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Free Ice Cream Day at Mel Lloyd Centre aims to bring joy and dignity to Shelburne families

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

On Wednesday, May 6, a mobile café will roll up to the Mel Lloyd Centre in Shelburne with a simple mission: give away as much free ice cream as possible.

The event is being organized by Make It Sweet Mobile Cafe, a growing local business that operates multiple ice cream trucks and mobile cafés in the community, owned by Jenny Jelen.

For this initiative, Make It Sweet is partnering with the Shelburne Food Bank, which operates from the Mel Lloyd Centre. Family Transition Place (FTP) also has a satellite office at the centre. Make It Sweet's ice cream truck will park right outside the building and offer free ice cream to everyone ? food bank clients, FTP clients, staff, and the general public. The goal is to create a welcoming atmosphere where anyone can enjoy a cone without feeling singled out or judged.m

Louise Marcoux Phillips, with the Shelburne Food Bank, said that anyone and everyone is welcome.

?This is open to as many people who want to come as possible, not just food bank clients,? she said. ?If anybody feels like an ice cream cone, they can come and get one for free.?

While every cone will be free, donations will be accepted. The event is designed to support the food bank and FTP by raising both funds and awareness, giving them a chance to reach more people who may need their services.

?Jenny is accepting donations, but of course, there is absolutely no expectation or pressure, just if you are able,? Phillips said. ?Part of the proceeds are going right to the food bank and Family Transition Place.?

For the Shelburne Food Bank, the timing and format are especially meaningful. The first Wednesday of the month is typically its busiest day, with dozens of clients coming through the doors. With demand continuing to increase due to a growing population and economic uncertainty, community support is needed now more than ever.

For those visiting a food bank, it can be an emotionally difficult experience, and maintaining dignity and privacy is crucial. By opening the event to the entire community and positioning it as a fun, public celebration, organizers aim to ensure that food bank users can enjoy the day without standing out.

?We want to make sure they feel comfortable and appreciated,? Phillips said. ?We have to do everything we can to protect their sense of pride and respect for themselves. No one will know where they're coming from, and that's really important.?

The hope is that a simple ice cream cone can offer not just a sweet treat but also a moment of joy, normalcy, and connection.

It's meant to remind everyone that they are part of a caring and supportive community.

For more info on the Shelburne Foodbank, call (519) 925-2600 or go to shelburnefoodbank.ca.

For more info on Family Transition Place's satellite office in Shelburne, which focuses on counselling, outreach and support services, go to familytransitionplace.ca or call (519) 942-4122.