

York Region

**Food
Network**



Annual General Report

(for the fiscal period ending December 31, 2006)

2006 in Review

A message from Graham Woodward, Chair

Our vision is to ensure that all residents of York Region are food secure. Food security is the assurance that all people at all times are able to acquire nutritional food in a way that upholds basic human dignity.

Our mission is to increase access to affordable, nutritious food for York Region residents. York Region Food Network will:

- Raise awareness and promote food security issues and policy change in our communities.
- Support community-based food security programs and services.

Board of Directors and Staff for 2006

Officers:

Graham Woodward, Chair
Rosanne Rodgers, Secretary
Linda Alderson, Treasurer

Directors

Rick Albert
Cathie Cappuccitti
Marie Jennerich
Lewis Nastasi
Tracy Woloshyn, Advisory Member

Staff

Elizabeth Brims
Executive Director
Kim Arseneault
Administrative Coordinator
Catherine Cook
Program Coordinator
Terry O'Brien
Corporate Liaison

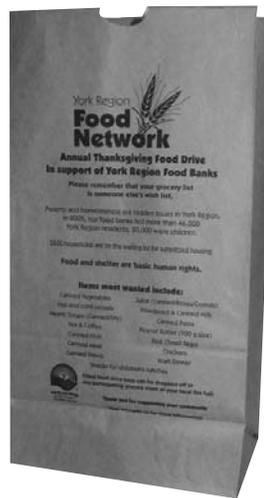
The past year reaffirmed that hunger is a real and growing concern in York Region. While the Region has a whole has prospered and grew 22% from 2001 to 2006, food banks use risen almost 40% and additional food banks have opened in King City and with a supplementary service offered by the Salvation Army in Newmarket. While food bank demand has risen, donations have been in steady decline from over 1 pound per resident in 1992 to about one quarter of a pound per resident in 2006, two of our three community gardens were threatened by Municipal property changes, and indications continued to surface that you and I are only one unfortunate event, such as job loss or illness, away from hunger.

Fortunately the past year also reaffirmed that YRFN has a board, staff, and volunteers who are passionate and committed to reversing the current trends. When the community gardens in Aurora and Newmarket were threatened due to lands sales and development, YRFN staff secured a commitment from both of the Towns that the gardens would be appropriately relocated. As well, staff continue to expand our funding base, allowing for the enhancement of existing programs and the development of new ones. When faced with the growing pressure on food banks, board members

and staff gave their weekends and weeknights to formulate and implement longer term strategies to address the Region's hunger problems, including plans for expansion of the community garden programs and further efforts in the areas of public education and government advocacy. It is unacceptable that anyone in our community should go hungry in a region of such obvious and growing wealth.

York Region Food Network's greatest asset is its people. I thank the numerous volunteers who are essential to the operation and improvement of our programs. I thank our board members, Cathie,

Jacqui, Lewis, Linda, Marie, Rick, Roseanne, and Tracy for their unfailing commitment to ending hunger in York Region. And I thank YRFN staff, Catherine, Elizabeth, Kim, and Terry for another year of exceptional work. It is a great pleasure to work with so many people who refuse to accept the status quo and inspire me to do the same.



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...the voice of hunger in York Region

Financial Report

Linda Alderson, Treasurer

"Of all the preposterous assumptions of humanity, nothing exceeds the criticism made of the habits of the poor by the well-housed, well-warmed and well-fed." (Herman Melville, American novelist 1819 - 1891) This observation is as relevant today as in the 1800's. The truth in the observation can be seen in our own community as the working poor continue to eek out a life beyond simple survival while the majority of our politicians and well-placed residents continue to ignore the reality for many of their neighbours. Their inability to embrace new and more realistic economic models on which to base policy and funding decisions continues to create a need for agencies such as York Region Food Network.

