



Food Bank Support



Community Gardens



Fresh Food Partners: Gleaning Program

The Year in Review

A message from Terry O'Brien, Chair

It is my pleasure to report on a very successful year for the York Region Food Network. The organization has initiated a number of exciting new programs, improved program funding, and firmly established itself as the voice of hunger within the community.

New initiatives such as the Back to School program and the Winter Needs program assisted children of low-income families during very critical times of the year. Both programs were enormously successful and will be expanded with the help of corporate sponsors.

A number of unforeseen circumstances this past spring resulted in unusually low collections during the food drive. The YRFN has decided to explore a new event called Stuff-The-Bus to address the chronic summer food shortages at local Food Banks, plus raise awareness of hunger issues in the Region. This past year sees the opening of food banks in King Township, which will be added to future food drives and the collection of regional statistics.

A record number of food bank client surveys were completed this year, and the detailed information collected will assist and inform regional politicians, media, and the public. The ongoing surveys, and plans for a new website, are just a small part of a broad communications strategy in place for next year. The intention is not only to provide more awareness and visibility of food security and hunger issues in York Region, but also to generate action on a regional basis.

Fundraising and sponsorship activities continue to grow, and our program funding is on track. However our biggest challenge is to secure ongoing core funding. This will be a priority for the coming year, essential to the future of the York Region Food Network.

I would like to thank staff members Elizabeth Brims (Executive Director), Marilyn Howe (Food Drive Coordinator), Catherine Cook (Garden Coordinator), and Kim Arseneault (Administrative Coordinator) for the excellent work accomplished over the past year. The entire board is looking forward to another successful year with them. Board member and past food drive coordinator Dan Ciriani as well as Board Members Lynn Catton and Esther Templin have left the Network due to other commitments. Their contributions over the years have been greatly appreciated by the Board and the Food Banks of the Region. We will miss them.

We have two new Board members to welcome; Linda Alderson, Treasurer and Graham Woodward, Director.

The staff, board members, and countless volunteers and partners of the YRFN are to be congratulated for the year's many accomplishments. Personally, I look forward to working with all of you in the upcoming year.

Respectfully,

Terry O'Brien

Terry O'Brien
Chair

YRFN – the voice of hunger in York Region

Food for thought

A message from the Executive Director

The York Region Food Network is comprised of individuals and organizations that work together to implement and support community based initiatives that provide access to nutritious food for all people in need in York Region. Together we have taken on the challenge to raise awareness of food security issues and promote actions for change in York Region through education and advocacy, and encourage the development of public policy that promotes increased food security. This is not an easy task as the existence of hunger, poverty and homelessness in York Region is often misunderstood and many believe that these are 'big city' issues only. However, as food bank use continues to grow, we must all recognize that food banks are no longer providing just food; as the working poor struggle to carry on, food banks are also providing basic necessities to York Region residents.

Together we can and we do make a difference to so many individuals in our community. I see it every day in the volunteers who work to support YRFN's programs and initiatives. Volunteering is the single 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. Thank you to all the York Region Food Network volunteers for their tremendous support in 2004.

Respectfully,

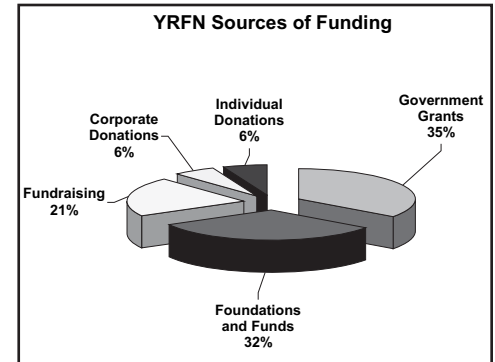
Elizabeth Brims

Elizabeth Brims,
Executive Director

Financial Report

Linda Alderson, CA, YRFN Treasurer

The York Region Food Network was fortunate during 2004 to receive continued support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. In addition, new support was obtained from the Regional Municipality of York and Human Resources Development Canada through the Community Development Initiative Fund (CDIF) and Supporting Community Partnerships Initiatives (SCPI). The success of our annual fund raising events can also be seen in the amount of money raised.



Adherence to expenditure budgets set for programs such as the back-to-school back packs and community gardens meant that net revenues earned from fund raising events and donations were available for general administration. It is due to the conscientiousness and efficiencies of the three staff members and countless hours from volunteers that the administration costs continue at acceptable levels.

It is encouraging and exciting that we enter 2005 with increased financial resources as seen in our bank balance. These funds, combined with the continued dedication of the Board and staff of the Food Network and the tireless efforts of volunteers will help ensure all residents of York Region have access to affordable and nutritious food.

2004 Highlights

Partnership

York Region Food Network continues to work with Food for Learning and Fresh Food Partners on community based programs such as breakfast clubs and gleaning trips.

