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Shelburne Rotary donates $20,000 to local food bank amid surge in usage

Written By Joshua Drakes

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

With food insecurity continuing to rise and challenge the capacity of local food banks and charities, the Shelburne Rotary Club stepped up with a massive donation to Shelburne Food Bank.

Local Rotary President Karen Webster said that the club remains committed to combating food insecurity.

?The Shelburne Rotary Club recognizes that food insecurity is a growing and urgent challenge for many individuals and families in our community,? she said. ?In response, the club is pleased to be able to support the Shelburne Food Bank, as well as related initiatives like the Backpack Project and Christmas Hamper Program that provide essential assistance to those in need.?

The Rotary Club said in a press release that the money was raised through the Nutcracker Gala and thanked all who donated.

?The Shelburne Rotary Club was very happy to be able to recently present the Shelburne Food Bank with a cheque for $20,000,? the statement read. ?The money was raised at the Nutcracker Gala on November 15, 2025. Everyone's generosity in supporting the Nutcracker Gala to make this donation possible is very much appreciated.?

The Rotary Club said that the food bank is a critical service for the town, providing food to roughly 300 families per month, a figure that has increased dramatically over the last 10 years.

In 2016, it served just 42 families monthly.

?That is an increase of almost eight times,? the Rotary Club statement read. ?During a period in which the population of Shelburne did not even double.?

Ardith Dunlop, who has been involved with the Shelburne Food Bank since 1993, said the organization was immensely grateful to the Rotary Club for helping to offset some of its high operational costs.

In 2025, due to rising living costs and the resulting decrease in people able to donate, the Shelburne Food Bank ran a deficit well into the tens of thousands of dollars.

Thanks to the local Rotary Club's donation, half the running deficit was eliminated.

?In 2025, the Food Bank spent $42,000 more than we received in donations,? Dunlop said. ?This is concerning? but would be way more so if we didn't have some steady caring supporters, like the Rotary Club of Shelburne.?

Dunlop also said that donations like these aren't just helpful, they're uplifting for a food bank. It gives them the support they need to stop worrying about tomorrow and start planning ahead.

?A donation like the one from the Rotary Club of Shelburne can be transformative for a food bank our size,? Dunlop said. ?This helps keep shelves stocked for weeks during high need seasons. It helps stabilize operations so we can focus on service, not survival. Donations at this level aren't just helpful - they give us confidence.?

?They provide a bit of breathing room and planning power. Most importantly, it sends a message to the community that someone believes this work matters,? Dunlop added.

Alongside emergency food assistance, the food bank is also partnered with the Christmas Hamper Program and the Backpack Program, providing much-needed support packages for the Christmas season, as well as lunchbags and backpacks for students.

Dunlop said that any support, not just large donations like this one, is always welcome and always needed.

?Monetary and food donations are always needed, especially as we enter this time of year when both of these are at their lowest,? Dunlop said. ?We are also struggling within the limited space we have at the Mel Lloyd Centre, really requiring more space to operate within.?

The Shelburne Rotary Club also encourages anyone who is able to support the food bank.

?If you are able to support the food bank in any way, there is always a need,? the club's statement read. ?Cash donations enable the food bank to purchase the items necessary for the hampers that go out to families experiencing food insecurities and to buy and replace fridges and freezers.?

There are also other ways to help support the food bank. You can also host a food drive, drop off donations in the food bins at the front of Shelburne's No Frills and Foodland, or make an e-transfer to: shelburnefoodbank@gmail.com