

# THE SHARING PLACE FOOD CENTRE



## THE FEED

**April - June 2022 Newsletter**

### **Message from Chris Peacock Executive Director**



April has arrived! The snow is melting, the birds are chirping, and our community is starting to connect in a more meaningful way. With the lifting of certain COVID-19 restrictions, we are starting to see each other's faces again and bring back the important moments of social connection. However, the uncertainty of what is to come is clearly still

with us, and we are also faced with rising national and global tensions that have caused increased concern in our communities. I hope the warmer weather gives us the opportunity to have moments to connect, and that we use our collective impact to find ways to help strengthen our community when it needs it most.

At The Sharing Place Food Centre, we are in full renovation mode to help us build and strengthen the health of our community. We are preparing to leverage our new space and capacity to grow our community impact and improve the connections we make with our members. While we manage this growth and expanded capacity, we continue to focus on the details of each of our existing programs to make sure we provide exceptional service to those who need us most.

Over the last three months we have seen significant increases in housing, food, and fuel costs. This has placed many community members into a new position that they have never experienced before; a situation where they have no money left to pay for the necessities for their family or themselves. We are working hard at The Sharing Place to expand our capacity to improve access to healthy food and provide more opportunities for our members to participate in meaningful programs. We are in the midst of constructing our new Meals-4-Change Kitchen, improving our Food Bank environment, and creating 2 new programs to leverage this capacity. While we expand, we continue to improve our internal systems, member experience, and community partnerships. We know that with these improvements we will maximize the social return on our donors' contributions and improve the resiliency of our organization.

The work being done to improve The Sharing Place is complemented by the work being done across our region to improve the food system. The signs of spring bring the thawing of our agricultural land and opportunities to engage in community gardening, purchasing food from local farmers and many other activities that support our local food system. We look forward to sharing with our community the work we are doing to support our food system and the opportunities that exist for you to help. Make sure to follow along on Instagram and Facebook @sharingplaceorillia

We could not do what we do without the support of our amazing community. We look forward to finishing these essential upgrades to our programs and welcoming the community into our new environment to connect around food. Please do not be a stranger. If you are interested in learning more about our programs and the work we are doing, give us a call, send us an email, or drop by our facility. We would be honored to give you a tour and answer any questions you may have.

Kind Regards,

Chris

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## DONATION DRIVE

### Top Needed Items



Financial donations can be made to help us purchase fresh food, such as meat, dairy and produce.

> **DONATE ONLINE**

[www.sharingplaceorillia.org](http://www.sharingplaceorillia.org)

**Running June 1st - June 25th**

Canned Soup  
(284 ml)

- Vegetable
- Chicken Noodle
- Mushroom

Canned Vegetables  
(156 ml)

- Mushrooms
- Corn
- Peas
- Beans
- Tomatoes

Peanut Butter

Pasta Sauce

Pasta Noodles

Canned Meat & Fish

Rice (not instant)

Sugar

Flour

Tea Bags

Coffee (not instant)

Whole Grain Cereal

- 450 g
- 750 g

For most people, supporting The Sharing Place Food Centre isn't at the forefront of people's minds in summer months. People usually consider organizing a donation drive or donating during the holiday season, a time of giving and sharing. In fact, we receive 50% of our annual donations between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve.

However, our programs that support people who experience food insecurity are in high demand during the summer months, when donations slow down.

Help us to keep supplies up during the summer by hosting a Healthy Summer Holiday Donation Drive, and get your community involved too! This is a great way to help other people in your community have access to the wonderful meals of the summer holidays that we all enjoy.

Find everything you need on our website and scroll down to Organize a Donation Drive, or reach out to [Christine@sharingplaceorillia.org](mailto:Christine@sharingplaceorillia.org) for support.

**Organize a Healthy Summer Holiday Donation Drive**

## Jan/Feb/Mar Impact

Our plate has been full! And we couldn't do it without you.



Lbs. of food recovered from food service providers:

**127,648**



Food Bank Members that accessed a six-day supply of food:

**4,403**



Pre-made meals prepared and distributed:

**6,259**

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## Volunteer Highlight

### Meet Cathy

*"I want to make people feel comfortable when they need to come to The Sharing Place for food."*



Cathy has been volunteering at The Sharing Place Food Centre for more than three years. She began her time here packing Holiday Hampers and shortly afterwards, became a weekly, reliable addition to The Sharing Place team. You may be greeted by her smiling face when you come in to pick up food.

