

Shelburne Food Bank buys new freezers for Food Rescue Program

Written By **Paula Brown**

Shelburne's local food bank is expanding its efforts to tackle rising food insecurity in the community with the purchase of three new freezers.

Shepherd's Cupboard Food Bank unveiled the new up-and-running freezers on Monday (June 24), which will be used to hold food items collected through their Food Rescue Program.

The food bank was able to purchase the freezers after applying with the Rotary Club of Shelburne for a grant from Farm Credit Canada and receiving a total of \$13,000.

"We are so thankful to be recognized as a worthy recipient for this grant so that we could serve our community better," said Ardith Dunlop, volunteer co-ordinator with the Shelburne Food Bank.

"It means everything to know that we can help in a significant way. We're partners with the food bank and most of what we do goes towards feeding our community - there's nothing more important than food. It's just one more thing that we could do to help feed local people," said Bobbi Ferguson, a member of the Shelburne Rotary Club.

The Food Rescue Program sees local businesses such as grocers and restaurants donate food items that are approaching their expiration and would typically be thrown away. These food items are donated to the food bank, which freezes them and later distributes them to clients. The food items donated are often dairy products, meats, and baked goods.

Shepherd's Cupboard Food Bank currently partners with five local businesses for the food rescue program including Foodland, No Frills, Mary Brown's Chicken, Starbucks and Cobbs Bread.

With the purchase of the three new freezers, Dunlop said the food bank will be able to "step up" its food rescue operations.

She explained that prior to purchasing the freezers, the food bank would often need to distribute the food within the day or week to clients to avoid it spoiling, but now with the new freezers, they will be able to store more food for longer.

The ability to store more food for longer periods of time is significant for the food bank as they see increasing demands for service.

According to statistics from 2022, the Shelburne Food Bank has 300 files consisting of 950 individuals from Shelburne, Melancthon, Mulmur and Amaranth. Of those clients, 68 per cent are from the Town of Shelburne.

The Food Bank also noted in 2023 they served between 225 to 250 families of which, 41 per cent were adults, 38 per cent were children and 21 per cent were seniors.

Dunlop and Ferguson said the food bank has seen a 600 per cent increase in the number of clients since 2017 when they served 41 families in the community.

"This is huge because it doesn't cost us and is extra that comes in that will allow a family to stretch their budget a lot more. We are able to give more to the clients in a month than we were before and we want to give them as much as possible because they can't possibly make it on their own," said Dunlop.

"It helps us to be able to help them cope," she concluded.