



Ottawa Food Bank

Feeding the Need

Spring 2016



A Fresh Perspective

Community Harvest Program provides tons of produce

Mom always said to eat your vegetables... and the Ottawa Food Bank thinks that's great advice.

That's why we're so proud of our Community Harvest Program, which has grown from a modest beginning in 2010 to providing more than 175,000 pounds of fresh produce last year — including 101,000 pounds grown on our own farm.

"We want to be able to provide people with the healthiest food they can access," says Community Harvest coordinator Jason Gray (above). "Fresh produce is usually the most expensive thing in the grocery bag, so food bank clients don't usually budget for it. That's why it's so important for us to provide it."

The program has its own seven-acre farming plot, donated by local farmer Tom Black, where Gray and his team — including more than 700 volunteers — grow tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, onions, winter squash, zucchini, cantaloupe, broccoli, cabbage, potatoes, and kale. Five acres are farmed for the food bank, while the other two are for "cover crops," which replenish the soil for future use.

In 2015, the farm yielded about 101,000 pounds of food, while the other 75,000 pounds were donated from other local farmers. When Community Harvest began in 2010, most of its produce was donated. But over the years, as its own farm has grown acre by acre, most of its produce comes from its own crops.

“We’re providing a product that’s as fresh as you could buy in any store.”

“We’ve been able to scale it up a little each year,” says Gray, who spends hours in the field every summer, planting, maintaining, and harvesting the crops. Gray said that after several years

of increasing the farm size, they’ll hold steady this year, since they don’t want supply to exceed demand. “We have to be careful not to grow too big too fast. We want to ensure that everything we harvest will be used, and not go bad.”

(CONT'D pg. 2) ►►



Ottawa Food Bank

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Gray says the Community Harvest Program simply could not work without the help of its army of volunteers, including individuals, corporate teams, students, and community organizations. In 2015, 703 volunteers donated 2,746 hours of manual labour.

“Our volunteers are absolutely crucial to our work,” says Gray. “They’re the most inspirational part of the program for me.”

While they’re not increasing the acreage of the farm this year, Gray says there are a number of other pressing needs — tractor equipment, a flail mower, items for the greenhouse, and other equipment.

Meanwhile, Gray is thrilled that his work for the food bank is not a desk job. He loves working on the farm, and he still gets out and meets local farmers to solicit donations of fresh produce. Anything to help keep providing healthy food for hungry neighbours throughout the Ottawa region.

“I love that we’re providing a product that’s as fresh as you could potentially buy in any store,” he says. “And that it not only tastes incredibly good, but is very healthy too. Fresh produce is such an important part of what we do.”

The Community Harvest Program couldn’t work without the support of friends like you. If you’d like to volunteer, contact Jason at Jason@ottawafoodbank.ca. Learn more at www.ottawafoodbank.ca/community-harvest



Food for Thought

by Michael Maidment, *Executive Director*

After the winter we just had — and the incredible amount of snow that fell — doesn’t the warm weather feel like a wondrous gift?

The sun is shining and every day feels like it’s full of promise and potential. And one of the most promising ventures going on right now is the Community Harvest Program. In order to get fresh, healthy produce into the hands of our hungry neighbours, we grow and collect

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nutritious, local fruits and vegetables right here in Ottawa. The plot of land was donated by generous friends, and the farm is worked by staff and volunteers.

The Community Harvest Program is in full swing right now. The fruits and vegetables are growing, and come harvest time, there will be literally tons of fresh produce for our clients to enjoy.

Meanwhile, I love hearing stories of people who give back by volunteering with us. So please be sure to read Lisa’s story on page 3.

In the same way it requires a lot of work to weed, water and nurture a garden, it takes a lot of support from our

community to keep the Ottawa Food Bank running. It is only thanks to generous gifts, hardworking volunteers and food donations from friends like you that we can move our neighbours beyond hunger.

Thank you for caring about your hungry neighbours, and giving back to help them.

Gratefully,

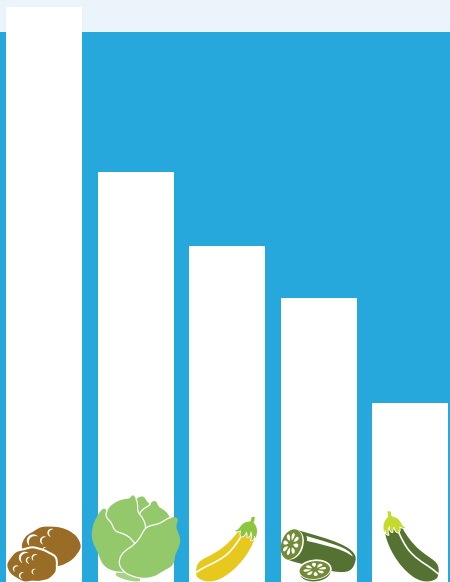
Michael

Growing Food for a Health

The Community Harvest Program grows and collects nutritious, local produce for clients served by Ottawa Food Bank community food programs across the national capital region. In 2015, the program distributed a total 176,553 pounds of fresh produce — over 101,000 pounds of which we grew ourselves!

