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More than a meal: Community partnerships help FTP feed hope every day

Behind every meal served at Family Transition Place (FTP) is a story of compassion, community, and care.

For individuals and families arriving at the shelter, a warm meal often represents far more than nourishment. It provides comfort after a difficult day, creates a sense of normalcy during a time of uncertainty, and reminds clients that they are supported by a community that cares.

Over the past year, FTP prepared more than 4,000 nutritious meals for women and children accessing its emergency shelter, with menus thoughtfully designed to meet a wide range of dietary needs. From food allergies and intolerances to cultural and religious preferences, every meal is prepared with care to ensure clients feel welcomed, respected, and included.

In addition to daily meals, the organization's kitchen prepares more than 3,000 muffins, sandwiches, and healthy snacks each year, ensuring women and children have access to nourishing food throughout the day. Whether someone is heading to work, attending appointments, taking children to school, or simply needing a quick snack between counselling sessions, these homemade offerings help sustain clients as they focus on rebuilding their lives.

The kitchen also celebrates life's important milestones.

Every client staying at FTP on their birthday receives a homemade birthday cake, specially prepared just for them. For many, it is a simple but meaningful reminder that they are valued and deserving of celebration, even during one of the most challenging chapters of their lives.

Food has also become an opportunity for healing and connection through the organization's growing garden program.

Over the past two years, FTP has cultivated a thriving garden that actively engages clients in planting, tending, and harvesting fresh produce and herbs. The garden not only supplies ingredients for daily meals but also provides therapeutic opportunities to connect with nature, learn new skills, and experience the satisfaction of growing food from seed to harvest.

The garden has flourished, producing an impressive variety of fresh ingredients, including cucumbers, tomatoes, garlic, beans, Swiss chard, potatoes, and an assortment of culinary herbs such as dill, parsley, and basil. Edible flowers, including chamomile, also make their way from the garden into the kitchen, adding both beauty and flavour to meals prepared for shelter residents.

These fresh ingredients enhance the quality of meals while reflecting the organization's commitment to providing healthy, nourishing food prepared with care.

At the heart of the kitchen is Claudia, FTP's food and nutrition service worker and a certified Red Seal chef. Drawing on her professional culinary expertise, creativity, and passion for cooking, Claudia transforms fresh, locally sourced ingredients into nutritious, comforting meals that nourish both body and spirit. She has also documented many of her culinary creations (you can scan the QR code to see some of them!), giving the community a behind-the-scenes look at the care, skill, and attention that go into every dish prepared for the women and children staying at the shelter.

While Claudia's dedication is at the heart of FTP's food program, she is the first to recognize that its success is made possible through the generosity of an incredible network of community partners, local businesses, schools, farms, organizations and private donors. The following are just a few of the many supporters whose contributions help ensure every meal, snack, and dessert served at FTP is prepared with care.

Among these valued community partners is the Orangeville Food Bank ? including its garden program ? which continues to provide food and fresh produce that help keep the shelter's pantry well stocked throughout the year. Their longstanding partnership plays an

important role in ensuring clients have access to nutritious, balanced meals. We are also grateful for the ongoing support of Share the Bounty, whose regular donations of non-perishable food items help supplement our food supplies at both our Orangeville shelter and our satellite office in Shelburne, ensuring that clients at both locations have access to essential pantry staples.

Fiddle Foot Farm's Fall and Winter Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program has also become an invaluable source of fresh, locally grown vegetables. Seasonal produce from the farm brings exceptional quality and flavour to the kitchen while strengthening the connection between local agriculture and community care.

Several local businesses have also made meaningful contributions to the program. Little Caesars Pizza Orangeville regularly donates pizzas for shelter residents, offering a comforting and familiar meal for women and children. Extravaganza Brazilian Pastries & Sweets Inc. generously provides gourmet pastries that add moments of comfort and enjoyment, while Bluebird Café & Grill regularly donates freshly made soups, helping ensure clients have access to wholesome, nourishing meals.

These organizations represent only a small sample of the many businesses, community groups, and individuals who stand behind FTP. Alongside countless private donors whose generosity often happens quietly behind the scenes, their financial contributions, food donations, and acts of kindness enable the organization to respond to changing needs while continuing to provide high-quality, nutritious meals to women and children staying at the shelter. Together, these partnerships demonstrate what is possible when a community comes together to support its most vulnerable members.

For women and children fleeing abuse, arriving at a shelter often means leaving behind nearly everything familiar. A warm dinner, a freshly baked muffin, a packed lunch, or a homemade birthday cake may seem like small gestures, but they offer comfort, dignity, and a sense of belonging during an incredibly difficult time.

FTP's food program serves as a powerful reminder that food is about more than filling empty plates. It builds connection, restores hope, and helps create a safe environment where healing can begin.

As demand for services continues, ongoing community support remains essential. Every donation, every partnership, every garden harvest, and every shared meal help ensure that women and children arriving at FTP are welcomed with compassion and care.

Community members interested in supporting the organization's work can learn more about donation opportunities by visiting the Give page on FTP's website: familytransitionplace.ca