

Orangeville Food Bank preparing for a tough summer



By Jasen Obermeyer

For most, the summer season is a time to have fun, enjoy the weather, and relax. For the Orangeville Food Bank, though, it's a time that sees an increase in users but a decrease in donations.

Summer vacation means schools close down, and with that, their breakfast and other food programs that too many kids rely on.

Though the food bank has their program 'Kids Zone' which provides kids under 18 with monthly orders of yogurt, cheese strings, oranges, apples, carrots and cucumbers (free of points), it is still not enough for those in need.

Heather Hayes, the food bank's executive director, says they were stunned when there were 612 visits to the food bank in May, with June being similar, and although several were repeats, 'that was pretty big for us' the increase has been quite substantial as of late.' She says that because the schools' breakfast and food programs close down, they see an increase of kids, and users in general, during the summer months. 'When those programs shutdown, we forget that somebody's not getting a lunch or a breakfast.'

Some of their recent big donations include the Orangeville M&M Food Market donating a fridge/freezer combo, along with Lavender Blue Catering's donation of six cases of cereal. Their biggest recent contributor has been the Compass Community Church's Walk for Compass Run, held in mid-June, which raised \$10,000 for the local food bank. The money will go towards their food budget and operating costs.

In celebration of their 25th anniversary, there is a campaign online through Canada Helps called '25 for 25,' where one can donate \$25 monthly to the food bank.

Ms. Hayes says they are pushing their new Grow A Row Give A Row program, along with hygiene products, snacks and cereals, food the kids rely on from the school programs.

'Any kind of fresh produce, any kind of dairy, or any kind of protein, are the things people are really looking for, because those are the biggest strains on any of our budgets.'

She says the reason they fall out of people's minds during this time is that there is no major holiday during this season, no 'celebration of food,' like Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

'Summer is all about being outside and being with your family, and sort of letting some of the worries and cares of the rest of the year float away.'