As the gap between the rich and the poor grows wider resulting in an increase in the number of people who require financial assistance in our communities, our challenge is that we are seeking financial support from a rapidly decreasing pool of resources. We recognize that there are many worthy agencies seeking support from individuals and corporations. We are extremely grateful for the financial contributions received. We could not make the favourable impact within York Region without these contributions.

YRFN held two very successful fund raising events in 2006. It has been decided to reserve the gross amount raised at these events to be used against future unforeseen shortfalls in government and/or public funding. Should YRFN fail to obtain sufficient funding for a particular program and administration to support the program, the funds from the reserve will ensure the program remains in place until alternative measures can be taken to secure funding.

As stated in previous years' reports but cannot be repeated enough, the work of YRFN is greatly dependent on the dedication of the staff and volunteers working in all programs. It is only with the continued co-operation and dedication of all these people that YRFN can help ensure all residents of York Region have access to affordable and nutritious food while raising awareness so that one day there might indeed be the will of the people transformed into the deeds of the politicians and no one in York Region will be left with the choice between clothing their children or feeding them.



Program Report

Catherine Cook

Community Gardens

In 2006, 164 families and 7 service groups participated in YRFN's three community gardens. The gardens are located in Newmarket, Aurora and Markham and are made possible with the generous support of the Region of York, the Town of Aurora and a private donor.

We welcomed 47 new gardeners and 3 new service groups to York Region Food Network. Both our Newmarket and Aurora Community Gardens operated at capacity. At the Markham Community Garden, 83 of the 90 available plots were utilized. Seven plots were unassigned due to inferior growing conditions.

In support of our community gardens Miller Compost generously donated \$8,300 in compost. Additional in-kind donations were received from 11 companies and 3 private donors representing a total a value of \$10,788.64 in contributions.

Community Support Programs

Backyard Gardening

The Backyard Gardening Kit program delivered 73 gardening kits throughout the region. This marks a 10% increase over distribution totals in 2005. While the bulk of the gardening kits were distributed to the Public Health ABC Program, the Georgina Food Pantry and the Jackson's Point Cooperative also received kits for distribution.

Back-to-School Backpack Program

The Backpack Program met the needs of all participating food banks and the Women's Centre of York Region through the delivery of 375 backpacks and school supplies across York Region. Dymin Steel Incorporated, IKEA Vaughan, The Optimist Club Aurora, Wesley United Church, Healing Hands Chiropractic and Wellness Centre and residents throughout York Region played a critical role in donating backpacks and school supplies to support this program.

Food Bank Support

The 2006 Spring Food Drive brought in a total of 94,759 pounds of food while the Fall Food Drive brought in a total of 154,846 pounds of food. An additional 14,255 pounds of food was accumulated over the 2005 poundage totals.

Volunteers

York Region Food Network programs depend on volunteer support. In 2006, 220 volunteers contributed a total of 1715.5 volunteer hours in support of YRFN programs. The total number of volunteers in 2006 increased by 9 percent over the previous year and the number of volunteer hours also increased by 9 percent.



Fundraising & Corporate Relations

Terry O'Brien

This past year has seen increased support from every segment of the local community. Revenues and contributions from private and corporate sectors continue to grow reducing York Region Food Network's dependence on short-term government funding. This is in line with the long-term objective of developing sustainable community support.

YRFN's three major fundraising events produced gross revenues of \$46,000 in 2006 – an all time high more than tripling 2005 efforts! Plans are already underway to review the timing and effectiveness of the fundraising events in order to develop an overall strategy for future growth. Some of the issues that need to be addressed are current resources, donor burnout, event overlap, and our ability to reach new patrons in every area of the region. Fundraising also needs to be examined in context with other revenue sources such as direct donations, program support, gifts-in-kind, and private foundation applications.

Other significant developments in revenue include a 64% increase in corporate donations, plus an increase of 187% in individual donations. Direct website donations have rocketed, and overall reliance on government funding has dropped from 88% to 50% in four short years.

