



THE FEED

January - March 2023 Newsletter

Message from Chris Peacock Executive Director



Greetings Sharing Place donors and community food advocates. I hope each of you had a safe and happy holiday season and the snowstorm did not cause significant issues to your holiday plans. We were snowed in at the Peacock household but thankfully we were where we needed to be. My heart goes out to those that were not able to be with family and friends due to weather or other unforeseen circumstances. It is always a time that is filled with joy for many but can also be a difficult time for others.

We were fortunate at The Sharing Place to have an opportunity to help many of our community members. The Food Bank was busy over December, running at full capacity, open 4 days a week and providing a six-day supply of food to those that needed our help. We also

ran our Holiday Hamper program that distributed close to 500 hampers filled with a Turkey or Ham, fresh veggies and the trimmings for a holiday dinner and breakfast. We are so thankful for all our volunteers that once again stepped up and did an exceptional job managing the increased demand for our services and receiving so many community food donations. They are truly the hardest working team of volunteers I have ever encountered. We are grateful for their commitment to our members and their ability to bring a positive and dignified vibe to our organization. Well done team!

Not only do we have an amazing team of volunteers, but we also have an amazing community that once again has provided us with enough food and financial support to continue our programs and focus on improving our impact. A big thanks to our donors, funders and community partners that enable us to improve access to healthy food throughout the Orillia region.

The new year brings time to reflect on 2022 and plan for 2023. At The Sharing Place we will be opening our new Commerical Kitchen this month to expand our Meals-4-Change program and create new opportunities to improve community food access. We are also launching a new Service with Dignity training program for our volunteers and staff. This continues the goal of providing our members with a dignified and welcoming experience when they engage with our organization.

The School Fuel program continues to grow, and we now support 23 local schools with healthy food for their breakfast and snack programs, feeding over 4,500 kids a day. With this growth comes increased food and program expenses. Growth compounded with inflation means we continue to see significant increases in our variable costs, reinforcing the importance of having a resilient organization that can weather economic turbulence and increased need. Resiliency will be a focus for us in 2023; improving our organizational policies and procedures, solidifying strategic partnerships that build our collective impact, continuing to diversify our funding streams and making sure we train our team to be great at what we do.

We know we will have a challenging year, but it will be filled with opportunities to improve our impact and grow as an organization. We look forward to collaborating and sharing with many people and organizations. We encourage everyone to reach out if you wish to learn more about The Sharing Place, stop in for a tour or send us an email. We are always happy to discuss how we can improve what we do and make sure we are truly creating a healthy community through access to nutritious food.

Kind Regards,

Chris

2022 Impact

As busy as popcorn on a skillet!

Food Recovery



Lbs. of food
recovered from
grocery stores:

448,075

Meals-4-Change



Premade meals
prepared and
distributed:

23,945

School Fuel



Children & youth
that accessed
healthy food:

516,064

Food Bank



Members that
accessed a 6-day
supply of food:

19,763

Community Member Highlight Meet Kathleen

We have added a new article to our newsletter called Community Member Highlight where you will meet one of the people who have visited The Sharing Place Food Bank program.



"When I was younger, I lived in Toronto. I collected food and clothing in our Co-Op for the homeless people in our neighbourhood and cooked turkey dinner for them every Christmas for about 6 years or so. I wanted to help people. Even though we didn't have any money to donate, it didn't take anything to gather donations for people. I always loved to feed other people. Especially when you are down with so much, you still have to eat.

Later, I lived for several years with my partner in an RV. Summer in Ontario and winter in Florida. In 2014 I had a stroke and in 2017 he got sick. I had an RV, a car and two dogs but I didn't have a driver's license. He always did the driving. When he died, anything we had went to his kids. I had no place to live and nowhere to store anything. I stayed in a hotel during that time. I still carry some of his ashes in a vial around my neck.

I found an apartment here in Orillia, a room with a bathroom. I had to go on welfare and try to find a job. All my money went to rent. I managed to get through six months on the food that I had saved but then I had to swallow my pride and go through a lot of spiritual growth to find food for myself as opposed to collecting for others. I called up The Sharing Place and got food. I would walk up and back with the groceries I got. That year my hip started to go, and I couldn't get there anymore so I made arrangements to have it delivered.

The landlord sold the building I lived in that spring and in the summer, a new landlord gave the tenants a letter saying they were going to renovate, and we had to leave. The law said we could come back at the same rent, but they gave us a payout if we agreed not to come back. There was no place for me to go. I have two little dogs who are my family. No rooms would allow pets. I had nowhere to go and was going to be homeless with a bad hip and ongoing issues from the stroke. If I ended up homeless, I'd be dead in months. I had to be out by the end of the year. I had faith though. I was lucky because I had the food bank and welfare. In December I found an apartment for \$1000 a month. I was only getting just over \$800 a month, but I had the money from leaving the other apartment. I believed my welfare money plus a little bit out of the pot from the last apartment would be enough until I got ODSP. The application is long and hard, and I ran out of money in June. After that I just kept falling deeper and deeper in dept. I got denied ODSP, everyone does, and I appealed through legal aid. I had a court date for a hearing because I owed \$2000+ in back rent. I was poor as a church mouse. My rent went up again. And they charged me \$186 to take me to court. Finally, I was approved for ODSP. They backpay you to the date of original application, so I was able to pay my back rent. I also bought an air fryer to eat healthier. I bought my own groceries for two months and didn't have to go to the food bank. But that money ran out. ODSP is just over \$1200 a month and after rent, I barely have any money left. I go back to the food bank again now to help make ends meet.

