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Food Bank hits fundraising goal for food rescue van

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The Shelburne Food Bank, Shepherd's Cupboard, has reached its fundraising goal to purchase a food rescue van to help expand its efforts in tackling food insecurity in the community.

Ardith Dunlop, volunteer co-ordinator with the Shelburne Food Bank, told the Free Press on Jan. 2 that they surpassed their fundraising goal and collected more than $100,000 in donations through their sponsorship campaign.

?We're beyond thrilled and grateful to the community and these companies for stepping up so that we could go over our funding mark. We're anticipating the arrival of the van and what it's going to mean in terms of both acquisition and assisting in the work of the food bank,? said Dunlop. ?This is such a necessary tool for us to be able to collect the food that's needed, and to do the food rescue that ends up helping us at the food bank. We really wanted to wrap up this campaign so that we can focus back on what we're here to focus on, which is food.?

Shepherd's Cupboard Food Bank and the Rotary Club of Shelburne celebrated the official launch of their sponsorship campaign in July at Trillium Ford in Shelburne. The goal of the campaign was to help raise $100,000 to purchase a 2023 Ford E-Transit Cargo Van T-350 for the food bank.

The campaign saw local businesses choose from a selection of sponsorship tiers priced at $20,000, $10,000, $5,000, $2,500, and $1,000.

In October the Shelburne Food Bank announced they had surpassed the halfway mark of the fundraising campaign with $63,000 raised.

As the 2024 year came to a close, the Shelburne Food Bank received donations from four local organizations and businesses ? Town of Shelburne, Compass Run For Food, TransAlta and Shelburne Centre for Health ? which helped them surpass the fundraising goal.

?We were surprised that it came along as it did. You typically get to the three-quarter mark [fundraising] and it's much harder because you think most people who we're going to jump on, have already,? said Dunlop. ?Right before Christmas there were a couple of really great emails that came through wanting to jump on and support. It was wonderful.?

The Shelburne Food Bank has been floating the idea of purchasing a vehicle to help with pickups and deliveries of food for almost five years. Two of the biggest catalysts for the purchase are the rise of food insecurity in the community and the stress the demand has put on volunteers using their personal vehicles.

The Shelburne Food Bank uses a team of 10 volunteer drivers, who use their personal vehicles to pick up and transport purchased and donated food items.

According to the Shelburne Food Bank, in 2023 there were 936 trips taken by volunteers using their own vehicles.

The food bank noted the repeated usage and heavy loads have resulted in a number of blown tires, breakdowns, and wear and tear on volunteers' vehicles.

The Shelburne Food Bank has also seen a rise in the number of clients accessing its service with a 600 per cent increase since 2017,

when it served 41 families in the community.

According to statistics from 2023, the Shelburne Food Bank has 400 files consisting of over 1,000 individuals from Shelburne, Melancthon, Mulmur and Amaranth. Of those clients, nearly 70 per cent are from the Town of Shelburne.

The Food Bank also noted in 2023 they served between 225 to 250 families each month of which, 41 per cent were adults, 37 per cent were children and 17 per cent were seniors.

Dunlop said the local food bank is expecting to see a continued rise in the number of clients throughout 2025.

?The food bank is faced with making tough decisions in order to be sustainable for the 2025 year.?

The additional funds that helped the food bank surpass its $100,000 goal will be used to have the vehicle wrapped in sponsor logos, purchase vehicle insurance, and install winter tires.

?It will go into the account for the food bank and will be used towards whatever it is that the food bank needs,? said Dunlop.

The Shelburne Food Bank Food Rescue Van is slated to be up and operating in the community sometime between January and February.