

Centretown Emergency Food Centre Annual Report for 2016

Since I have been writing Annual Reports for the Centretown Emergency Food Centre for over 20 years, a change in format seems timely, and so I am presenting this year's report topic by topic, instead of a month-by-month overview.

Summary of 2016: Located at 507 Bank Street, the Centretown Emergency Food Centre offers a 3- to -4 day supply of food to people in need in our catchment area bordered by Wellington Street, Main Street, including Lees Avenue, Billings Bridge and Lyon Street. Our biggest challenges this year were the significant increase in client numbers and the decrease in food donations. This year we welcomed a considerable number of recently-arrived refugees, many of whom were Syrian, but also many families from Burundi and other African countries. And while our member churches are very generous, it is clear that our need goes way beyond what they can provide.

Statistics: This past year the Food Centre provided food to 10,126 people, up from 9,790 last year and including a large increase in the number of children, that is 1983 compared to 1,680 children in 2015. This indicates a marked shift in our clientele, with more families using our services. The other significant change was, as noted above, the number of new refugees among our client numbers. Yet another was an increase in minimum wage earners, that is, in working poor who turned to us for help.

Programs: While the Food Centre's top priority is the quality and quantity of food we offer our clients, we offer as much programming for our clients as our limited space allows. We keep our bulletin boards up to date to provide clients with easy access to pertinent information such as meal and drop-in programs and complementary social services. This past year we offered more cooking demonstrations, a great opportunity to promote nutrition and thrift. At Christmas we were able to offer 50 client families a Christmas hamper, thanks to the Christmas Hamper program of Centretown United Church, while donations of ham, turkey and gift cards from the Ottawa Food Bank were available to clients not eligible for a hamper. We keep hats and mitts all winter and, when we can, we have books, clothing and household items available for clients too. With so many children among our clientele, we were very pleased to start to start a lunch-bag program this summer, funded by St. Andrew's Church, and we are planning to provide this special help to client families with school-age children again this summer.

Finances: One of the biggest stresses for the Food Centre is finances. Last year's expenses totalled **\$222,070** of this, almost \$100,000 was for food purchased to supplement donations. Staffing and rent are our other major expenses. This year we have managed to avoid a deficit, but this surplus will soon be used up as we will have to purchase a large portion of our food in January and February. Now that we have hired Gladys McClement as my part-time assistant, our staffing costs are up but we benefit in so many ways from her expertise and versatility. For instance, I estimate that she saved us about \$10,000 in food costs this year when tendering contracts for food purchases. And with her on staff, we can reduce the number of weeks that we take on extra help in the summer.

Support: We are very grateful for strong support from our member churches, the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Food Bank. Of these, our greatest source of support is the churches of the Centretown Churches Social Action Committee, our parent organization. CCSAC gives us an annual grant of

\$25,000, while the Churches contribute another \$46,900 directly to the Food Centre, as well as being the major source of our donated food and volunteers. This was a particularly busy year for CCSAC as it organized a wonderful Walk-A-thon in the fall from City Hall to Parliament Hill, an event which made \$12,000 in proceeds for the Food Centre. Happily for us, this event took a large bite out of our projected deficit!

The City of Ottawa’s sustaining grant of about \$57,000 is another major source of stability for us, while the third pillar is the Ottawa Food Bank which donated approximately a quarter of the food we distribute. During the year, we also benefited from donations from many individuals, including several large donations, from food drives by local schools and from Christmas fundraising events by the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa, Thirteen Strings and Knox Presbyterian Church.

Volunteers: Of course the Food Centre could not function without its many dedicated volunteers. On each of the four days the Centre operates, we have a morning and an afternoon volunteer team. Some of our weekly volunteers also serve on the Management Committee. Each member church has volunteers who deliver their food donations and we consider CCSAC representatives as volunteers too, given their efforts and collaboration with our Annual Advent Service, the Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner they host for us, and the Ecumenical Service for Social Justice. We cannot thank CCSAC and our volunteers enough.

As Coordinator, I am responsible for all aspects of the day-to day running of the Food Centre. I meet monthly with the Food Centre’s Management Committee and prepare a monthly report for them and for CCSAC. I train staff, supervise and mentor our summer students and Carleton placement students, and fundraise actively for the Centre. For the past two years, the Link2Feed data base program has been a major drain on the Centre’s resources, but has now been absorbed into day to day operations. Looking ahead to 2017, despite the space constraints of our small quarters, it is my goal to maintain our high level of service to our clients, to lower food costs by tendering contracts to wholesalers, to further reduce our labour costs and to continue to seek new sources of funding to support our program.

ANNUAL CLIENT STATISTICS

	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
Children	2159	1885	1611	1686	1091	803	658	664	646	650	955	1008
Adults	7969	7875	7626	9233	8638	8057	8112	7973	7412	7132	7448	7103
Total	10126	9,760	9331	10919	9729	8860	8770	8637	8058	7782	8403	8107

PER-CLIENT FOOD COSTS

2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
\$9.63	\$10.32	\$9.99	\$10.10	\$9.97	\$10.11	\$8.02	\$9.58	\$8.65	\$7.10	\$7.70

Kerry Kaiser, Coordinator, January 24, 2017