



Ottawa Food Bank

Feeding the Need

Winter 2016



A Second Chance for Sandra



For almost twenty years, I was a pastry chef here in Ottawa. But I started having health issues back in 2009. I had to tell my head chef, “My doctor is telling me if I don’t stop and actually let myself rest, I am going to permanently damage my health.”

I’d been off work for about a year before I needed help with food. I had a modest amount of savings put aside, but it’s expensive to get healthy food. I’m a single mom with two kids, and my son is high-functioning autistic.

The first assistance I received was from a local charity that provided fruits and vegetables at wholesale prices. One fellow told me, “You know you’re here every month, which is great. We love to see you. But do you need more assistance than what this box is providing?”

I said, “Well, it’s really hard to stretch what I’ve got.” He told me about my local food pantry and the

days they were open. I ended up going probably half a dozen times over the course of a year. Which is very, very hard to do when you’ve been used to being able to go to the grocery store and buying what you want.

“You might not see it, but you really are helping.”

The first time I went, I actually left because there were so many people in the room, and I felt self-conscious. I just couldn’t handle it. I had to go back

the next week and sit there and say, “No, I need this.” That was really hard. But then I saw other people in there who I’ve seen walking around the neighbourhood. You realize it’s an “everybody issue.” The people in there have already decided they need more than what they can provide for themselves, and that’s a big step. (CONT’D pg. 2) ►►►



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About a year after I had stopped working, I saw the principal at my son's school. He knew a little about my background, and he mentioned that the ladies who ran the breakfast program were looking to step back a bit. He wondered if I would be interested in coming in to help for a couple of hours a few days a week. He told me it wasn't physical work and should be fairly easy.

I started working about two hours in the morning, three days a week. At first, I would come home and sleep for three or four hours afterwards because I was exhausted. But by the end of the school year, when the ladies decided to retire, I agreed to come back and take over. So for the last four years, I've been running the breakfast program.

I love going to work each morning. I enjoy being there and talking with the kids and making sure they get off to a good start in the morning. Whether I serve 20 kids a meal in the morning or we provide a snack for 80 kids, they still get a healthy meal.

Your support makes a huge difference. You might not see it, but you really are helping. Think about sitting and trying to concentrate when you skip breakfast . . . how productive are you going to be? It's important to get something into you that will keep you going, and it's amazing how far you can go with a little bit of help. Thank you.



Food for Thought

by Michael Maidment, *Executive Director*

Last year, 50,000 of your neighbours got the food they needed each month thanks to your support of the Ottawa Food Bank!

You helped fund the Community Harvest Program, in which fruits and vegetables are grown on land donated by a local farmer. More than 100,000 pounds of food was grown and distributed to hungry people in Ottawa in 2015.

You also supported another program called reFRESH. After the local harvest season ends, our goal is to continue buying fruits and veggies to provide fresh produce year-round.

“ We only exist because of your generosity and our community's desire to help people in need.”

People who live in poverty are really affected by nutrition and the foods they eat, especially kids. About 47% of the food we distribute now is fresh, and the goal is to keep increasing that amount.

Ottawa is one of the coldest capitals in the world, and we're now in the frigid winter months. Demand for food spikes in February and March as electricity, gas, and hydro bills increase. The difficult season is ahead, so your help is critical in helping us get through the next few months.

Every single gift we receive we put to work – whether it's through a school breakfast program like the one Sandra runs, serving dinner to people in a homeless shelter, or helping a family who turns to their community food bank. We only exist because of your generosity and our community's desire to help people in need. Thank you for making this work possible.

Gratefully,

Michael

Did You Know?

Our Community Harvest Program grows and collects nutritious, local produce on a plot of land donated by a local farmer here in Ottawa. Your support enables us to grow cantaloupe, peppers, zucchini, broccoli, cabbage, onions, potatoes, squash, kale, tomatoes and more.





Help in Her Hour of Need

When Nicole retired for medical reasons, you provided a helping hand!

A few years ago, I retired from the federal government for medical reasons. It wasn't planned, and it was a very trying situation. I didn't have savings at the time, so I ended up going to my local food program for the breakfasts they serve and getting help from different places.

Everyone was so nice and welcoming. They didn't make me feel ashamed or that I was less than the next human being. I said to myself at the time, "Really we have a great country to help people like this."

There were times that, having retired on medical grounds, I couldn't cook, or I was depressed, or suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. I didn't have money for coffee or things like that, so my food bank helped me a great deal in the times I needed it, like morning breakfast.


And it wasn't just food — it was the mental support to help me get up and face the next day. To see that glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel.

Now I try to help as much as I can because they helped me in the past. I try to help out with little things to give back to the community. I'm not able to work, so I can't volunteer, but I give food whenever I can.

When people have proper food in their stomach, they have the energy to go and find a job. Or to go and study to better their and their family's lives. Hopefully the appreciation is there, and they can turn around and help other people who need it down the road.

If we all try a little bit, if everybody helped a little bit, nobody would be in need. Thank you for supporting the Ottawa Food Bank and hungry people who need help. God bless all of you for your kindness of heart.

The first year of the program, over 73,500 pounds of fresh produce was grown during the season. In 2015, that number expanded to more than 100,000 pounds of produce. Thanks to a generous donation from a friend to purchase greenhouses to extend the growing season, we expect to grow even more food this year.



Because of generous friends like you, people in our community are getting the fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables they need for a healthy diet!



Giving From a Grateful Heart

Johnny loves to volunteer and help others.

I've been in Ottawa for close to 25 years. I visited my community food program off and on when my three children were young and times were tough. I still get help occasionally when I need it, and my favourite thing they give me is peanut butter — I could eat it three times a day!

Now that my children are grown and gone, I recently moved into a new neighbourhood. The first thing I did was explore the area. I saw the Ottawa Food Bank's community partner as I was walking around, and that first Monday I went there to volunteer.

I learned to help others from my tribe back home in Ghana, West Africa. I saw how my mother uplifted everybody around there, so that was instilled in me — no matter where I am or what I do.

I volunteer at the food bank about five days a week. I go there, have my coffee and help around. My favourite part is when the Ottawa Food Bank truck comes in with the food, because there's work to be done. I get excited to help unload the truck. I love the exercise.

I think it's better to give, especially when you have abundance. By giving, you are helping to uplift all your other brothers and sisters. You're helping families. You're helping children. Because it takes all of us to make things work.

Thank you for thinking of us. Thank you for your compassion, your insight and for knowing that there are people out there who need a helping hand.

Ways to Give

The only way to end hunger in Ottawa is by working together to get food to our struggling neighbours. Here are three simple ways you can help hungry people in our community.

To learn more about how you can donate time, money or food, visit ottawafoodbank.ca/donate/



DONATE MONEY

Every \$1 you give provides \$5 worth of food for men, women, and children in need! Just think of all the lives you can change with your generous gift.



DONATE FOOD

Your donations of non-perishable, nutritious foods are always welcome. Or call us to donate perishable items such as fruits and vegetables.



DONATE TIME

None of the work we do would be possible without volunteers. Your help is critical to ensure food gets to hungry people in our community.

Our mission is simple: **Help people get beyond hunger.**

Your support allows us to:

- Foster relationships with food industry partners to turn every dollar donated into \$5 worth of food.
- Educate people on how to prepare nutritious food on an extreme budget with Ottawa Public Health and other services across Ottawa.
- Forge a strong network with the 140 local agencies that work directly with our hungry neighbours.
- Work with local farmers and growers who ensure that 47% of the food we deliver is fresh.
- Extend our reach across the Ottawa region through the generosity of corporate donors.

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