In 2004, with the support of YRFN, Fresh Food Partners hosted nine gleaning trips. Over 215 people participated and they gleaned over \$5000 of fresh produce that would have otherwise gone to waste or plowed under.



Gleaning Trip Participant

2004 Highlights Continued...

Community Gardens

The 2004 community gardening season started with Aurora gardeners awaiting the news of a new garden site. The Town of Aurora granted permission to use the Crescentbrook Farm daycare site at the corner of Allura and Edward. The



Newmarket and Markham community gardeners faced far less tension although some could hardly wait to see the compost delivered. The annual donation and delivery of Millar compost has become the first sign of the new season and a symbol of promise for our gardeners.

In May the three gardens opened to the enthusiasm of 142 families and 4 service groups. That same month the Backyard Gardening Kit program expanded to include Woodbridge and Richmond Hill participants. The Food Network was delighted to receive funding to hire a summer student who assisted the Community Garden Coordinator with various garden related projects.



Community Garden Donation to the local Food Bank

Throughout the season, gardeners were invited to attend education workshops, open houses, recognition ceremonies, conferences and media events. Gardeners were also encouraged to lend a helping hand. By the end of the season an astounding 1116.5 volunteer hours were contributed by our gardeners and friends of the garden. Not only did our community gardeners display a warm heart when it came to volunteering their time but they also showed their generous spirit donating much needed fresh produce to the local food banks.

Three gardeners, and Catherine Cook, Community Garden Coordinator, attended the annual American Community Garden Conference in Toronto. They were inspired by fellow gardeners who had traveled across the globe to attend, and to learn about different community gardens. Workshops on healing gardens, school gardens, and greening communities were presented. At the Conference, York Region Food Network received a grant designated for the operation of the Aurora Garden. The funds will be used in 2005 to improve the compost and irrigation systems.

Public Education and Advocacy

Semi-annually YRFN publishes a newsletter providing a snapshot on food security issues in York Region. As well, the Food Network coordinates the collection of statistics on food bank use and, in coordination with Daily Bread Food Bank YRFN conducts a survey of food bank clients in York Region. In 2004, YRFN found that 30% of all survey respondents are employed either on a casual, part-time or full-time basis and that 6% of survey respondents are retirees.

Facts such as these enable YRFN to obtain support for other initiatives that in turn, assist in elimination of poverty and hunger for York Region residents. As well, YRFN representatives participate in community coalitions such as the Inn From the Cold and the York Region Alliance to End Homelessness and advocate on behalf of vulnerable populations.

Food Bank Support

YRFN continues to coordinate regional food drives in partnership with York Region food banks. In 2004, over 230,000 pounds of food were collected in the bi-annual drives. Throughout the year, YRFN provided information to various community groups organizing ad hoc food drives in support of local food banks.

With financial support from the Community Development Investment Fund (CDIF), YRFN piloted a back to school backpack program. This initiative provided basic school supplies, directly to low income children through the food banks. Highly successful, the backpack program increased the self-esteem and confidence of at-risk children, reduced financial and emotional stress for parents unable to provide



Back to school program.

back to school supplies and lessened the need for low-income families to take funds from their food budget to purchase required school supplies. As well, York Region Food Network purchased capital items, such as outdoor signs, desks, shelving and plastic food bags for the food banks.

Board of Directors and Staff for 2005

Officers:

Terry O'Brien, Chair
Elizabeth Bishenden, Secretary
Linda Alderson, Treasurer

Directors:

Cathie Cappuccitti
Lewis Nastasi
Rosanne Rodgers
Graham Woodward
Tracy Woloshyn,
Advisory Member

Staff Members:

Elizabeth Brims
Executive Director
Catherine Higham-Cook,
Community Garden Coordinator
Marilyn Howe
Food Drive Coordinator
Kim Arseneault
Administrative Coordinator

York Region Food Network would like to extend sincere thanks and best wishes to *Lynn Catton*, *Esther Templin* and *Dan Ciriani* for their hard work and dedication as Directors of the Board during 2004. As well the Board and staff extend heartfelt thanks and appreciation to *Lisa DiSera* for her commitment and dedication to the Food Network as the outgoing Executive Director.

Recognition:

Brown Bag Recipients:

Dan Ciriani
Marilyn Howe

Certificate of Appreciation:

Lisa DiSera

Thanks to the Food Network's 2004 Contributors

The York Region Food Network thanks the following funders and donors for their generous support during 2004. We would also like to acknowledge the significant contributions made by more than 120 individual donors.

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MAZON Canada,
a Jewish Response to Hunger
Ontario Trillium Foundation

Government

The Regional Municipality of
York Region,
CDIF and SCPI funding

In Kind Support and Community Partners

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Ecogenesis
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Millar Compost
Oakridge Outfitters
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Town of Aurora
Town of Newmarket
Treasures
Weston Produce
Yard Works 4 Life
Zellers Aurora



the voice of hunger in York Region