

Centretown Emergency Food Centre Annual Report for 2017

In submitting my report for 2017, I am pleased to note that the Centretown Emergency Food Centre achieved the five goals I set at the start of the year: to maintain the quality of service for our clients, to lower our per- person food costs, to reduce staffing costs, to install air conditioning in our client room and to find new sources of funding. Of course, I had greater success with some than others!

Summary of 2017: Located since 1978 at 507 Bank Street, the Food Centre will celebrate its fortieth year of operation this year. A project of the Centretown Churches Social Action Committee (CCSAC), the 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, on a monthly basis. We serve needy people of all backgrounds, race and religion. Many of our clients are on social welfare or on the Ontario Disability Support Program. Most are single males living in rooming houses, but we also serve families, working poor and recent immigrants. This year we continued to welcome refugee families from Syria, Burundi and other African countries.

Statistics: This past year the Food Centre provided food to 9,406 people, less than the 10,126 from last year, including fewer children, 1956 compared to 2159 children in 2016. This is mainly because in 2016 year we served so many large refugee families while they were in short-term housing at the Y. However the lower number of clients did not diminish the amount of work in the Centre, and some days we worked at full capacity, that is, an average of 50 clients per day.

Programs: Our grocery program is only one link in the social service network for low-income people in Centretown, but it is a vital one. We do not have space to address our clients' other needs, but we try to enhance our support by partnering with other groups and through referrals, rather than duplicating services that exist elsewhere.

So while the Food Centre's top priority remains to provide as much high-quality food as we can to each client, we keep our bulletin boards up to date to provide clients with pertinent information such as meal and drop-in programs and complementary social services. Our cooking demonstrations are a great opportunity to promote nutrition and thrift. At Christmas 48 of our client families received 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 distributed to almost every client who was not eligible for a Christmas hamper. We keep hats and mitts all winter and, when we can, we have books, clothing and household items available for clients too. Our honorarium program for delivery staff has helped stabilize the life of several of our former clients.

Finances: During the year, and right up until the end of December, we worry about whether we can meet the year's operating expenses because most of our donations come in December, the last month of our fiscal year. Last year's expenses totalled \$205,012. Of this, \$81,201 was spent on food purchased to supplement donations. Staffing and rent are our other major expenses. Staffing costs were lower in 2017 and we are benefitting in many ways from having a part-time assistant at the Centre. Aiden Grapes, whom we hired in August to replace my former assistant Gladys McClement, has provided to be an efficient and resourceful colleague and his work at the Centre means we have less need for part-time helpers.

Support: We are very grateful for strong support from our member churches, our parent organizations, the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Food Bank. CCSAC, our parent organization, gives us an annual grant of \$25,000, and this year raised almost \$18,000 for us with its very successful Walk-A-Thon in October. In 2017 our member churches contributed \$47,205 directly to the Food Centre, and are also a major source of our donated food and volunteers.

The City of Ottawa's 2017 sustaining grant of \$59,853 and an additional grant of \$4,120 for a much needed air-conditioner in our client room, was 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 distributed. During the year, we also benefited from donations from many individuals, including several large donations, from food drives by all local schools and from Christmas fundraising events by the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa at St. Giles Presbyterian Church, Thirteen Strings' Christmas Candlelight concert and a special concert for us at Knox Presbyterian Church.

Volunteers: To meet our clients' needs, the Food Centre relies on over 70 dedicated volunteers. They are comprised of our morning and an afternoon teams at the Centre, the members of the Management Committee, the congregation members who deliver the food donations from their churches, the teachers at local schools who coordinate food drives for us, and the CCSAC representatives, whose collaboration with our Annual Advent Service and hosting of an Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner are much appreciated. Together, they donated over 10,000 hours to the Food Centre in 2017, so 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. In a year I will typically speak at 20 organizations, Sunday services, and other church-sponsored events. It is always a pleasure to meet members of our congregations and to be able to recognize their support. In 2017, I attended 21 such events. As well, when we do Food Drives at local grocery stores, I work those

weekends to facilitate delivery and sorting of the food so we are ready to open on Monday morning. In 2017, this involved four weekends of extra work. Another source of additional work for the Centre continues to be the Link2Feed data- base program – the assistant or student starts their day by entering the previous day’s data.

As we begin our 40th year of operation, I want to thank our founding Churches and volunteers for their courage and vision. The anniversary year coincides with the introduction of Ontario’s new minimum wage laws. Naturally, we hope that the new wage levels will improve the financial stability for those of our clients who have jobs. But we worry that cost-saving measures will mean many will lose their positions, or get fewer hours, and that in turn, the need for our services in Centretown will see a marked increase.

That notwithstanding, my goals for 2018 are to focus on enhancing client education in regards to nutrition, augmenting our food selection and adding some fresh paint to the Food Centre.

ANNUAL CLIENT STATISTICS

	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Children	1956	2159	1885	1611	1686	1091	803	658	664	646	650	955
Adults	7453	7969	7875	7626	9233	8638	8057	8112	7973	7412	7132	7448
Total	9409	10126	9,760	9331	10919	9729	8860	8770	8637	8058	7782	8403

PER-CLIENT FOOD COSTS

2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
8.51	\$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, February 5, 2018