

## **AGM report, Centretown Emergency Food Centre, 2018**

In 2018, the Centretown Emergency Food Centre's 40<sup>th</sup> year of service, we continued to provide our clients with the highest quality of service possible within our limited means. We did this despite several challenging situations and conditions. We had set modest goals for 2018 - focus on client education in regards to nutrition, augmenting our food selection and adding some fresh paint to the Food Centre. In the end we didn't paint, but we accomplished far more than we had expected!

**Our Clients:** To our surprise, the number of clients remained quite steady. While we expected a shift in the composition of our client base, we still saw a large number of refugee families from local emergency shelters. These clients are housed quite quickly in different parts of the city, but a new family moves into the shelters as soon as one is housed.

In 2018 we served a total of 9032 clients compared to 2017 when we served 9422 - a slight decrease, but not enough to make an impact on the workload at the Centre. Because of a decrease in food donations and higher food costs, our per-person food cost in 2018 was \$9.53 vs \$ 8.51 in 2017.

I speak to numerous clients everyday but certain episodes stick out. One involved a mother who had a small baby and 6 year old son with her, who lived in one of the shelters in our area. She had used our services earlier that month, but had already gone through the food we had given her. As the little boy looked at me with hope in his eyes, I was struck by how children are impacted by poverty. His relief when I said we would serve them again was evident. When he came to me to show me the milk and cereal he had received and told me he could now have breakfast, it broke my heart.

**Summary of 2018:** We began 2018 year with a small financial surplus, and a small surplus of food from our Christmas food drives, an asset that was quickly depleted. Our first big challenge occurred in February when I was suddenly taken ill. I had emergency surgery, and spent the next month and a half recovering, before returning to work in early April. During my absence, my Assistant, Aidan Grapes, did a remarkable job running the Food Centre, supported by our volunteers, many of whom stepped in to do extra shifts, and by our part-time helpers, who also pitched in generously. I remain very grateful to all of them.

Over the summer, we dealt with a variety of challenges working to maximize the value of our food purchases, sort our delivery problems with our main grocery supplier, care for our clients during the excessive summer heat and ensure a full complement of volunteers when many of our team members tend to take time off. Donations from several community gardens and Shoppers Drug Mart augmented our selection of fresh produce, and a lower-priced bread contract helped keep our per -person food costs within reason.

As we did not qualify for an HRDC grant this summer, we hired a graduate student, George Rivers, for the summer using our own funds. George was a great asset to our Centre and he brought friends from the Police Services program at Algonquin to fill vacant shifts during the summer.

In September, a new Carleton placement student, Heather Teissen, joined us for the year. Also in early fall, we began our Christmas preparations, as we are tasked with selecting 50 families for the Christmas Hamper project run by Centretown United Church. The hampers are much sought –after, and we wish we could offer one to every client family. However, families who do not make the selection list and almost all other clients are offered the choice of a ham, turkey or gift certificate, thanks to a program of the OFB. Christmas is our busiest time, the most stressful for our clients and one that puts the most pressure on our staff and volunteers. Happily this is balanced by generous donations from churches, individuals and businesses, food drives at our local schools and proceeds from Christmas concerts by Thirteen Strings Chamber Orchestra and the Cameron Highlanders.

During the year, our monthly Management Committee meetings give us a chance to review the quality and effectiveness of our service, fine-tune our food selection to include more protein (chicken drumsticks) for Thursday and Friday clients, review our HR Policies, and respond to shifts in client base. As well, we conducted a client survey to provide insights into their needs. Overall results of the survey were positive, with many commenting on how well they are treated and that they realize we are doing the best we can. But of course, we also received comments such as “I would like more fresh fruit and vegetables”, and “more meat please!” We wish we had the resources to give more but we do provide nourishing 3-4 day supply of nourishing food according to each client’s family size and cultural preferences. And we use every opportunity we can to refer clients to other sources of assistance. Our own survey results were matched by the positive results that we received from the two- year project evaluating Ottawa food banks run by Ottawa U and the Ottawa Food Bank.

Another measure of our work this past year: we spent over \$ 88,000 to purchase food to supplement donations from Ottawa Food Bank, our churches, local schools, food drives at Metro Glebe and Loblaws Isabella, community gardens and many other sources. In total, we estimate that we distributed approximately \$450,000 worth of food and toiletries to our clients.

An ongoing challenge over the past years has been the Centre’s aged computers and outdated software that left us vulnerable to data loss and other problems. This fall the Management Committee approved the purchase of four new computers. After comparing several quotes, we decided to purchase one new computer and three refurbished ones from a local company, PC Perfect. A donor offered to purchase the hardware, CCSAC obtained a grant to cover most of the software, and the computer firm donated one of the refurbished computers, so since early December, we have benefitted from better and more secure equipment.

