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Working together to provide weekly warm meals to people in need

A group of concerned residents are hoping to combat food insecurity in the community by providing weekly hot meals to those in need.

The first-ever Food For You was held on March 5 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Trinity United Church in Shelburne.

?With food insecurity being so high in this area, we felt there was a need in the community. We put our heads together and this is what we came up with,? said Shelley Doney, one of the organizers of the initiative.

The weekly Food For You initiative was created by six founding members ? Sandra Gallaugher, Shelley Doney, Marci Lipman, Sabine Rohner-Tensee, Ann McAlpine, and Betty Harmony.

The group began planning for the initiative in January and will host a meal every Wednesday for the upcoming months.

Food For You volunteers will prepare both a meat-based and vegetarian meal, which is free to anyone who attends and requires no reservation.

?Its two-fold ? you're coming for a hot meal, but also getting together with other people to share in camaraderie and the conversations that happen,? said Rohner-Tensee.

Ardith Dunlop, volunteer coordinator for the Shelburne Food Bank, said they've seen a 600 per cent increase in their number of clients since 2017, when they served 41 families in the community.

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, roughly 73 per cent are from the Town of Shelburne.

The Food Bank also noted in 2023 they served between 325 to 350 families each month.

?It's always helpful when others step up and do something because of food insecurity struggles as it's more recognition that this is a real and growing problem here, not only in Shelburne but all over Ontario and Canada,? said Dunlop.

?It's very difficult for many individuals and families to access fresh and nutritious food on limited incomes. While this won't alleviate any of the ongoing and increasing needs at the foodbank, it will provide another weekly time that those in need can receive a meal,? she added.

Food For You will be held every Wednesday, starting at 5 p.m., at Trinity United Church in Shelburne.