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Ramadan Food Drive in Orangeville and Shelburne running all month long

Written By Sam Odrowski and Paula Brown

Millions of Muslims are marking the Holy Month of Ramadan worldwide, and locally, a follower of Islam is looking to give back to the community.

This year, Ramadan runs from Feb. 28 to March 29, and local resident Tricia Celik is organizing a donation drive for the Orangeville Food Bank and Shelburne Food Bank, encouraging halal and vegan items.

?I'm trying to build bridges in the community and have a face within the Muslim community at the food bank,? said Celik of why she's organizing the food drive, which she's done since 2023.

?It shows support within the community that we're all here together.?

She added, ?There's been an increase every year since we've been doing this, with Muslims accessing it.?

Heather Hayes, executive director of the Orangeville Food Bank said the demographics of individuals accessing the food bank has changed dramatically in the last few years.

?With the changing demographic, we started noticing that individuals accessing the food bank had different food needs than we had seen before,? said Hayes. ?We've worked to ensure we have halal food in the freezer at all times, that we have fresh fruits and vegetables because in certain cultures it's more common to make food from scratch. It's really important to make sure we have the right food so that people can stay healthy and engaged in their communities.?

Celik said she's encouraging donations of perishable and non-perishable items, as the Orangeville Food Bank has refrigerated storage for products like milk, eggs and meat.

While Celik's encourages halal, vegan-friendly items to ensure food-insecure Muslims can eat in accordance with their faith over Ramadan, donations of any kind are appreciated by the Orangeville Food Bank and Shelburne Food Bank.

Some of the most needed food items at the local food bank's include dried lentils, canned pasta, cooking oils, dried beans, canned fruit, apple sauce, snack sized items, canned tomatoes and canned meats.

The not-for-profit organizations have seen a steady increase in the number of people accessing food over the last several years.

When the Orangeville Food Bank's executive director, Heather Hayes, first started in the role in 2015, there were just 380 monthly visitors. Last month, the food bank served 1,402 different people.

The Shelburne Food Bank has reported a more than 600 per cent increase in the number of clients they see on a monthly basis since 2017, when they served 41 families in the community. They now serve roughly 250 families.

Celik said she's encouraging donations of quality items that people would enjoy for the Ramadan Food Drive.

?Give as you would like to receive yourself,? she noted.

Celik said her goal with the drive is to bring the community together for a good cause.

?I'm trying to lift people's spirits. If they're walking [into the food bank] at Christmas time, they're going be used to seeing Christmas

stuff all around. So maybe there's a new Muslim that's going to come here [during Ramadan] and feel welcome,? said Celik of her Ramadan display at the Orangeville Food Bank.

?It builds bridges, raises awareness, and people might feel more comfortable if they see a Muslim to ask some questions or learn a little bit.?

Donations can be brought directly to the Orangeville Food Bank at 3 Commerce Rd or at donation boxes located at Orangeville Town Hall (87 Broadway) and Alder Recreation Centre (275 Alder Street).

A Ramadan table has also been set up at the Orangeville Food Bank by Celik, dawning decorations, balloons, colouring pages for kids, and donations geared towards Muslims.

Donations for the Shelburne Food Bank can be dropped off at the No Frills (101 2nd Line, RR 1) and Foodland (824 Ojibway Rd.) in Shelburne as well as the Dufferin Muslim Centre (506195 Highway 89, Unit 1)

Any inquiries about donations can be directed to Celik by email at theplace2biswithmrs.c@outlook.com.