

York Region

Food Network



JUNE 2006

NEWSLETTER

York Region Food Network is pleased to announce the receipt of two community grants.

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.

4th Annual Charity Golf Classic

Mark September 14th in your calendar as the date of YRFN's 4th annual golf tournament at Silver Lakes Golf & Country Club! We are delighted to have Shoeless Joe's, Sharon as our corporate sponsor. Call 905-967-0428 to book your foursome!

Thank you!

Editor: Kirsten Eastwood



ACE Bakery Ltd. has provided YRFN with a community grant to support the development of a Community Kitchen program in York Region. A Community Kitchen is a small group of people who get together once or twice a month to prepare meals for themselves and their families. YRFN's program focuses on using low cost items to prepare delicious meals.

The Junior League of Toronto has provided a seed grant to support the Fresh Food Partners' Gleaning Program. This grant will be specifically used to offset the transportation costs associated with the gleaning program.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our new community partners.



Food for thought

Executive Director's Message

Ask anyone what hunger is and they will explain it to you. Everyone understands hunger. Ask that same group of people what food security is and the answers might conjure up images of strictly guarded food!

There are over 200 definitions of food security. Despite this, understanding what food security is can be difficult. Food security is a concept that stretches beyond measures of hunger and food availability. Put simply, food security is freedom from hunger. The more complex definition of food security is when people have enough nutritious food to focus on other needs and are free to enjoy a healthy and active life.

York Region Food Network is an agency that focuses on food security. Our mission is to increase access to affordable, nutritious food for all York Region residents.

In 2005, York Region food banks fed over 46,000 people. As an agency we are outraged at the level of hunger and malnutrition in a region where food is plentiful. We live in Canada's fastest growing area and in a wealthy society; yet more than 20,000 children are hungry. What can we do?

We cannot continue to rely on overburdened and under stocked food banks. This spring the food drive gathered 73,100 pounds — **15%** less than the 90,000 pounds sought. Because the major beneficiary of food bank services in York Region are families with children, it follows that an increasing number of children — and their parents — will go hungry this summer, as the food banks run out of supplies. We thank you for your support and encourage you to continue to donate to York Region food banks over the summer months as we look at alternative methods to ease the shortfall.

Elizabeth Brims

...the voice of hunger in York Region

Community Gardening – The gift that keeps on giving

Program Coordinator's Message



I've always thought the term "Community Gardening" was so appropriate. Of course we are all drawn together to garden, but what makes our gardening so special is the sense of community that can be felt by new and old gardeners alike. This is the time of year when we see familiar faces that we haven't seen for months, get caught up on each other's lives, and tackle our gardens with early-season enthusiasm.

However "Community Gardening" just doesn't quite say it all. It's not just the friendly faces and frequent laughter that make our gardens a community; it's also the gift of giving.

In the first couple of weeks of gardening, I have had the opportunity to witness some wonderful gift exchanges.

- Gardeners gave of their time and effort to prepare the gardens for the season by staking the vegetable plots, weeding, and doing general maintenance repairs.
- Other gardeners volunteered by offering a friendly hello and assistance to new gardeners on the registration days.
- We've seen the gift of compost from Miller Compost, and even the gift of compost from one gardener to another – what better way for a community gardener to say they care than by sharing manure?
- If you had been at the right place at the right time, you too could have benefited from the gift of jumbo carrot seeds, contributed by a fellow gardener.

And of course we all know the giving won't end. Throughout the season, fellow gardeners will:

- Watch each other's plots when someone's on vacation;
- Pull weeds from the shared pathways;
- Share their expertise and stories of success and failure; and
- Of course, share their produce with the Food Bank to food banks.



They say gardening is good for the soul. If that is true, then Community Gardening is great for the soul.

Have a great gardening season, and don't forget to keep on giving – it's what makes our own little community even more special.

