

Shelburne Food Bank utilizing new drive-by method for visitors



Written By MARNI WALSH

Ardith Dunlop, volunteer co-ordinator for the Shepherd's Cupboard Food Bank in Shelburne, told the Free Press, "Things have changed quickly and dramatically for the food bank in the last few weeks."

The Mel Lloyd Centre, where the food bank is located, closed to visitors on March 13, and Ms. Dunlop says volunteers "scrambled to come up with an alternative way of running the food bank from the basement there, where we could still serve the clients, while keeping both them and the volunteers safe."

Presently, she says, "We are serving clients using a drive-by method. Food is pre-packaged in boxes depending on family size. Clients come to the outside door and are given a number and asked to wait in their cars; a food bank volunteer quickly checks in with them and reviews their options for food, and their address, and they continue to wait in their cars until their food box and coupons arrive upstairs. Their number is shown, and the box gets deposited in the car. Inside volunteers are packing boxes, collecting client's options and stocking shelves."

Ms. Dunlop added, "All methods of disinfecting and washing hands and keeping social distancing for the volunteers are being employed."

An emergency manager, Jennifer Roach of the Shelburne Police Services, visited the food bank to give suggestions on how to help keep everyone safe.

Ms. Dunlop explained that one of the key concerns for the food bank is that almost half of their regular shift volunteers have had to step back due to age, medical concerns, travel restrictions or personal comfort levels regarding the virus.

"Right now, we have new volunteers coming to assist on Wednesdays to make up the pre-packaged boxes of food - which has helped," says the co-ordinator.

She added, "Stores are trying to meet our weekly orders of additional supplies, but it has not always been possible to get all we need." With an eventual increase in food bank clients due to the COVID-19 crisis, Ms. Dunlop says volunteers wonder whether there will be enough "supplies and funds to meet the need."

Help has been coming in many forms. Ms. Dunlop says, "The Shelburne Rotary Club took on our need for toilet paper and their group somehow found and gifted us with many packages of the elusive white rolls. Many places that are closing with the virus donated their fresh products, such as Pete's Deli, Mansfield Outdoor Centre, and others."

The community can help by donating money to the Shepherd's Cupboard; e-transfers are accepted at Pace Credit Union using shelburnefoodbank@gmail.com as the address.

A weekly "most needed list" is posted on the Shepherd's Cupboard Foodbank Facebook page, and Ms. Dunlop says donations can be dropped off to a volunteer at the Mel Lloyd Centre at 167 Centre Street in Shelburne - Door "A" - between 11 am and noon on Wednesdays. Currently, the Shepherd's Cupboard is in need of Kraft Dinner, canned fruit, cookies, pancake mix and syrup, baking supplies, Hamburger Helper, instant potatoes, jello, sugar, canned vegetables, and mayo.

Ms. Dunlop says volunteers may call the food bank phone line at 519-925-2600 ext 350 if they are interested in helping on a Wednesday or Thursday. Clients may call the same number, if they have any questions.

"We are looking for normalcy in this time of stress and uncertainty," says Ms. Dunlop. "So we are very glad to still be able to operate, in a very different manner, from our same spot. A big shout out to the County of Dufferin for their support in making that happen; as well as to all the many volunteers, both old and new, that have allowed us to continue to operate the food bank these last weeks in the new way; and to our wonderful community that has stepped up yet again to support getting food to those that need it. 100% of what comes in goes directly out to our community clients."

The Shelburne Shepherd's Cupboard Food Bank is open Wednesdays from noon to 1:30 p.m. and Thursdays from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.