

So, in my role, I oversee the direct distribution of food to our clients who pick up at our locations. But within that, I also launched the Fresh Start program, which targets the root causes of food insecurity. So, of course, providing food will always be at the heart of what we do. But as someone who oversees the team that serves the front line and conducts up to 90 registration appointments a day, five days a week, it becomes painfully easy to see that hunger is just a symptom of deeper challenges. So, I work alongside our trauma informed team and our on-site community partners who offer these wraparound services like employment aid, settlement services, housing assistance, mental health support to address those root causes.

**Mary Barroll:** Wow, that is quite inspiring. What do you think made your nomination stand out to the judges?

**Ashlyn Koebel:** So, despite the amazing work of nonprofits around the world, the reality is the need isn't going away. In fact, it's growing right now. The GBFB, Greater Vancouver Food Bank, serves about 16,000 clients every single week. And that number is growing. So, the GBFB provides food, and I believe we do it really well. But at the end of the day, food is just a temporary Band-Aid, in a world that needs sustainable solutions.

So, anyone who's been in nonprofit knows two things really well. One, the way we serve others must evolve if we're going to keep up with the growing need. And two, collaboration isn't just helpful, it's essential for creating real, lasting change. So I think my nomination stood out because the GVFB embraces those two truths, the need for change and collaboration, and that's how programs like Fresh Start came to life because in a world where negativity is really easy to find, hope for a better way forward, one in which we do more than just keep up with the demand, is what stands out because it's what we're all searching for anyways.

**Mary Barroll:** What are some of the ways in which you find meaning or motivation for the work that you do?

**Ashlyn Koebel:** For me, every person deserves dignity and respect, and that's truly all the motivation I need to keep fighting against the injustice and inequality that exists in our world. In my work, I find meaning in standing up for those who face barriers and advocating for a world where everyone not only has basic needs like food, but also equal opportunity to thrive.

I wanted to sincerely thank CharityVillage for hosting these awards and shining a light on the incredible work that's happening in many different cities and areas.

**SFX: Applause and music**

**Male Announcer:** What an evening it's been, filled with meaningful stories and so much inspiration. Before we wrap up our celebration, let's turn things back over to our host, Mary Barroll.

**Mary Barroll:** As we close out the 2025 CharityVillage Awards gala, let's take a moment to hear directly from our winners about what this recognition means for their organizations, their staff, volunteers, and communities.

**Naomi Low:** it just gives people the confidence to keep moving forward and to continue to do great things in their community. As an organization, we have to be uplifted with something of this nature. It just inspires people to do more.

**Mercy Lawluvi:** For everybody at IWSO, this is an extremely proud moment. It reinforces the fact that the voices and contributions of our staff and the women we serve truly matter. And believe you me, this motivates us to continue pushing and pushing for equity and inclusion.

**Patrick Doyle:** It's just the day-to-day connections that we're making that I'm just so proud of. And so being able to share this with all of our collaborators, all of the other organizations that we work with is just an absolute honour and I'm so happy to be able to do it.

**Kerry Cavers:** I just want to say thank you again for even putting on these awards. Especially right now in this climate, it's tough to be a nonprofit. It's tough to be doing this work. As an industry and just being a baby nonprofit and being recognized, it's really encouraging. We will live on this high of this award for a while.

**Ashid Bahl:** I'm amazed at how much one person can accomplish. And this is what I wanted to show people, that even one person can make a difference. All it takes is to share and care for each other. Life is not about us. Life is about making life happen for someone else who's less fortunate than ourselves. In that lies the true significance of living.

**Ashlyn Koebel:** I think it's really easy to get caught up in your own mission and the own problems that you see. But being able to see the broader impact and to see people recognized for that was really inspiring. I think it really helps you to be better together, not alone. So, I really appreciate you guys doing that.

### **SFX: Applause**

**Mary Barroll:** A heartfelt congratulations to all of our winners and finalists in the 2025 CharityVillage National Awards. In this episode, we've had the privilege of celebrating the people and organizations whose commitment and compassion strengthen the nonprofit sector every single day. These awards exist to highlight the work that often happens quietly, work that lifts communities and moves our country forward. If you'd like to explore the full list of this year's recipients, including those who couldn't join us on the podcast, you'll find everything on our awards website at [charityvillageconference.com](http://charityvillageconference.com). And for those wanting a deeper look at the stories behind the honours, complete video interviews with today's featured winners are available in the show notes.

As we look ahead, make sure to mark your calendars for the 2026 CharityVillage National Conference and Awards. You never know, it might be your organization we're celebrating next.

To every finalist, every winner, and all the remarkable nonprofits, charities,

professionals, and volunteers across Canada: thank you for your dedication, your leadership, and your impact. The entire CharityVillage team celebrates you.

### **Theme music**

**Mary Barroll:** Charity Village is proud to be the Canadian source for nonprofit news, employment, crowdfunding, e-learning, and so much more. You can find us online at [charityvillage.com](http://charityvillage.com).

In our next episode of CharityVillage Connects we explore how the recent seismic shift in the world of global aid, with the elimination of USAID funding has created giant ripple effects for Canadian charities working internationally. We look at where this important impact is being felt most, how organizations are adapting to it and what this means for Canada's future role in global development. I'm Mary Barroll, Thanks for listening.

**Sponsor's message:** Today's podcast is brought to you by WUSC. For more than 50 years, WUSC has been working alongside communities around the world to drive positive education and economic outcomes for young people.

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