Catherine Cook

Food bank use in 2005

Graham Woodward, Research Coordinator, YRFN

- In 2005, York Region food banks fed 46,575 clients - an increase of 38% since 2001. This is projected to increase to over 48,000 by 2007.
- While food bank use continues to grow, food drive collection continues to decline – down 6% since 2002.
- An average of 3,882 individuals used a food bank each month, representing 0.6% of the population. ¹
- Two parent and single parent family use is increasing – 2.5% of York Region's single parent families use a food bank each month.
- Use by seniors has almost doubled since 2001 to over 100 people per month. The equivalent of 2% of the senior's population in York Region uses a food bank each year.

Where does this information come from?

Statistics are based on monthly utilization statistics collected by 7 of York Region's 8 food banks – Georgina Food Pantry, Newmarket Food Pantry, Aurora Food Pantry, Markham Food Bank, Richmond Hill Community Food Bank, King Township Food Bank, and Whitchurch-Stouffville Food Bank, as well as the Food Room at Women's Centre of York Region. **Vaughan Food Bank does not share their statistics with the YRFN.**

Revised tracking methods prevent comparison to years prior to 2001.

Why do we collect this information?

Food bank statistics provide valuable insights that are used for a variety of purposes:

- To increase awareness that food banks exist and how they operate (i.e. food banks are operated primarily by volunteers and are generally funded through private, charitable donations of both food and money);
- To monitor demographic trends in clients, which helps both the food banks and other agencies to plan services appropriately;
- To develop programs that improve access to nutritious foods. Tracking who requires a food bank can assist social service agencies in developing programs to improve access to healthy food (i.e. if half of all food bank users are children, programs can be developed to address this need);
- To influence social policies by informing politicians and key decision-makers.
- To use when applying for community project funding for YRFN programs such as the Back to School Backpack and Winter Needs programs.

What we do not know - the true extent of the hunger problem in York Region?

These statistics provide insight into the number of people at risk or who are food insecure, but underestimate the extent to which hunger is a problem in York Region. There are many more people having difficulty accessing food, going hungry or at risk of going hungry, than can be estimated using food bank statistics. A recently published list of reasons why people may not access food banks includes inadequate amounts of donated food, geographic fragmentation, and failure to meet ethnic or nutritional adequacy. ²

How many people receive food assistance through other means?

There are many additional agencies in York Region that provide

¹ Population of York Region excluding Vaughan

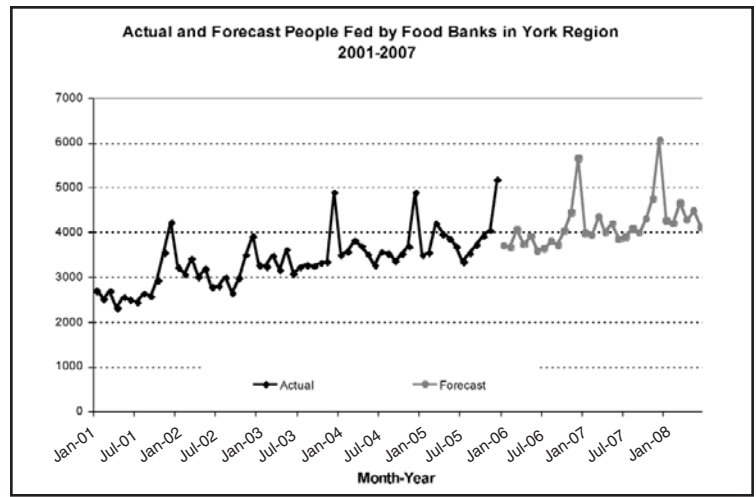
emergency food assistance to people who are experiencing food insecurity (e.g. faith communities, food voucher programs, closed or targeted programs at social service agencies, “Soup Kitchens” and other meal programs). The number of people who receive these services and the service volumes are not captured in this report.

Why are people going hungry?

Tracking the number of people who use food banks, along with limited demographic characteristics tells only one part of the “story”. The reasons why people are going hungry and need to access food from food banks are not reflected in these statistics.³

² Individual and Household Food Insecurity in Canada. Position of Dietitians of Canada. Copyright 2005. Dietitians of Canada.