2015 year
Communi

21,106 lbs of
15,245 lbs of
12,767 lbs of
10,827 lbs of
7,152 lbs of
5,484 lbs of
5,448 lbs of



It Could Never Happen to Me



Lisa lived an upper-middle-class life until a job loss left her where she never thought she'd be: in need.

I grew up in an upper-middle-class neighbourhood. I went to the best schools. I had a very privileged childhood. And I used to look at poor and homeless people and think, *They just don't want to do any better for themselves.*

Boy, was I wrong. I know that now, because it's happened to me.

Health issues forced me to leave my full-time job, and as a result, my income is way down. I'm a divorced single mom (my kids are young adults now), and though I work part-time, I'm on welfare.

About two years ago, I reached a point where I realized I needed help, but I was too proud to ask for it. But money was running out before the end of every month, and I needed to eat.

I knew about the food bank, but I kept thinking, *I'm not going to go there.* Finally,

reality won; I had to go. I felt ashamed. It was humbling and embarrassing, but I didn't have a choice.

Turns out that I didn't have to worry. The people at the food bank were so kind and understanding as they talked to me and met my needs. I left there with a couple of bags of groceries and with my dignity too.

That first experience was so positive that I immediately signed up as a volunteer. I wanted to be a part of the goodness that they were doing in the community. It's hard work and sometimes the days are long, but it's very rewarding. It makes me happy to make other people happy.

So now I'm on both sides — I'm a client who needs food, and a volunteer who helps give it away. And I'm grateful for both.

Thank you for supporting the food bank, and people like me!

thier Community

ield from the Black Family Farm nity Harvest Growing Project:

of Potatoes	4,990 lbs of Peppers
of Cabbage	4,460 lbs of Onions
of Squash	4,052 lbs of Broccoli
of Cucumbers	3,811 lbs of Carrots
Zucchini	3,731 lbs of Tomatoes
Beets	1,333 lbs of Kale
Cantaloupe	1,294 lbs of Eggplants



Thanks to your generosity, 101,700 pounds of fresh, nutritious produce were grown last year. Just think of all the men, women and children you helped feed!
ottawafoodbank.ca/donate

Helping Is in My Blood

I'm 73 years old, and a regular volunteer at one of the Ottawa Food Bank's community food programs. Why do I volunteer? I think it's in my blood.

When I was a kid, my mom would get calls from neighbours asking for help, and she'd drop everything and go. And my dad was a part-time farmer who would mow the sides of community roads after he finished in the field.

I saw these things, and I believe they just became a part of me. When I see a need, I try to meet it. I saw trash piling up under the hedges at the mall, so I brought a hand-grabber and a garbage bag and picked it all up. I saw an area of the city where a lot of weeds were growing, and I got my lawn mower and cut them down.

So when I heard about volunteering at the food bank, I was all in. I'll do any kind of job they ask me.

I love serving the people who are in need. I've met people from all walks of life. I met a woman who literally went everywhere on inline skates to save money she'd otherwise spend on transportation. I met a man who plowed snow for his income, but we'd had very little snow that winter, so his family was hungry. I met a woman who was so poor that she was grateful just to receive a peach from us. She said she hadn't had one in six years.

The food bank relies on volunteers to get the job done. And donors should know that their gifts are really helping people in true need throughout the city. Thank you!



“... donors should know that their gifts are really helping people in true need.”

Hunger in Ottawa



37%
of Ottawa Food Bank clients are children.



\$789
the cost, per month, to adequately feed a family of four in 2013.



50,000
people are helped by 140 agencies each month.



45%
of Ottawa Food Bank clients are families with children. Nearly half of those are two-parent families.

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

WE DO THAT BY:

- Fostering relationships with food-industry partners to turn every dollar donated into \$5 worth of food.
- Educating people, in tandem with Ottawa Public Health and Ottawa Social Services, on how to prepare nutritious food on an extremely limited budget.
- Working with local farmers and growers who ensure that 47% of the food we deliver is fresh.
- Forging a strong network with the 140 local agencies that work directly with our hungry neighbours.
- Extending our reach across the Ottawa region through the generosity of corporate donors.

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Get in Touch |

