

St. Thomas Elgin Food Bank
MANAGER OF PUBLIC RELATIONS & ADMINISTRATION ANNUAL REPORT 2023

March 26, 2024 Board Meeting

Highlights of 2023:

Food Related:

This year has been a whirlwind of activity at our food bank with such kindness and generosity from our local community members to help to 'feed the need' in our area! Our partnership with our vendors and food assistant providers continues to flourish and help feed the need in our community. We continue to receive fresh produce, baked goods, and dry food items from Harvest Hands regularly. Fresh produce is also received from Common Ground Farms, Kains Street Community Garden, apples from Great Lakes Farms, and fresh potatoes from Clifton Parker & Son. Also, food items from Grace Café, Christmas Care, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Knights of Columbus soups, London Food Bank for our milk and egg quotas along with the "Full Shelves" hub allocation, 20 trays of sliced bread, extra produce, and frozen meats. We also pickup at Costco in London every other week and our local grocery store donation bins twice a week. The Egg, Chicken, and Dairy Farmers of Ontario continue to support us throughout the year via Feed Ontario and Food Banks Canada. We also participated in the Food Banks Canada "After The Bell" program and received 580 snacks bags and \$1,680 to purchase healthy snacks for our children during the summer months. The "One More Bite" program is still ongoing with fresh, frozen, dry, and non-food items from Walmart and Food Basics. We categorize and weigh everything for computer input to the program – I am excited to mention that we received 83,242 lbs. of rescued food in 2023 (2002 was 51,796 lbs)! Superstore and Freshco are with the "Second Harvest" food rescue program with breads, bakery, and deli products picked up weekly and then weighed and entered into the program.

The "SNAP-Smarter Needs Allocation Program" via Feed Ontario supplied us with much needed pallets of frozen, fresh, and dry food items throughout the year. Erb Trucking delivered skids of healthy frozen dinners, pizzas, luncheon meats, margarine, Lean Cuisine Mac & Cheese meals, Green Giant Cauliflower Rice Lemon Cilantro frozen veggies, fresh produce, Nestle Stouffer's meals, & frozen boxes of Peanut Butter & Jelly Crustless Mini Sandwiches to name a few.

We were excited to learn that our new Amazon facility in Talbotville chose our food bank to donate assorted pallets of food, hygiene items, cleaning products, pet foods, & sundry items at least twice per month as of November 2023! A huge thanks to Sheri & Cassidy Lawrence for pickup and deliveries of these huge donations using their own trailer and trucks. Thanks also to the Amazon employees and my "Amazon Team" of volunteers for the task of moving these heavy pallets of donations into our building. It is wonderful to be able to provide our clients with some special extras and full containers of hygiene and cleaning products to fill their food hampers.

Food Purchases:

Our food bank client numbers continue to grow and therefore we have had to spend a lot more than prior years. We order pallets of food items now, compared to purchasing cases in past years. We spent a staggering \$245,201 on food purchases this year in comparison to \$119,346 in 2022. We have accounts at Superstore, Food Basics, Shoppers Drug Mart on Elm, Wholesale Club in London, and Worldwide Foods (they are the only vendor that delivers). I ordered 30 or more skids of dry and canned food products from Worldwide Foods in 2023 – lucky for us that they deliver! We need to utilize our van or rent a truck from U-Haul to pickup the larger skids of food products.

Building Facility / Equipment / Van:

Our new "Food Hamper" door and platform is working out splendidly for Kim to distribute hampers to our clients. The van was in an accident involving a driver that cut us off in the Walmart parking lot in the summer. We had a rental 2022 Chevy Tahoe SUV from June to August, damage to the van was covered by our insurance and it was repaired and back on the road the end of summer. I had the old metal shed removed and also tore up the old floor in our garbage & green bin shed. Our St. Thomas Recycling Centre has been very kind and allowed us to dump any excess garbage and building materials at no charge.

Food Drive Results:

Our generous community continues to organize food drives throughout the year to supply us with non-perishable food and hygiene items. We receive an abundance of donations at holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter from our local schools, hockey teams, businesses, churches, organizations, birthday & anniversary celebrations and the list goes on. I continue to partake in the myFM "All Hands Onn Deck" and "Jam-A-Ram" food drives held at Superstore annually which provide truckloads of much needed food & monetary donations to our food bank.

The "Holiday Food Drive" held at Railway City Brewery was an amazing success again this year with a massive collection of food and monetary donations! This annual event is "In Memory of Liette Dalla-Vicenza" (mom and grandmother to the fabulous musicians).

