

CENTRETOWN EMERGENCY FOOD CENTRE: COORDINATOR'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2015

Since 1975, the Centretown Emergency Food Centre, a project of the Centretown Churches Social Action Committee (CCSAC), has served low-income residents of Centretown. Open four days a week, the Food Centre offers clients a 3-4 day supply of food on a monthly basis, according to their family size, in a dignified and non-judgemental manner. Whether in need through poverty, social isolation, illness or addiction, our clients are welcomed with respect, offered choices in their food selection, and given referrals to other services.

In 2015 the Food Centre served 9,760, including 525 new clients, compared to 9,331 last year. Our numbers included 1,885 children (1,611 in 2014). The high percentage of children reflects the recent increase in subsidized housing for families in our catchment area. This year we spent \$101,000 on food to supplement donations from our member churches, local schools and other food drives, and from the Ottawa Food Bank (which donates less than a quarter of the food we distribute). All combined, this means the Food Centre distributed well over \$435,000 worth of food.

The Food Centre is very grateful to CCSAC, our largest source of financial support, for their annual grant of \$25,000. CCSAC's member churches also made direct donations of over \$30,100. We are grateful too for the City of Ottawa's grant of \$55,367 which pays a good part of our staffing costs. Despite this help, and generous donations from individuals, foundations, local schools and proceeds from special events, we have incurred a significant deficit this year. Contributing factors were that our rent doubled from \$10,000 to \$20,000 this year, and the implementation of Link2Feed, the Ottawa Food Bank's data intake system, added an unexpected \$10,000 in staffing costs.

In January, we took stock of the food from our December food drives and reorganized our storage to facilitate accessing these supplies. With help of our Treasurer, Susan Johnson, I completed all tax receipts and T-4 forms, and by month's end, I was able to turn our books over to the auditors for review. As well in January, we had our first meeting with Natalie Spooner at the Ottawa Food Bank about the proposed Link2Feed data base. Fortunately, the Ottawa Bytown Rotary Club did a big food drive on January 24 at Loblaws.

By February, with the usual dip in donations, we had used up all the extra supplies accumulated during Christmas food drives. We had trouble with deliveries from the Ottawa Food Bank and our produce supplier. I was able to resolve the OFB difficulties and changed produce supplier in order to ensure better product and lower costs. My part-time assistant Imi Kovacs installed an upgraded computer and new software, a gift from a client, in my office, and set up another computer, with internet access, at the desk behind the greeters. As well, Imi and I took a tutorial from our volunteer webmaster, Elspeth Tory, so we can update our website (www.cefcottawa.org) ourselves. On February 28, I attended CCSAC's planning retreat, organized by CCSAC Chair Paul Dole, and moderated by Joe Gunn.

In March, we noted a serious decline in food donations, something that the Food Bank experienced as well. Fortunately, Curves at 1185 Bank Street held its annual food drive. On March 25, I hosted a Tea to inform volunteers about the proposed Link2Feed program, and on March 30, the nutritionist from Centretown Community Health Centre did an excellent cooking demonstration using a hot plate and simple ingredients for our clients.

In April, we started the month by hosting a Fundraising Seminar with Dan Brunette of the Ottawa Community Foundation, attended by CCSAC and Food Centre volunteers as well as representatives from Centre 507 and Centretown United Church. On April 9, the Chair of the Management Committee, Allison Dingle, and I met with Michael Maidment, head of the OFB, to discuss delivery problems and Link2Feed. On April 13 we served a record 97 clients, an event that underlined the difficulties presented by our limited space, especially as we will need more client stations in order to implement L2F. On April 15, I participated in CCSAC's AGM, and later in the month, I interviewed a candidate for next year's Carleton placement.

Also in April, the Hiring Committee chose Sarah Arnold for our HRDC summer student. Realizing that implementing Link2Feed would be both sensitive work and a time-consuming task, we decided to hire another summer student to work solely on L2F in the expectation that, with summer staff and help from several volunteers, we could have most of our client base entered by September. The Committee chose Trish Roy, a Social Work student at Carleton for the L2F job.

In early May, Sarah started her summer job and Trish started her job on our Link2Feed program on May 19. We soon began entering our first client data into the program, hoping we would be finished most of the work by the end of the summer. The next week Trish and I met with OFB's Natalie Spooner, to review some of the problems we were facing, and we received two refurbished computers from OFB to help us with processing forms.

