



## THE FEED

### April 2023 Newsletter

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#### Message from Chris Peacock Executive Director



Well, it is that time again when our wonderful Development Manager, Christine Arnold, asks me to write a message for our quarterly newsletter. This is the time where I get to reflect on our past three months and what the future holds. It's a time when I think about all the incredible work our team of volunteers and staff have done to help those that are food insecure access healthy food. I think about the challenges our organization is faced with and how we are responding to those challenges. I need to filter, refine, and boil down the work we do and the struggles of our less fortunate community members, and fit it into a 500-word essay. So here we go.

The problem is simple. Food, housing, and fuel are now much more expensive than three years ago, which are the backbone to a low-income budget. Most people with a low income have seen little to no increase in their wages or social assistance, like ODSP, OW, OAS and EI. This means they cannot afford the necessities to maintain a healthy life for themselves or their family. When people are not able to afford the necessities of life, they get sick, they get desperate to pay for housing and feed their family and themselves. When you are desperate you can only make decisions for the moment, not for the long term. If you cannot make long-term decisions, then you cannot get out of the situation you are in. We need to provide those on a low income with the foundation of support required to build a plan to get out of poverty. Without a stable foundation we will have more people falling into poverty and fewer getting out. This will only cause continued increases in our health care costs, crime rate and a lower GDP. That's right, a lower GDP. If we are not providing low-income individuals with a stable foundation, there will be a less productive workforce and it will become much more challenging to maintain a positive workplace culture. As many successful businesspeople know, the more cohesive and positive a workforce is, the more efficient and productive their business will be. If we invest in our employees we invest in our long-term future success. If we invest in our seniors and individuals with a disability, we invest in the health and prosperity of our community.

At The Sharing Place, we are not sitting and waiting for the government to address the issues of income inequality, affordable housing and improved social assistance programs. We understand that this ship moves slowly, and we need to improve our long-term plans and resiliency as an organization. Over the next three months we will be opening our commercial kitchen and expanding our Meals-4-Change program, creating over 1,500 healthy frozen meals a week to distribute throughout our region. We will continue to expand our School Fuel program that supports 23 local schools and over 4,200 kids a day with healthy school breakfast items and snacks. We will continue to purchase and recover healthy food from local grocery stores and farmers to not only improve food security but help support our local food system.

The growth and long-term success of our programs is only possible if we continue to diversify and improve our donations, grants, and food recovery program. We believe if we continue to create programs that are impactful, dignified and built for the long term, our community will recognize this and respond with support. We promise to keep our programs moving in the right direction and we just ask that you help us fund this progress. Together we can build a foundation for a strong local food system that supports our most vulnerable community members. Eventually our government will be forced to address the issues of social assistance not being indexed to inflation, but at what cost to our humanity?

Kind regards,

Chris



Orillia Home Hardware Building Centre believes that access to nutritious food is vital to the health of each child.

**From March 1st - April 6th\*, Orillia Home Hardware will be matching every donation made to The Sharing Place, up to \$20,000.**

The Sharing Place Food Centre purchases and delivers healthy breakfast foods and snacks to more than 4200 students each day in 23 local schools, and 400 children each week when schools are closed. The Sharing Place funds 50% of food costs when schools are open, and 100% when schools are closed.



*\*Orillia Home Hardware will be accepting donations at the register from Saturday, April 1 - Thursday, April 6th.*

**Donate between March 1st - April 6th and Orillia Home Hardware will double your impact!**

Donate

## January/February/March 2023 Impact

Some food for thought...

### Food Recovery



Lbs. of food  
recovered from  
grocery stores:

**115,993**

### Meals-4-Change



Premade meals  
prepared and  
distributed:

**6356**

### School Fuel



Children & youth  
that accessed  
healthy food:

**230,219**

### Food Bank



Members that  
accessed a 6-day  
supply of food:

**6033**

## Community Member Highlight Meet Mike



COVID triggered a big change in my life. In May 2020 I had been working for a big construction company for 12 years. I was making \$75,000 a year, with a company truck, phone, and full benefits. The company restructured because of the pandemic and erased my position. After that, everything changed. I was unemployed for 3 months then took a retail job at 25 hours a week for just above minimum wage. I was making less than 35% of what I had been, and my family couldn't make ends meet. I found a full-time position in retail and have been working there over two years. I still earn a little over minimum wage, but at least it's full time with basic benefits. I got my T4 for 2022 and I made \$35,000.

I am 16 years married and we have a blended family with four children. Three of our kids live at home 23, 14 and 12, and our adult son lives on his own. I have Tourette Syndrome, as do both of our school-aged children. Our 23-year-old daughter has autism. My wife has physical mobility issues and has been struggling to get ODSP for three years. ODSP has cancelled her tribunal twice already, and the next one is in June. Even our doctor can't figure out why

they keep denying her. She has been unable to work for more than a decade and is not on Ontario Works. Our 23-year-old daughter receives ODSP and takes care of some of her own expenses and helps towards groceries and rent. It's not a lot. Aside from that, I am the only income earner. It's been years now and we are falling behind financially.

