

One good turn deserves another as community rallies behind OFB



Written By MARNI WALSH

The Executive Director of Orangeville Food Bank (OFB), Heather Hayes, told the Free Press this week, that community support during the COVID-19 outbreak has been overwhelming.

"This community has always rallied in times of hardship," says Ms. Hayes, "and the pandemic has proven that, once again, as support for fellow neighbours continues with generous donations that make sure there is food for people in need."

In order to provide a single access point for delivering food to clients, thus reducing the risk of contacting COVID-19 for both clients and volunteers, OFB formed partnerships with several area organizations in mid March to form "Dufferin Food Share." These organizations include, the Salvation Army, St. Vincent De Paul, St. Timothy Church, Westminster United Church, St. Mark's Anglican Church, The Cafe, The Concern Grand Valley Food Bank, and the County of Dufferin.

Ms. Hayes says the Salvation Army's New Hope Church graciously provided the space at 690 Riddell Road. "All parties have been so supportive during this reconfiguration providing food, space and volunteers," says the Executive Director. "We have over a 130 volunteers supporting the initiative." OFB Food Manager, Savanaha O'Reilly, oversees the operations at the Salvation Army, while the Executive Director oversees the administration, donations and warehouse operations at 25 Centennial Road.

"Volunteers have stepped up to sort food, do pick ups, package products, box food, help with administration and any needs we have," says the Executive Director. "Some of our longstanding partners like The Cafe located at Center Fellowship Church started soup production for us; large scale donations have come in from E. Hoffman Plastics, the Town of Orangeville, and many service clubs and businesses.

"Compass Run for Food, knowing that area food banks needed support immediately, provided funding - even though their event had been postponed until October 3rd," Ms. Hayes says. "We are very thankful to them for ongoing support."

Terry Doel and Vanessa Kreuzer from Lavender Blue Catering gathered volunteers for OFB's move to the Salvation Army location and "from there things took off," says Heather Hays. She reports that Terry Doel, an experienced chef, spotted OFB's healthy stock of beans and lentils, a staple which can often be difficult for people to use, and began to make delicious meals from that supply and more for OFB to distribute to those in need. Proving that one good turn deserves another, the Rotary Club of Orangeville Highlands generously donated funds to Lavender Blue to help with the cost of making those meals.

The Food Share, which is supporting individuals from all the collaborating agencies, and saw an increase from approximately 700 people a month to over 800 in March. "While we see familiar faces," says Ms. Hayes, "We are also seeing individuals that are out of work for the first time, parents worried about providing for their children.

Those in need of food support may access either Grand Valley Food Bank, (originally located on Cooper Street,) now relocated at

the Grand Valley Arena at 90 Main Street in Grand Valley; or Orangeville Food Bank relocated to 690 Riddell Road in Orangeville. Access is available every second week and clients will receive a box of non perishables and fresh items, including: milk, eggs, fruits vegetables, meats, hygiene products and pet food.

For those who have mobility issues, are immune compromised, or quarantined, OFB has developed a referral based delivery service, and the County of Dufferin Meals on Wheels staff are delivering four days a week.

“We have also increased food for children,” says Ms. Hays, “as we recognize that breakfast and lunch school programs are not available right now.” This includes cheese strings, yogurts, apples, oranges, vegetables and snack items. “We are really lucky to have the support of the Children's Foundation of Guelph Wellington, which has been providing perishable foods and vouchers to increase the amount of food we can offer to our small people,” she says.

Ms. Hayes says the situation “is a long term change for all of us.” She cautions, “The need for food support will increase as people use their financial resources to weather this storm. The effects of the recession of 2008 resulted in people needing to access food banks for two years afterwards; our resources and response to this will have to meet needs for at least 18 months to two years from now.”

Despite the current crisis, Heather Hays says, “Working at the food bank renews one's faith everyday. Faith in good people, faith in kindness, faith that sticking together will always get us through tough times. A pandemic is awful, but it is offset by the strength of community.”

To donate, or access more information, visit: www.orangevillefoodbank.org.