

NEWSLETTER

“working towards food security in our communities”

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Editor: Kirsten Eastwood

Our Mission:

Increasing access to affordable nutritious food for all people in York Region by:

- Raising awareness and promoting change on food security issues in our communities
- Supporting community-based food security programs and services

Our Vision:

York Region Food Network's vision is food security in York Region.

Food security is the assurance that all people, at all times, have economic and physical access to the food they need for an active and healthy life.

This means that people must be able to acquire food in a way that upholds basic human dignity, and that the food must be nutritionally adequate, personally acceptable, and culturally appropriate.

Annual General Meeting

York Region Food Network welcomes members of the community to join us for our Annual General Meeting. The AGM will be held on Thursday May 12th, 2004 at 7:30 pm in the Main Boardroom of the Newmarket Health Centre, located at 194 Eagle Street, Newmarket.

It is a time to celebrate the work we have done during the last year and for the community to meet the Board of Directors and staff. Following a review of two discussion papers refreshments will be served. RSVP your attendance at the AGM by calling Kim at the YRFN offices at 905-967-0428 or 1-866-454-9736

King Township Food Bank

If there's no food bank, where do people go for help? This thought was the driving force behind the opening of the King Township Food Bank (KTFB). Concerned residents worried about their King Township neighbours who might be experiencing food insecurity; as a result, the KTFB opened its doors in January 2005.

KTFB has a central depot in Kettleby and distributes pre-packaged food hampers on the last Saturday of each month, from 9am to 11am. There are three distribution points: St. Mary Magdalene Anglican church in Schomberg, St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Nobleton and All Saint's Anglican Church in King City.

For more information on the King Township Food Bank please call 905-939-2314.



Food for Thought

Executive Director's Message

It has been seven months since I joined the York Region Food Network and writing this message provides me with the opportunity to reflect on what has happened in this period of time. My conclusion - how much we have achieved in those seven months!

In August 2004, YRFN launched the Back to School Backpack program. Together we helped to provide over 250 backpacks, filled with essential school supplies, to children of low income families. The distribution of the supplies took place through York Region Food Banks and Women's Centre of York Region.

Shortly thereafter, YRFN initiated a winter needs program to provide hot lunch supplies and high quality winter wear directly to low-income children. Winter Needs is also a new initiative for YRFN. The Community Development Investment Fund of the Regional Municipality of York funded both programs. Neither program would have been possible without the generous support of the Optimist Club, Zellers Aurora, Staples Aurora, and Oakridge Outfitters.

Through the launch of these innovative initiatives, I have come to realize that food banks no longer provide just food; as the working poor struggle to carry on, food banks are also providing basic necessities, such as school supplies, mittens and gloves.

The volunteers who work at our local food banks help so many individuals in our communities. Volunteering is the most fundamental act of citizenship in our society. It is an extension of being a good neighbour and has the ability to transform where we live into a community. It has been inspiring to meet YRFN's volunteers – those who build our communities. Thank you to all our volunteers for their hard work and support of the York Region Food Network.

Elizabeth Brims, Executive Director

Welcome!



Marilyn Howe
Food Drive Coordinator

York Region Food Network is pleased to introduce Marilyn Howe. Marilyn has accepted the position of Food Drive Coordinator for the annual Spring Food Drive. Prior to joining the YRFN team, Marilyn was a dedicated volunteer for the Food Network, helping with the distribution of back to school kits, winter needs items, and with the reallocation of food across York Region. Marilyn can be reached by e-mail at fooddrive@bellnet.ca or by leaving a message on the YRFN office voicemail.

We are also delighted to announce that Catherine Higham-Cook is returning as the YRFN Community Garden Coordinator. Prior to this role, Catherine was a community gardener with YRFN for many years. Catherine brings with her a wealth of experience and we look forward to another successful season at the community gardens. Catherine can be reached by e-mail at cgcyrfn@bellnet.ca or by leaving a message on the YRFN office voicemail.

Thank you!

York Region Food Network has been fortunate to establish numerous friendships and supporters over the past 19 years. These supporters have enabled us to undertake the many projects and services that make a difference to so many people. We would like to thank the following corporate sponsors for their on-going support:

Bailey Metal Products
Instant Custom Signs, Brampton
605485 Ontario Ltd.
Oakridge Outfitters Clothing Company
Olivia Chocolates
Staples Business Depot, Aurora
Zellers, Aurora

There are also a large number of agencies and organizations that have provided funds or project support for a variety of YRFN initiatives in 2005. YRFN would like to acknowledge and thank the following organizations:

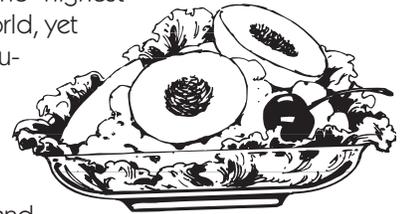
MAZON Canada, a Jewish Response to Hunger
Tom's of Maine
Optimist Club
Ontario Trillium Foundation
The Regional Municipality of York:
Community Development Investment Funds (CDIF)
and Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative (SCPI) funding

We are also grateful to the Community Resources Department of the United Way of York Region for their role in supporting YRFN.