The first time I used the food bank was about two years ago and I was reluctant. In my mind I felt like I had failed. It was the first time I couldn't put groceries on the table. I cried. I came in alone for groceries for my entire family. As much as the volunteers are welcoming and great, I felt awkward. I didn't want to have to ask for help but now I feel better that I know we have food for my kids.

Visiting The Sharing Place has been a huge financial help. We plan our meals a week to two weeks in advance, based on what we get from the food bank and grocery shopping. I have some food restrictions due to allergies, so if we receive that food from the food bank, my family can eat it and then I can stretch our grocery money to buy the food I need. With the food we receive and the extra sauces in the pantry section, it gives us more variety in what we cook.

It also allows us to stretch our finances in other ways. I often feel bad that we can't do special things for our kids, and I also feel bad that we get food from the food bank. It's awkward. What do we say, "We have to ignore your birthday because we don't have a bag of milk"? None of us smoke, drink or use recreational products, so that kind of money we put aside to take our son out for supper on his birthday.

We had to buy the younger children new winter boots this year and we bought them at value village. Our kids want name brand clothes, just like all kids, but we must find them at thrift shops or on sale. It's tough when they are growing so fast, and they don't last long. My older daughter and I have bonding time by going to garage sales. We get some great gifts and start our Christmas shopping in January. We've learned how to stretch our dollar over the last few years.

Since visiting The Sharing Place, I find that we are eating better. It's a good variety of meat and produce, and it goes a long way. When there is extra produce, we freeze mushrooms, onions, carrots, and celery, and then I can pull out diced veggies to add to soups, stews, and sauces. We have a family system at home that anything we freeze must be allergen free. If we pull out a frozen container of food, we know I can eat it.

What would I say to someone who needs food and is thinking about visiting the food bank but has never been before? Don't think about it. Just get the help you need. My 14-year-old daughter wants to come in to do her volunteer hours when she is old enough because our family uses the food bank, and she sees the benefit in our community.

## Volunteer Highlight

### Meet Alison

*Alison has been volunteering at The Sharing Place longer than anyone can remember, in our current and two past locations. She works in the Porter position, greeting people as they begin choosing their groceries and ensuring everyone has a cart. Since Alison moved out to the reception area, the other volunteers say she has really come out of her shell and has become known for her big bear hugs. If you stop in, make sure to say "Hello, Sunshine" to Alison.*



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

**A:** I hang out with family, go bowling and go for walks on the trails in Orillia to keep healthy.

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

**A:** Someone said I would be good at helping out, a long time ago. I have been volunteering ever since because I like to help people.

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

**A:** The number of people who visit the food bank. Today, more than 80 people came in, which is a lot. More and more people are coming in every week.

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

**A:** I love to see all the people who visit the food bank and all the volunteers. I have made friends with some of the volunteers.

**Q:** What do you find most challenging about volunteering?

**A:** Standing on my feet for five hours at a time. But it's worth it to do the work I do when I am volunteering.

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

**A:** I wish people would realize there are a lot of families that rely on the food bank.

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

**A:** I like meeting new people and working with the other volunteers. And it gets me out of the house too. In the bad snowstorm in December, I put on my big snowsuit and winter boots to walk to The Sharing Place because I wanted to make sure people got food.

**Q:** Tell me about some of the people you've met while volunteering at The Sharing Place?

**A:** Sometimes I go for lunch on Wednesdays with other volunteers. I didn't know them before I started volunteering. I have met a lot of nice people who care about me. They gave me a nickname that I like. Sunshine. I like when they greet me and say, "Hello, Sunshine!".

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

**A:** I think there should be higher wages for people that work. I have noticed more people coming in that are working, than in the past.

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

**A:** It is a great place to meet people, make new friends, and know that you are helping other people.

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

4973

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## Recipe of the Season Potato Leek Soup



A yummy, warming soup that is a favourite here at The Sharing Place.

### INGREDIENTS

3 tablespoons unsalted butter  
4 large leeks, white and light green parts only, roughly chopped (about 5 cups)  
3 cloves garlic, peeled and smashed  
2 pounds Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and roughly chopped into ½-inch pieces  
7 cups chicken or vegetable broth  
2 bay leaves  
3 sprigs fresh thyme  
1 teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon ground black pepper  
1 cup heavy cream  
Chives, finely chopped, for serving

## INSTRUCTIONS

Melt the butter over medium heat in a large soup pot. Add the leeks and garlic and cook, stirring regularly, until soft and wilted, about 10 minutes. Adjust the heat as necessary so as not to brown.

Add the potatoes, broth, bay leaves, thyme, salt and pepper to pot and bring to a boil. Cover and turn the heat down to low. Simmer for 15 minutes, or until the potatoes are very soft.

Fish out the thyme sprig and bay leaves, then purée the soup with a hand-held immersion blender until smooth. (Alternatively, use a standard blender to purée the soup in batches.) Add the heavy cream and bring to a simmer. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt and pepper. If soup is too thin, simmer until thickened. If it's too thick, add water or stock to thin it out. Garnish with fresh herbs if desired.

*The soup can be frozen for up to 3 months.*



### Our Contact Information

\*{{Organization Name}}\*

\*{{Organization Address}}\*

\*{{Organization Phone}}\*

\*{{Organization Website}}\*

\*{{Unsubscribe}}\*