Donor Highlights & Charitable Tax Receipts:

Our generous and dedicated new and regular donors continue to provide us with much-needed monetary donations throughout the year. I have highlighted all of these amazing donations in my monthly reports, but decided to mention a few that were extremely generous to our food bank!! We raised \$11,700 from donations received in February – for every \$25 donated your name was entered to win 2 tickets to the Taylor Swift concert! (The tickets were donated anonymously – so very generous!). Sadly, Centre Street Baptist Church had closed its doors in September 2022, and were so very generous to donate \$65,000 to us at that time. Then again donated another \$30,900 in March 2023! Such an amazing generous and kind donation to support our food bank! The "Forever Legacy Foundation" via Aqueduct Foundation donated \$20,000 once again this year to support our food bank! The Canadian Railroad Men's Mutual Protective Association was again generously donated \$20,000! "St. Thomas & Surrounding Area Honest Food Reviews & Specials" is a new donor that organized a fundraiser for our food bank and raised \$4,100! This amazing donation was matched by "Le Café Siam" for a total \$8,200 donation! The "Estate of Marianne Barrie" donated \$25,000. The Elgin-St. Thomas Community Foundation continues to support our food bank with \$5,000 from the "Sweetgrass Fund".

I continue to email or mail charitable tax receipts to our donors along with thank you letters with the majority being sent at year-end. I also send a personal thank you to all donors via Canada Helps online. My "Software4NonProfits" donation/receipt program is working well to provide the distribution of the receipts and track all donations received throughout the year. I continue to make all bank deposits and maintain spread sheets for our donations and e-transfers received. I also keep tallies of all gift cards received and used on spreadsheets and copy our treasurer on a regular basis. I continue to recognize monetary and food donations received on our social media via Facebook and Instagram.

Grants:

I continue to investigate potential future grant opportunities from Feed Ontario and Food Banks Canada.

Volunteers/Board Members/Staff:

We had a wonderful retirement dinner for our past treasurer, Pat Thornton held in the Legion Canteen. Pat was an invaluable asset to our food bank from 1988 to 2023! We still keep in touch and meet for lunch now and then. A fond farewell to our friend and past Board President, Mavis Currie in March 2023. We have an amazing group of dedicated and passionate staff, volunteers, and board members, everyone single individual is committed to assisting those in need within our community.

Professional Development/Public Speaking/Community Involvement:

I have been very active in my role with public relations and community engagement to promote our food bank. The food bank has been active with local media such as myFM Radio, CBC Radio, CTV London, St. Thomas Times Journal, London Free Press and the Elgin County Market. I have been active on social media via Facebook, Instagram, and our website, promoting the good work of our food bank, showcasing our generous donors and volunteers. I have made myself available to speak at different organizations and groups to educate them and talk about the food bank. We continue to share excess donations with the Inn, The Nameless, Harvest Hands, Grace Café, and the Outreach members from our Food Provider network.

I was excited to complete 6 out of 6 participation shares from Jackpot Time! We received extra funding from them whenever I shared their logo at our food bank, online, on our website, and then I drummed up a new one and added their logo to my signature line on all emails! Here is their letter of congratulations to our food bank:

"Hi Karen/St Thomas Elgin Foodbank,

First, thank you for being part of this social media event. Sharing the good news of charitable gaming with the public is working!!! Earnings are up at Jackpot Time; earnings are up for the St Thomas Gaming Association charities. If you have completed your 6 paid participation activities, it is our hope you will continue sharing with the community.

Thank you for submitting your recent participation marketing. Your charity has been approved for an extra ¼ share, and it will appear on the next monthly disbursement. Each time a charity of the STGA completes participation marketing activity, every charity benefits. The greater the audience we can reach about the benefits of charitable gaming in our community, the more customers will walk through the doors of Jackpot Time, the greater our shared monthly disbursements. You have now completed 6 of 6 available participation shares. Thanks Sean"

Sarah and I attended the Feed Ontario "The Evolution of Change 2023 Conference" held in Cambridge for 3 days in June 2023. There were over 180 food bankers in attendance representing 80 Ontario food banks. We currently have 138 direct member food banks in the Feed Ontario Network. Sue Gillick and I attended the "Community Conversation Series" event held at the CASO building. We setup our own booth representing the food bank along with other community partners. This event was to raise awareness and better understanding of the positive impact of the supports in place in our community. I am an active member of the "Food Providers Network" group and attend all monthly meetings via zoom. I strive to be the voice and face of the St. Thomas Elgin Food Bank.

We were chosen as the recipient of the "Tim Horton Holiday Smile Cookie Campaign" for a week in November 2023 with an astonishing \$15,196.91 collected from cookie sales at our local 7 Tim Horton outlets

On a Personal Note:

A heartfelt thank you to my fellow staff members, Sarah Coleman, Kim McCaw, Sue Gillick, and Catherine Dilworth for their hard work and dedication to our food bank throughout the year! A special thanks to our treasurers, Kiara Tilford-Kastner & Kelly Ward along with our accountants at Graham Scott Enns for their ongoing support. Lastly, we have an amazing group of volunteers that work well as a team and are truly dedicated and compassionate. Our food bank continues to offer a vital service to St. Thomas and Elgin County and our main goal is to continue providing this essential need to those most vulnerable. We realize that we are a necessity here to keep the hungry fed and continue to provide this invaluable service every 21 days to anyone in need. I am very proud to be a part of this amazing organization.

Sincerely,

Karen McDade
Manager of Public Relations & Administration