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# Shepherd?s Cupboard Food Bank stepping up to provide breakfast for local youth

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The Kids' Breakfast Hamper Program is a new initiative launched by Shelburne's Food Bank to plug a gap created when the provincial governments ordered the closure of all schools in Ontario.

Shepherd's Cupboard Chair Deb Wagsgtaff told the Free Press, that the program began with a conversation she had with a local principal, after March Break, when it was announced schools would be out for at least four weeks.

?We both wanted to make sure that kids in Shelburne still had access to healthy food that would usually be provided by the schools' breakfast program.?

From that conversation. Ms. Wagstaff says she ?talked with the other four local administrators and we came up with a plan that the Food Bank would make up breakfast hampers with the food that was at the schools.?

Each school delivered their food over the next few weeks and gave the Food Bank a portion of their breakfast club money to be used specifically for breakfast hampers, says Deb Wagstaff. As well as coordinating with local school administrators, Ms. Wagstaff is working with Food and Friends of The Children's Foundation of Guelph and Wellington, which both provides the financial resources, and then Shepherd's Cupboard sources the food and makes up the hampers to be distributed.

?The number of hampers vary from week to week,? says the Chair, ?We served over a 100 kids in April. Any family is welcome to come if they have kids in JK to Grade 12.?

She added, ?The size of the hamper reflects the size of the family. All they need to bring is their child's ID, such as a health card.

The items in the hampers reflect what students would see at most of the schools in the morning. A typical hamper would include some fresh fruit and vegetables, granola bars, cheese and crackers, breads, goldfish crackers, eggs, and yogurt, as well as a monthly coupon for produce, milk and bread that the families can use when they want.

Shepherd's Cupboard Food Bank Coordinator, Ardith Dunlop says, the community has been outstanding in their support.

?Food and money donations have come in regularily, with many community members also running online fundraisers for the Food Bank. We have had several large donations - one from the Harbringer Foundation has allowed us to increase the amount of the produce coupons for each family, one from United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin, and the Government of Canada's New Horizon Seniors' Program which allows us to give each senior a $15 Giant Tiger gift card so they can choose what they need,? Dunlop said.

Ms. Dunlop reports that visits to the local Food Bank are up. She says Shepherd's Cupboard is ?working with the different community agencies within Dufferin to ensure that those with limited mobility or those who are isolated, or can't get out, are still able to get a hamper when needed.?

Regarding safety measures with Covid 19, the Coordinator says, ?clients are served outside of the Mel Lloyd Centre where prepackaged hampers are put in their cars or buggies depending on the size of the family.? She says, ?Volunteers answer Covid questions each time before a shift, wash their hands before and after, and hand sanitizer, masks and gloves are provided. Carts and work areas, as well as all handles are disinfected at the end of each shift.?

Ms. Dunlop points out that ?Statistics show that it takes an additional 18 months after a disruption in pay to recoup losses within a family.? She says, ?We are hopeful that our community will continue to support food stability for all by continuing to donate to the Food Bank. They can do this by following our Facebook page to see what we are in-need of each week. Items can be dropped off at

the grocery stores or at Door A at the Mel Lloyd Centre between 11am and noon on Wednesdays. E-transfers can be made directly to shelburnefoodbank@gmail.com. Questions can be left on our phone line at 519-925-2600 ext 350.?

Deb Wagstaff says the Kids' Breakfast Hamper Program encourages ?more families to come out and take advantage of this community resource. The program runs every Wednesday from 10 am to11 am and families can come every week.? She says, ?We chose this time, separate from normal Food Bank hours, so that families would feel more comfortable and avoid line ups.? Families are asked to come to 167 Centre Street, The Mel Lloyd Centre, Entrance A and wait outside the doors with identification. She says, ?The program will run until the end of June and then a new plan will be developed for July and August. Up to date information can be found on our Food Bank Facebook page, as well as a short video explaining the breakfast program.?