

Local initiative offers customer a chance to buy meal for those in need

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Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Buy a meal and leave one for a stranger in need.

The Rotary Club of Shelburne helped launch a new initiative in the community on Tuesday (March 9) at Jelly Craft Bakery, called Feed It Forward Everyone Live in Freedom Everywhere.

Feed It Forward Everyone, Live in Freedom Everywhere (FIFE4LIFE) was started by Simcoe resident Pamela Stewart at the beginning of 2020, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative is a food program designed to offer free choice, and easily obtainable, cooked meals to all in need.

How the program works is, customers of restaurants participating in the program are able to purchase food items off the menu and instead of receiving the food they choose to pay it forward. A receipt for the meal is then left on the FIFE4LIFE board in the restraint for others in need to redeem. Restaurants, in designated towns, are approached by FIFE4LIFE and asked if they want to become part of the program.

'It doesn't cost the restaurant anything,' said Stewart. 'All the promotional materials are paid for and supplied so it's a way in which we can help the restaurants help feed people in need, and it's a win-win - the restaurants get the support they need right now in these troubling times.'

The idea for the program, Stewart said, came after she saw a story of a restaurant helping locals in need by offering them cooked meals.

'I thought 'wow, what a great thing to do' to actually get these people a cooked meal,' said Stewart. 'A week later the idea came to me and it was pretty life changing' within a month I had 20 restaurants signed up.'

Since launching the program in Alliston a year ago, the initiative has grown to include Beeton, Tottenham, Angus, Wasaga Beach, Collingwood, and now Shelburne.

The program made its way to Shelburne after Bill Waite, a member of the Rotary Club of Shelburne saw the program in Collingwood, where he lives.

'I thought 'what a great idea' and then I thought to myself, 'why don't we do something like that',' explained Waite. 'I reached out to the Club, they thought it was a great idea, Pamela thought it was a great idea, in fact Shelburne was next on the list.'

There are five restaurants in Shelburne participating, which include: Jelly Craft Bakery, Johnny's Pizza, The Duffy, Main Street Café, and Sunrise Dinner. The Rotary Club of Shelburne has donated \$75 in menu items to each of the restaurants to start the program off.

'When we reach out to people to ask them for help they're willing to help and a lot of them will say I didn't know there was a need or didn't know how to,' said Waite. 'It helps the restaurants help people in need, it helps people who want to give [find] a way to give.'

Lynnette Millman, a member of the Rotary also noted that with COVID-19 pandemic school food programs have been closed, and the Feed it Forward program can now offer students who might not be getting a meal at home something.

Restaurants involved in the program, will have a logo displayed in their window showing they are part of the FIFE4LIFE program. Patrons looking to buy a meal as part of the initiative can inform their server that they would like to purchase a meal for the Feed It Forward Program.

Any restaurants in the community interested in taking part FIFE4LIFE, can contact Sandra Gallagher from the Rotary Club of Shelburne at s.gallagher@hotmail.com