³ YRFN carries out an annual food bank user survey to help answer this question. Results are available later in the year.



The Poverty Game

Elizabeth Bishenden, YRFN Volunteer

In 2005, the York Region Food Network and York Region Public Health partnered to update the Poverty Game, which was originally developed in Dawson Creek, British Columbia. The Poverty Game came to Ontario with the development of the second edition, in 1986 by Penny Monkman, Garth Tyler-Neher, Joyce Tyler-Neher and Branching Out Community Needs Society. Taking the Poverty Game to youth groups became the YRFN’s 2005 Food Security Event Program, and so far, four youth groups have spent an evening with YRFN volunteers, learning how poverty affects people in York Region.

To play the Poverty Game, each participant is given a new character. Information on that character’s identity card details his or her age, marital status, income, and expenses for food, shelter and laundry. Using a square playing board, the players roll dice and move around the board, with each side of the board representing one month. Income, in the form of play paper money, is given to each player at the beginning of the month, and expenses are paid weekly or monthly. With each roll of the dice, choices, chances, and emergencies arise, and each player tries to get through the month with a little money and some dignity left over.

“Thank you for the presentation you made at our Venturer Square Table meeting. The kids really enjoyed themselves and I am sure you left them with something to think about. I know they all enjoyed the snacks you brought.”
Ross Haagsma,
1st Aurora Venturers

Each character in the game is rather like someone you might meet at a food bank. Rita and her husband receive Ontario Works payments, but struggle to support their family of three. What happens if the brakes on the car that Rita’s husband uses to go to work need to be replaced? No choice! Paul is single and unemployed and he spends more than half of his income on rent. Does he want to go out for coffee with some friends? Choice! Marion is a single mom, unable to work because of disabilities. When the family dog is hit by a car, does she spend the money to save its life, or have it put down? Choice or no choice!

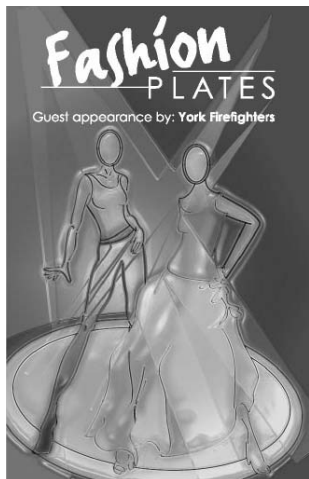
Good things happen in the Poverty Game, too. Jobs are found, gifts are received, and as the youthful players take on their characters, the different individuals think of ways to enjoy life without much money.

Winning isn’t part of the Poverty Game. Making choices, dealing with the problems handed to you, and understanding why many people living in poverty can’t escape their situations is what the game is really all about. York Region youth who have played the game with the YRFN’s

facilitators have spent quite a bit of time reflecting on the choices they’ve made for their character. How good does it feel to turn down every social invitation in order to save money? How does it look if someone takes you out for lunch, but you’ll never be able to reciprocate? What does it feel like to buy only second hand clothing? How does it feel to be out of money?

YRFN volunteers have enjoyed playing the Poverty Game with young people. The fresh ideas and different attitudes are interesting to watch. Understanding the way poverty works makes winners of all the players.





The Fashion Plates Fashion Show for the York Region Food Network was an overwhelming success. More than 350 women attended the event, presented by Creative Colours Fashions. Over \$8,700 was raised to support Food Network programs. We would like to thank you for your generous support. We look forward to seeing you next year!

Thank you to all of the event sponsors and contributors:

Event host

Creative Colours Fashions

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Signature dessert

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Chimes Hair Group, Aurora
L'Oréal Professionnel, Toronto

Makeup for models

Make-Up Artistry by Rita Stripe
Dolce Vita Publications, Vaughan

Balloon pop

Robert and Cindy Zimmerman

Catering for models

Chinook Restaurant, Aurora

Evening event support

Junior League of Toronto - Northern Branch

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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.



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