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Shelburne Food Bank fundraising for van to help with deliveries

Written By **Paula Brown**

Shelburne's local food bank is looking to expand its efforts to tackle rising food insecurity in the community while also relieving the demands put on volunteers by purchasing a vehicle for the food bank.

Shepherd's Cupboard Food Bank and the Rotary Club of Shelburne celebrated the official launch of their new sponsorship campaign on Monday (July 8) at Trillium Ford in Shelburne. The goal of the campaign is to help raise funds to purchase a 2023 Ford E-Transit Cargo Van T-350 for the food bank.

?We are very excited to kickoff the campaign for our van sponsorship program. We've decided to take a leap of faith in the Shelburne community and think about purchasing a transit van so we can continue to collect more, deliver more and better serve the community,? said Ardith Dunlop, volunteer co-ordinator with the Shelburne Food Bank.

?There's nothing more important than feeding our community and this van will help us do that,? said Bobbi Ferguson, a member of the Shelburne Rotary Club.

The Shelburne Food Bank has been floating the idea of purchasing a vehicle to help with pickups and deliveries for almost five years. Two of the biggest catalysts for the purchase are the rise of food insecurity in the community and the stress the demand has put on volunteers using their personal vehicles.

According to statistics from 2023, the Shelburne Food Bank has 400 files consisting of over 1,000 individuals from Shelburne, Melancthon, Mulmur and Amaranth. Of those clients, nearly 70 per cent are from the Town of Shelburne.

The Food Bank also noted in 2023 they served between 225 to 250 families each month of which, 41 per cent were adults, 37 per cent were children and 17 per cent were seniors.

Dunlop and Ferguson said the food bank has seen a 600 per cent increase in its number of clients since 2017 when they served 41 families in the community.

The Shelburne Food Bank uses a team of 10 volunteer drivers, who use their personal vehicles to pick up and transport purchased and donated food items.

?The food bank is in dire need of a food rescue van as we have been using volunteers' vehicles for the last 30 plus years to get food, and have seen an increase in the volume of deliveries,? said Dunlop.

According to the Shelburne Food Bank, in 2023 there were 936 trips taken by using vehicles owned by volunteers.

The food bank noted the repeated usage and heavy loads have resulted in a number of blown tires, breakdowns, and wear and tear on volunteers' vehicles.

The Shelburne Food Bank is now turning to local businesses to help with the purchase of the van by launching a sponsorship campaign.

The campaign sees local businesses choose from a selection of sponsorship tiers, each of which comes with different perks. The five tiers that businesses can pick from to sponsor the van include: Community Partner ($20,000), Team Partner ($10,000), Friend ($5,000), Fan ($2,500), and Pal ($1,000).

The fundraising goal for the sponsorship campaign is $100,000.

?Because our food bank is volunteer-based, 100 per cent of the money collected always goes towards food and hygiene items for our clients; we would never be able to take that money to do this. So, in order to be able to purchase a van for the food rescue program, we have to fundraise,? said Dunlop.

?Without the community's support this won't happen,? said Ferguson.

At the end of the sponsorship campaign, the Shelburne Food Bank will have the vehicle wrapped with logos from the businesses that provided donations as a thank-you for their help.

?We really hope that the Shelburne community responds positively, as they always have, to supporting us in our efforts to work on the food insecurity we see daily,? said Dunlop.

Local businesses interested in helping raise donations by becoming a sponsor of the Shepherd Cupboard Food Bank's Food Rescue Van can contact the food bank by email at shelburnefoodbank@gmail.com or by phone at 519-925-2600 ext. 350.