Food security – it is a basic right for all Canadians

By Tracy Woloshyn, Public Health Nutritionist, York Region Health Services.

Canada enjoys one of the highest standards of living in the world, yet over 10 percent of our population, approximately 3 million people, cannot count on a healthy diet. They lack the funds to purchase sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary



needs and food preferences for an active healthy life. In other words, these Canadians experience food insecurity. In a position statement released in March 2005, Dietitians of Canada (DC), which represents 5,000 dietitians in Canada, calls for improvements in the social safety net in order to address the root cause of individual and household food insecurity: poverty.

Households most at risk for food insecurity include one-parent families, especially those with children under the age of 13, those receiving social assistance, those who rent their dwellings, and Aboriginal people living off reserves. "Research consistently demonstrates that individuals in food-insecure households are at increased nutritional risk and have poorer health," says Elaine Power, professor at Queens University and author of the DC position paper. "Lack of money makes it more difficult to purchase foods required to manage medical conditions, leading further to poor health."

Governments, the volunteer and private sectors, as well as public health personnel have responded to food insecurity in various ways: charitable food distribution such as food banks (which do not receive any government support); community kitchens; food skills workshops; and school and community feeding programs. While well-meaning, all of these approaches have inherent limitations, since many rely on volunteer labour, donations and good will, which are almost always inadequate to meet the demand. Moreover, food banks may be difficult to access by those in need due to location and transportation limitations. As well, food may be of poor quality, selection and quantities may be limited, and the food may not meet nutritional needs or suit dietary modifications required because of health concerns.

Some of the strategies to bring about change to combat poverty are the following:

- Advocate for public policy that ensures families have adequate financial resources to purchase sufficient, safe and nutritious food. These policies include improving social assistance and minimum wage rates, establishing affordable housing policies, eliminating the Canada Child Tax Benefit claw back for families receiving social assistance, improving employment insurance coverage and benefits and providing accessible and affordable child care. Such policies would strengthen the social safety net and promote better health of the population.

- Vote and vote wisely. Political parties espousing policies to cut taxes and privatize services invariably cut the social programs on which food-insecure people depend. Ask electoral candidates where they stand on these issues.

Educate yourself about the issues and processes to achieve food security through social change. Begin by reading the Dietitians of Canada position paper "Individual and Household Food Insecurity in Canada" available at www.dietitians.ca/news/highlights_positions.asp.

Emergency Food Programs

By Elizabeth Bishenden

This year's Survey of People Accessing Emergency Food Programs has been a resounding success! The survey is done in cooperation with Daily Bread Food Bank, North York Harvest and the Social Assistance in the New Economy Project at the University of Toronto. We've had an amazing group of new volunteers here in York Region; this year twenty-two people participated in the training and survey process for the YRFN. It's a tough task to sit down with a food bank client and ask about many personal and private matters. The emotions that these interviews bring out can be difficult ones, and the volunteers in York Region have been wonderful, giving each food bank client interviewed the opportunity to voice their opinions.

In York Region, we have exceeded our 2005 goal of completing 119 surveys at 7 food banks, and we're well on our way to developing a good picture of the many issues food bank users face each day in the region. Data from the survey doesn't stay with the YRFN; we'll use it to inform politicians, the media, and the public about what it is like to live in York Region and depend on food banks. It will be used in the YRFN's work to ensure that no one goes hungry in the future. This project of surveying the food bank clients will continue in future years, and work is already underway to make the survey even better for 2006.

3rd Annual Charity Golf Tournament

By Terry O'Brien, Chair

On September 21, 2005, York Region Food Network will be hosting the 3rd Annual Charity Golf Classic in support of local food security programs.

The YRFN Charity Golf Classic will once again be held at the beautiful Silver Lakes Golf and Country Club. The tournament promises to be a great day of golf, fun, prizes, and fund-raising. All proceeds from the day will go toward programs to improve access to affordable, nutritious food for all people in York Region.

As a local, registered charitable organization, we are looking for support from the community to ensure the success of our event. You can help with this event in a variety of ways such as sponsoring a hole, donating a prize, or volunteering on the day.