The Food Drive Bag initiative, two-thirds funded by the United Way of York Region, gained essential support from the YRNG (York Region Newspaper Group). On very short notice they were able to distribute close to a quarter-million bags through The Era-Banner, The Liberal, Economist & Sun, Sun-Tribune, and the Advocate. Their phenomenal support resulted in a dramatic increase in fall food donations. Ongoing, this gift-in-kind will save YRFN over \$23,000 a year and fuel essential awareness of our organization and its programs!

An integral part of operations, Gifts-in-Kind provide critical resources for YRFN. Donated goods and services encompass everything from compost for our community gardens, to thousands of volunteer hours, to farm land for gleaning, to regional food drive bag distribution, to website design, to prizes for fundraising events. Gifts-in-Kind are on the rise in every facet of our operations and will continue to be an important part of YRFN programs and events.

Over the course of the past year over 4,000 individuals and companies were contacted in some way. Attending functions such as municipal Chambers of Commerce events and involving Community Groups in fundraising events has resulted in hundreds of direct contacts with considerable results.

One thing is clear - York Region Food Network has momentum. Recognition and exposure has never been better. This in turn has not only increased revenues, but has also attracted a number of influential members of the community to join our newly formed Corporate Advisory Council which has its inaugural meeting in February 2007. The council will meet three times a year and be made up of individuals with active and ongoing experience in the corporate community.

Purpose of the YRFN Corporate Advisory Council

- *To assist York Region Food Network in networking with the corporate community, explore ways of gaining long term and sustainable support, and suggest how to communicate more effectively to create awareness around hunger and poverty issues in York Region.*
- *To provide input on YRFN financial and business strategies as requested by the Board of Directors and in support of the YRFN's mission.*

Over the course of the past year we have generated a great deal of interest and excitement around the programs and goals of YRFN, and with this awareness will come a desire from the community to help and participate. We have also seen that assistance from the community can come in many forms. It is not difficult to see a direct link between increased exposure and the dramatic mushrooming of website donations at Christmas. Developing exposure and nurturing support will be critical for the ongoing success and influence of the York Region Food Network.



Thanks to the Food Network's 2006 Contributors

York Region Food Network thanks the 212 individual donors who donated \$36,492 to support the operations and administration of York Region Food Network. Without your support, day-to-day operations would be impossible.

Also thank you to the following donors for their support of York Region Food Network:

Corporate

605485 Ontario Limited
ACE Bakery Limited
Burton Communications Cabling
Dymin Steel Inc.
Everest Supply Inc.
Fenn Company
Instant Custom Signs - Brampton
King Creek Farm
Labatt Breweries of Canada
Monteith Baker & Johnston
Pinnacle Roofing Consultants Inc.

Foundations/Organizations

Junior League of Toronto
Ontario Trillium Foundation
United Way of York Region

Government

Regional Municipality of York, SCPI
and CDIF Funding

Community Partners

Artisan Screen Print Ltd.
Association of Chinese Evangelical
Ministries (Canada)
Canadian Children's Theatre Co.
Canadian Mental Health Association
York Region
Knights of Columbus (Aurora)
Ontario Massage Therapist Association
Ontario SPCA
Queen's York Rangers Army Cadet Corps
Richmond Hill Chinese Community Church
Rose of Sharon
St. Andrews Presbyterian Church
St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Thornhill Secondary School
Union Street Women's Institute
Unionville High School
York Highlands Chorus

In-Kind Support

AGS Contract Glazing Limited
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Alwind Industries Ltd.
Andy Dislich - RE/MAX Omega Realty
Angeline Navarra - R.M.T.
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Karat Club
Lasair Laser and Advanced Skin Care
Lisa Palmer Design
Little Caesars Pizza Newmarket
L'Oreal Professionnel, Toronto

Makeup Artistry by Rita Stripe
Mark's Choice Ltd.
Markville Toyota
Metroland Media Group Inc. (YRNG)
National Car Rental
Northlands Printing Inc.
Not Just Cards - Hallmark
NYC Accessories
Nygard International
Olivia Chocolates
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