**Q:** What do you do when you aren't volunteering?

**A:** *I like to be active and spend time downhill skiing and hiking in winter, and cycling in the spring, summer, and fall. I am a retired hairdresser of 42 years, spending 15 years working as a hairdresser in palliative care, and eight of those as a hospice volunteer.*

**Q:** Do you have a stand-out memory of one of your volunteer experiences?

**A:** *A member came in to receive a holiday hamper and she seemed nervous, shy, the type of person who hid her smile when she was insecure. I told her she had a beautiful smile and she just lit up. When her boyfriend came over, I asked to take a picture of the two of them together on their phone. To this day they remember me when they see me in the community. It warmed my heart. I knew I had made a difference in somebody's day.*

**Q:** What's it like to be a volunteer here?

**A:** *The Sharing Place Food Centre is my happy place. I like to be involved with people and I like to reach out and do things for others, no matter who it is; someone in the community, my family, or my friends. I like to make a difference in people's lives and in their day.*

**Q:** What has surprised you most about volunteering at The Sharing Place Food Centre?

**A:** *The increase in the amount of people that come in for service now, as compared to when I started volunteering in the Food Bank program. I am also pleasantly surprised at the quantity and quality of food people receive.*

**Q:** What do you find most challenging about volunteering at The Sharing Place Food Centre?

**A:** *I find it hard when you see instances of children living in challenging circumstances, of anyone living in difficult situations. People who come through the door with a job, but they still need to come here for support. I have learned a lot about the LGBTQ community through my personal experiences recently, and I feel for people from this community who come for food because I can understand the challenges of what they have been through.*

**Q:** What do you wish other people knew about The Sharing Place Food Centre?

**A:** *I wish people knew how much support is needed, how much is needed in way of donations. And that it's a safe place to come if you need food.*

**Q:** Why do you continue to volunteer at The Sharing Place Food Centre?

**A:** *I have been drug-free for 34 years, and sober for 40 years. I could have been one of the people coming through the door. I want to do what I can to help people feel comfortable when they need to come to The Sharing Place for food. And I feel like I am working with family here. It's a great place to come and everyone is super nice. I look forward to my volunteer shifts and I know I am making a difference.*

#### **Total Hours Contributed by the Volunteer Team Jan/Feb/Mar 2022**

**2681**

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### **In The Spotlight - School Fuel Program**



In September of 2020, when COVID-19 restrictions shut down volunteer-led student nutrition programs in schools, The Sharing Place Food Centre responded by expanding our existing School Fuel program, sourcing, purchasing, and distributing school-safe, pre-packaged, healthy, grab-and-go snacks to 19 schools in Orillia and surrounding area.

Since then, The Sharing Place Food Centre has partnered with Student Nutrition Ontario – Central East, a core funder of student nutrition programs across the province and expanded the program to include all 21 local schools.

The funds distributed through Student Nutrition Ontario cover approximately 15% of each school's total student nutrition program costs. Schools can also apply to receive support from Breakfast Clubs of Canada, President's Choice Children's Charities and through independent fundraising efforts. Additionally, through generous community support The Sharing Place Food Centre has been able to subsidize each school's entire program cost by 50%. A dedicated team of Sharing Place volunteers assemble each school's order, which are then delivered every two weeks in our refrigerated van.

By partnering with The Sharing Place Food Center, schools take advantage of our buying power and ability to access healthy student nutrition food items at reduced cost. By reducing costs, funds go further and enable schools to purchase more food and make it available for all students. Once the snacks arrive at the school, all students are encouraged to access the nutrition baskets, removing any stigma that may be attached to these programs. Studies indicate that only one in four households that experience food insecurity will access a food bank program and the School Fuel program reaches students from food insecure households that may be going to school hungry.

Consistency of programming is also an important part of this program. No matter how big or small the school may be, how many volunteers are available, and regardless of the amount of funding each school receives, every student in Orillia and surrounding area is offered the same healthy, nutritious breakfast each school morning. When schools are closed, and throughout the summer, The Sharing Place Food Centre continues to work with school staff and local agencies to provide healthy snack bags for children and youth in our community.

Our goals for the School Fuel program moving forward are to expand the variety of food items currently offered, beyond pre-packaged, grab-and-go items, to increase the amount of healthy food options. We will continue to partner with agencies that are already talking about student nutrition to advocate for a nation-wide student nutrition program, work towards farm to cafeteria food systems, and improve food literacy and education in schools.

### **School Fuel in Our Community**

- Healthy breakfast foods for over 1640 students in 21 local schools each school day
- 300+ snack bags a week to local community partners when schools are closed
- 400+ snack bags distributed a month to youth through the Food Bank program



### **Our Contact Information**

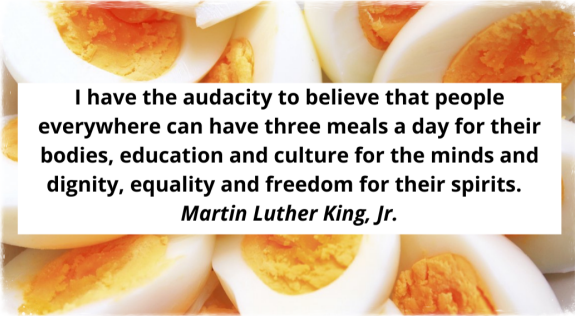
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**I have the audacity to believe that people everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for the minds and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits.**

***Martin Luther King, Jr.***