**Support:** During the year, the Centretown Churches Social Action Committee, our parent organization, provided great support and leadership for us in a number of ways, most notably its annual grant and its October fundraising Walkathon which resulted in net proceeds of \$19,000 for the Food Centre; its member churches contributed an additional \$44,250 directly to the Food Centre; its Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner for our volunteers; its participation in our joint Advent Service and Potluck Lunch; and its ongoing oversight and encouragement. I want to thank CCSAC Chair, Kristine Burr, in particular for her active and helpful involvement.

We realize however that some churches in our support base have diminished ability to support us, even though we were founded to alleviate the need for them to respond to requests for food at their door.

Other important sources of support are our annual operating grant from the City of Ottawa, the generous weekly donation of food from the Ottawa Food Bank, annual contributions by most CCSAC churches and food drives by CCSAC churches, local schools and organizations, in particular, the Bytown Ottawa Rotary Club. The Food Centre also has many loyal donors, and we are grateful to each one of them. This year we were able to expand our donor base to include a few more local businesses.

We are a volunteer-run organization, with about 85 dedicated volunteers, who this year contributed over 11,000 hours. They are essential to our ability to respond effectively to our clients' needs.

Speaking of our dedicated volunteers, I wish to note the sudden death in mid-December of Joyce Ivison, a long-standing CCSAC representative for First Baptist Church, Food Centre volunteer and member of the Management Committee. We recall her remarkable dedication to helping others, her energy, compassion and good spirits with great affection. She will be deeply missed.

**Programs:** Without doubt the Christmas Hamper Program is our most important and most sought-after. During the winter, we always have warm hats and mitts, and often fleece blankets too for our clients. With careful balancing of our food budget, we were able to introduce an additional protein offering, chicken legs, something that has proved very popular with clients. While also worked to augment our support for our clients by constantly updating our bulletin boards of community information; by offering a shelf full of free books, an indirect way of enhancing literacy, and by partnering with the Centretown Community Health Centre for monthly cooking demonstrations. This year Helene Samson-Bouchard, a CCHC nutritionist, did five cooking demonstrations of simple and thrifty meals at the Centre. They encourage better nutrition & cooking skills, featuring ingredients that we offer on a regular basis.

**Finances:** With our grant and donations from CCSAC and its churches, donations from individuals, several foundations and organizations, our City of Ottawa grant and CCSAC's walkathon, we had revenue of \$237,400, and expenses of \$212,100, ending the year with a surplus.

**As Coordinator,** I realize that food security is only one of our clients' needs. Safe and affordable housing, health care, literary skills, employment training... there are so many facets to poverty. We hope the City of Ottawa will increase the pace at which affordable housing units are added to our community's infrastructure. We would like to do more ourselves, but our space and resources limit us. I also recognize that we have a responsibility to plan for the future. During the year, the Management Committee took some first steps toward future planning (outreach programs, additional services).

During the year I had the pleasure of speaking at four of our churches and attending nine events. These opportunities to meet our support base are meaningful and encouraging! I was also able to strengthen our relationship with the Ottawa Food Bank which resulted in some additional media coverage and monetary donations from listeners who heard our pleas on the CBC. My assistant Aidan Grapes has been attending all agency meetings with the OFB and has gained some new insights into other food centres.

In closing, in the coming year I would like to continue with the monthly food demonstrations, revise our food selection sheet to accommodate some of the recommendations made by clients in our questionnaire, see how we can get more use out of the space we occupy, look at additional programming for our client base, enlarge our donor base and strengthen our relationship with the other resources in our catchment area. I am also committed to making sure that we purchase our food supplies at the lowest price possible and will be retendering our food purchasing contracts.

**ANNUAL CLIENT STATISTICS**

	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>Children</b>	<b>1835</b>	<b>1956</b>	<b>2159</b>	<b>1885</b>	1611	1686	1091	803	658	664	650	955
<b>Adults</b>	<b>7198</b>	<b>7453</b>	<b>7969</b>	<b>7875</b>	7626	9233	8638	8057	8112	7973	7132	7448
<b>Total</b>	<b>9033</b>	<b>9409</b>	<b>10126</b>	<b>9,760</b>	<b>9331</b>	<b>10919</b>	<b>9729</b>	<b>8860</b>	<b>8770</b>	<b>8637</b>	<b>7782</b>	<b>8403</b>

**PER-CLIENT FOOD COSTS**

<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2006</b>
\$9.53	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, January 22, 2019