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Monthly message: Summer donations needed at the Shelburne Food Bank

This coming summer, the Shelburne Food Bank needs you!

Summer is approaching, and with it comes feelings of joy for many adults and children.

The school year is almost done, and children look forward to the more unstructured days of the summer, as families begin to make plans to enjoy the warmer weather together.

However, summertime is often a critical time at the food bank.

Donations typically decrease during summer and usage often increases as many clients struggle to feed their families without the support of the breakfast and lunch programs offered at schools. In fact, according to Feed Ontario, 69 per cent of Ontario Food Banks are concerned about having enough food to adequately provide support to those in need this year.

The Shelburne Food Bank struggles each summer to ensure client needs are met.

We are often asked what we need in terms of donations. Money is always the most useful as we can buy in bulk when prices are lower and make better purchases of necessary items for the hampers. Non-perishable items are always needed, in the quantity of 300 or more for each month.

Some of the items that go into hampers include:

? Canned goods ? vegetables, fruit, pasta sauce, soup, beans, fish, ham, pasta.

? Boxed items ? pancake mix, cereal, crackers, Kraft dinner, Jello, toilet paper, hamburger helper, cookies, instant potatoes and cake mix.

? Condiments ? pancake syrup, peanut butter, mayonnaise, ketchup, jam, salad dressing, barbecue sauce, Nutella and honey

We also do hygiene months where we give out laundry and dish detergent, toothpaste, deodorant, toothbrushes, body wash. The Shelburne Food Bank also does special months where it focuses on certain items like cooking oil, taco kits, etc.

We welcome sports teams, activity groups, families or individuals that collect donations to drop them off at the food bank so that they can see what it all entails. Other collection points are the Shelburne Public Library, No Frills, Foodland and Marg McCarthy Realty.

The Shelburne Food Bank also does Food Rescue or Food Reclamation from the grocery stores in town and collects food that has been frozen or donated before the best-before date, each week. This food goes into the food bank's freezers and is given out on the days the food bank is open. Weekly collections occur at Jimmy & Stef's No Frills, Foodland, Cobs Bread, Mary Browns Chicken and Starbucks.

The Shelburne Food Bank is also very lucky to be partnering with the Shelburne Horticultural Society again this year. Three years ago the town built us a large garden at Fiddle Park and they have taken the lead on planting, sowing and reaping the bounty that comes weekly from there in the summer.

Several members also bring in produce from their farms. The Shelburne Food Bank does accept fresh produce grown in your garden so if you're wondering what to do with your extra vegetables, please do consider donating them!

Donations can be made directly to the food bank at shelburnefoodbank@gmail.com or by cheque to either Compass Community Church or Trinity Primrose Church and writing Shelburne Food Bank in the memo line.

Food donations can be dropped off at the food bank on Wednesdays from 9 to 1 p.m. or Thursdays from 5:30 to 8 p.m. or you can call 519-925-2600 ext. 350 to make arrangements for an alternate time.

According to Food Banks Canada, it took about 25 years before food bank visits surpassed 1 million visits in a month. We should have all responded to that sombre milestone.

We did not. The need for food banks continues to spiral. Let's get behind our local food bank as the generous and supportive community we are. Let's make sure all our neighbours can enjoy the summer without worrying about food.

Please donate to the food bank today.