

FCC donates to elementary school nutrition program

By **Brian Lockhart**

You might have seen their tractor drawn trailer coming through your community to receive donations for local food banks.

Farm Credit Canada (FCC) does a yearly collection and then gives back to schools to help with local programs.

Laurelwoods Elementary School in Amaranth received \$1,000 from FCC to go towards its Food and Friends Breakfast Program.

Students at Laurelwoods helped to get donations for the last food drive.

“We partner with schools across the country as well as our customers who all contribute to Drive Away Hunger, which is a program we have been running for 13 years,” explained FCC Relationship Manager Sean Bingley. “For this school, we travelled from Grand Valley to Alliston on a tractor tour. We pull a trailer and they raise food here and we take it to a local food bank. Our tour usually gets 40 to 50 thousand pounds of food.”

Locally, donations are given to food banks in Grand Valley, Shelburne, Alliston, and Orangeville.

Since the event receives a considerable amount of donations the food is usually distributed to several food banks.

Other partners in the program also contribute various food items which can be distributed.

“One of our partners in the program gives 15,000 lbs of vegetables. We deliver that to the Barrie Food Bank because they are a hub for several rural food banks. They will deliver it and make sure it gets to people before it spoils,” Mr. Bingley explained.

Laurelwoods received the donation as part of an initiative the FCC started this year.

“Each office was able to select a school they partner with for Drive Away Hunger as a kick-off to our tour. We selected Laurelwoods because if you're here on the tractor tour it's quite exciting. They bring out all the kids on the track as the tour goes around.”

Mr. Bingley was representing the Thornton office of the FCC.

“This donation will go to our Student Nutrition Program,” said Laurelwoods student nutrition program coordinator Kate Bryan. “We feed an average of around 35 to 40 kids each day. They can come in for a hot meal ? cereal, milk, bagels, eggs. Some kids are here at 7:00 a.m. for a practice. It's a long time to 10:30 when they get their first nutrition break.”

The school program doesn't keep track of individual names of children who use the program to avoid any kind of negative connotation that could be associated with the program. Because of that, Ms. Bryan said the number of children taking part in the program has increased.

“Lots of kids use the program for different reasons,” Ms. Bryan explained. “Some kids have been on the bus for an hour. They just arrive and check off what they have taken and we keep track of that.”

The program also receives money through their own fundraising activities.