My brothers want me to move back to Toronto, but I like it here. It's cleaner and healthier. I like the small-town feeling, that people smile and say hello on the street. This is where the spirit dropped me when my partner died, and this is where I'll stay. The lake is healing. All these things that happened are lessons in life. I'm trying to meet each lesson and go with it. People may look at my life and think what a sad old woman. But I feel so grateful and lucky. After 30 years of being a homemaker and not having anything to put on a resume, I still have money for rent, food in my belly and food for my dog. I still get to exist, flourish, and learn my lessons.

What would I say to someone who needs food and is thinking about visiting the food bank? I would say go. Why is that even a question? I had pride, ego. I always helped others; it was hard to accept help. Accept the help. There are so many people out there that need the help."

Volunteer Highlight

Meet Sarah

Sarah is a student volunteer and in the short time she has been here, has made a big impact. When she isn't participating in warehouse "shenanigans" with the other volunteers, she is working hard to fight poverty and food insecurity in our community.



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

A: *I am finishing up high school now, and I also like to do yoga, sing, go for walks and spend time outside.*

Q: Tell me how you first got involved with The Sharing Place Food Centre?

A: *I am part of a youth program placement, and it was suggested that I volunteer at The Sharing Place. I started five days a week doing food recovery, going along with the driver to pick up food from the local grocery stores. Since then, I have had the opportunity to help in different positions. I enjoy them all but really enjoy working in distribution, directly serving the public.*

Q: What was your first impression or first stand-out memory of The Sharing Place Food Centre?

A: *I found The Sharing Place volunteer community to be special. I have never had a volunteer experience like this before where there are varying age groups working side by side. Oftentimes in the workforce you're working with your peers, or directed by people who are senior to you, but working together has been a great experience. It has given me insight into other people, each on different points of their life journey. I also didn't realize how many retired people choose to volunteer, and how important it is to them.*

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

A: *I feel like I am a part of something. Important and valuable. I feel very welcomed here and seen. I feel confident in my abilities and my work here has helped me to channel that confidence. I always leave with a full heart.*

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

A: *Being able to see past the stigma of food banks. Realizing that food banks need so much more than just cans or items in your cupboard. I also learned through the Food Recovery program about how much waste happens in our local food system. This was a shock to me. Food that is still perfectly consumable and that should be shared in the community. It makes me wonder how it took so long for programs like this to come to life.*

Q: What do you find most challenging about volunteering?

A: *Volunteering encourages me to look inward and face the internal conflict of need vs desire, which has been a little uncomfortable, but I am so grateful for it. I am becoming aware of the reality of food insecurity. I see how difficult it can be for those in need of the food bank to come in, and I just want it to feel like a safe space for everyone.*

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

A: *I wish people were more aware of what food banks really need. Things like diapers, hygiene items, food for animals. Healthy food that goes beyond canned soup and pasta.*

Q: Tell me about some of the people you've met while working at The Sharing Place Food Centre?

A: *The people in the warehouse make me feel cared for. As a younger volunteer, the community of people in the warehouse who volunteer with me have helped me to build my social skills, especially after the effects of the pandemic. I felt I had a hard time creating connections again and they helped me feel safe doing that. I feel like they want to see me succeed in my personal ambitions.*

Q: What's your personal philosophy on what should be done about food insecurity?

A: *I am not sure I have an answer. As a general note, those who aren't struggling with food insecurity should reflect on their privilege and how they can help those that are struggling. As a society, we need to work through the stigma, to normalize getting supports for people in need. Ensuring everyone feels safe and human.*

Q: What would you tell someone who is thinking about volunteering?

A: *I would tell them that it's a community that will fill your heart. You will be made to feel very welcome.*

Q: What else can you tell me about volunteering at The Sharing Place?

A: *I really feel that volunteering at The Sharing Place has made me challenge some of my mental health struggles and my anxiety. Helped me to build my confidence. See and feel like I am a capable young adult contributing to this community. I had forgotten that I was capable. I am thankful for the opportunity to volunteer here and everything The Sharing Place has offered me.*

Total Hours Contributed by the Volunteer Team in 2022

14428

Recipe of the Season

Turkey Stew

Here at The Sharing Place, we still have some turkey in our freezer. Maybe you still have some leftovers in your freezer, or maybe you still have a whole turkey if your family didn't make it in because of the storm. Use up any leftovers in this yummy recipe!



INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup butter
1 onion, diced
1/1 cup flour
1 teaspoon poultry seasoning
1/2 teaspoon dried rosemary
5 cups turkey broth (chicken or vegetable will do)
3 cups baby potatoes, sliced in half
2 carrots, cut into into 1-inch pieces
2 ribs celery cut into 1 inch chunks
1 bay leaf
2/3 cup heavy cream
1/3 cup frozen peas
Salt and pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

Heat butter in a large pot over medium heat and cook onions until softened, about 3-4 minutes.
Add flour and seasonings and cook 1 minute more.
Stir in broth a bit at a time whisking until smooth after each addition.
Add potatoes, carrots, celery, and bay leaf. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to a simmer, and cook covered for 18 minutes or until vegetables are tender.
Stir in the turkey & cream, simmer an additional 5 minutes uncovered.
Stir in peas, discard bay leaf, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Let rest 2-3 minutes to heat the peas.
Garnish with parsley if desired and serve.

The soup can be frozen for up to 3 months.



Our Contact Information

{{Organization Name}}
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