On June 2, CCSAC hosted its annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner for the Food Centre. On June 4, I met with representatives of Northern Lights, an employment program, in order to enhance the resources we offer our clients. On June 25, the Rotary Club of Ottawa Bytown held a very successful food drive at Loblaws on Isabella. During the summer we received surplus food from Whole Foods Market at Lansdowne once a week. And the weekly donations that we receive all year round from Second Avenue Sweets and produce from Lansdowne Park Community gardens also helped us offer our clients some variety during a generally lean period.

Over the summer, we faced the usual problems of excessive heat, stressed clients, and food storages. As well, delivery problems with our main supplier, Hartman's Independent Grocer, were compounded when Hartman's closed without notice for several days before reopening as The Independent Grocer.

In July Allison and I met with Sylvie Bellaire, Interim Director, Centretown Community Health Centre to exchange information and to explore ways the two organizations might work together to provide

greater support for our clients. The meeting was worthwhile but did not result in any new programs. In late August Imi Kovacs resigned to accept another job. Fortunately, we were able to offer the position to Gladys McClement, an experienced social service worker who is familiar with our clientele. Gladys has made a special contribution with her popular monthly cooking demonstrations.

At first the data intake for Link2Feed went smoothly but then we began to see more problems with duplicating input and intrusive questions that some clients were reluctant to, and in some cases refused to answer. In early September, Carleton Placement student Ixchel Medina started her assignment. While the summer and early fall were slow for donations, fortunately they picked up in October. During the month we continued to work on aligning our in-house statistics with L2F data.

In November, the Food Centre was consulted about a letter that CCSAC sent to the Board of the Ottawa Food Bank to outline our frustrations with Link2Feed, in particular the duplication of effort and the time involved, and to suggest some practical adjustments to the program. We are very grateful to CCSAC for such an effective communication. We were greatly saddened by the death of CCSAC's dedicated Chair, Paul Dole, on November 19.

In December I submitted the final names of families for Centretown United's Christmas Hamper program, and with a large donation of turkeys, hams and gift certificates from the Food Bank, we were able to give extra help to our clients who did not receive a hamper. This year we had fewer and less successful food drives than previous years, so we had much less food than normal stored away for the coming months. However we received generous cash contributions from the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa's concert at St. Giles and Thirteen Strings' Christmas Candlelight concert, as well as several unexpected donations, in particular two donations of \$10,000.

On December 8, our Advent Service and Pot-Luck lunch for Food Centre volunteers and CCSAC representatives was a great success, with an uplifting message from our guest minister, Pastor Jim Pot of Knox Presbyterian Church.

During the year, I worked very hard to attract donations and to keep our expenses to a minimum. But with fewer donations of food, we have again spent a significant amount on food, our largest expense. Our final financial results will be detailed in the audit and the Treasurer's Report.

As Coordinator, I met monthly with the Food Centre's Management Committee, and prepared a monthly report for them and for CCSAC. I worked closely with our Treasurer to ensure our financial records are accurate and our funds well-managed. I supervised our part-time workers and Carleton University placement student, as well as various helpers who receive an honorarium. Over the course of the year, I spoke at 5 churches to promote the Food Centre to their congregations.

One of my special joys as Coordinator is to work with a wonderful team of volunteers and team leaders. The special respect and care they give our clients is what makes our work special. This is

always especially evident at Christmas time, our busiest and most stressful month. In 2015, our volunteers donated almost 9,460 hours to the Food Centre.

In closing, I want to thank all our supporters, in particular, our member Churches and their congregation members for their financial and spiritual support for our work. The Food Centre is not a long-term solution for our clients' poverty and needs. We are basically providing an emergency service to our clients. Giving food does not address their root problems, and there is always the risk of creating a culture of dependency. We are fortunate that our parent organization, CCSAC, is better placed to take action, advocating for higher minimum wages, adequate social welfare benefits and more social housing. Meanwhile, we continue to provide our clients with as much food security as we can.

Kerry Kaiser, Coordinator, January 26, 2016

ANNUAL CLIENT STATISTICS

	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
Children	1885	1611	1686	1091	803	658	664	646	650	955	1008
Adults	7875	7626	9233	8638	8057	8112	7973	7412	7132	7448	7103
Total	9,760	9331	10919	9729	8860	8770	8637	8058	7782	8403	8107

PER-CLIENT FOOD COSTS

2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
\$10.32	\$9.99	\$10.10	\$9.97	\$10.11	\$8.02	\$9.58	\$8.65	\$7.10	\$7.70	\$6.73