We believe that with your help, we can make a difference in our community. If you are able to support YRFN's golf tournament, please contact Terry O'Brien, Charity Golf Classic Chair at 905-967-0428, or yrfn@bellnet.ca.



Ready, set, grow!

By Catherine Cook, Community Garden Coordinator

Some of our more ambitious gardeners have already begun to plant seedlings indoors in anticipation of the upcoming growing season. I'm counting on good weather early in May so that our gardeners can get to their soil, once they have registered for their plots.



Registration dates are scheduled for the third week in May and are as follows:

Returning gardeners

Aurora Community Garden	Tuesday May 17th 7 – 8:30 pm
Newmarket Community Garden	Wednesday May 18th 7 – 8:30 pm
Markham Community Garden	Thursday May 19th 7 – 8:30 pm

New gardeners

Aurora Community Garden	Friday May 20th 7 – 8:30 pm
Newmarket Community Garden	Saturday May 21st 9 – 10:30 am.
Markham Community Garden	Saturday May 21st 12.30 – 1:30 pm

All registrations will take place at your respective community garden. If you have any questions concerning the upcoming season, please contact me by phone at (905) 967-0428 or 1 866 454-9736 or e-mail at cgyrfn@bellnet.ca. I look forward to seeing all of you in May and wish you a successful growing season.

AS THE PLOT THICKENS



Matthew & David Cook

Gleaning Program – access to fresh fruit and vegetables at no cost!

By Karen Aagaard and Fae Chen



Packed into a yellow school bus, balancing boxes and baskets on their knees, gleaners gather with children in tow. The bus lurches forward as the driver shifts the vehicle into gear, barreling down Davis Drive in Newmarket, Ontario. Soon, traffic lights and noisy cars are replaced with strawberry bushes and muddy boots. In about twenty minutes, empty baskets are filled with fresh, farm-picked strawberries.

The Gleaning Program was established in 1999 by Fresh Food Partners, which is comprised of representatives from York Region Health Services, York Region Food Network, and community agencies and members. This innovative program enables families living in York Region – primarily those living on a limited income – to pick or “glean” their own fresh produce at no cost. At the end of the harvesting season, local York Region farmers invite these families to pick fruits and vegetables that would otherwise go to waste or be plowed under. As a result, gleaning participants are able to enjoy excellent quality strawberries, apples, corn, peppers, zucchini, squash, tomatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage.

Gleaning participants bring their children along to help out in the field. This provides a great opportunity for children to learn where their food actually comes from.

The gleaning participants want to provide their families with

fresh and nutritious produce produce that they otherwise could not afford. What appears, at first glance, to be a simple program, is a little more complex when all pieces of the program puzzle are pulled apart.

There are essentially three pieces of the puzzle: the providers (the local farmers and their families), the task group (those who organize, implement, and fund the program), and the gleaners (those who participate in produce-picking). It is only when all three puzzle pieces communicate with each other, that the Gleaning Program can take place. In 2004, Fresh Food Partners hosted nine



gleaning trips. Over 215 people participated and they gleaned over \$5000.00 of fresh produce.

After an hour of gleaning, the gleaners are back on the yellow school bus. This time, the empty baskets are filled with luscious strawberries. Their sweet smell filters through the air. Conversation is taking place and recipes are being exchanged. As the final destination is reached, gleaners are tired but excited, and looking forward the next trip.

We are always looking for volunteers to help glean for food banks and meal programs. If you would like more information or would like to volunteer, please call Fae Chen at 905-895-4512, ext. 4339.



Join the YRFN's Fundraising Campaign

I support the YRFN's work to improve access to affordable, nutritious food for all people of York Region.

I have enclosed my donation of _____ \$15 _____ \$25 _____ \$35 _____ other.

Cheques should be made payable to York Region Food Network YRFN will issue a charitable tax receipt for all donations over \$10.

Name: _____

Address: _____

To donate by credit card, visit our website at www.yrfn.ca, and click on the link to CanadaHelps.org; a secure website where you can make a tax-deductible credit card donation to YRFN. Your privacy is important to us, and we are committed to protecting and safeguarding your personal information. We do not rent, sell or trademark our mailing list, but rather use it to keep you informed of York Region Food Network's activities, services, and programs. Please contact our office to update your information or to be removed from the mailing list.



194 Eagle Street, Newmarket, Ontario L3Y 1J6

Phone: 905-967-0428 Toll Free: 1-866-454-YRFN (9736) Fax: 905-967-0097

Email: yrfn@bellnet.ca www.yrfn.ca

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