

# CONNECTIONS

FALL/WINTER • 2014



Aisha stocks the Society for the Living Food Bank with much needed baby food

## Neighbours Building Neighbourhoods

Every city is made up of smaller neighbourhoods, some with more challenges than others. Your partnership with North York Harvest Food Bank has enabled us to invest in some of these communities where our member agencies support families and individuals who need food assistance.

The Society for the Living is a small, volunteer run, food bank for the residents of Jane and Finch. “We have a lot of high risk youth, new-comers to Canada, seniors on fixed incomes and single parents living in the area,” shares Aisha, the volunteer coordinator for the food bank. “There’s always been a need for food but in the last few years we’ve seen serious growth in how many people come to the food bank.”

The residents of this neighbourhood represent some of our most vulnerable citizens. The disappointing job numbers

we hear about on the news greatly affect the daily lives of residents of this neighbourhood. With the rising prices of rent, utilities and fresh food, it is unfortunately no surprise that access to enough healthy food is an issue.

*“Food is the greatest issue a lot of these people deal with.”*

Aisha shares that the food we deliver to their food bank goes a long way. “Food is the greatest issue a lot of these people deal with. When we can check that off, they don’t worry as much and that decreases their stress so they can focus on other things and they are very grateful.”

One family, Aisha met, had just moved to Canada and didn’t have any winter clothes. They didn’t speak English and had come to the food bank to ask for support. “We end up not only being a

place for food but a connection point for people. Some come a few times and then we never see them again – hopefully because they’ve gotten on their feet and don’t need us anymore. Others stay longer and want to get involved and give back.”

Over the next three years, with the continued support of generous donors like you, we will be investing even more into our member agencies, not only by delivering food and building capacity for handling food like vegetables and dairy products, but also working with our amazing volunteers so that they can further support their communities and the people they work with.

To invest into our communities and make sure families can check some food off their worry list, donate to North York Harvest today.

## Bringing the Joy Back Into Food: Banu’s Story

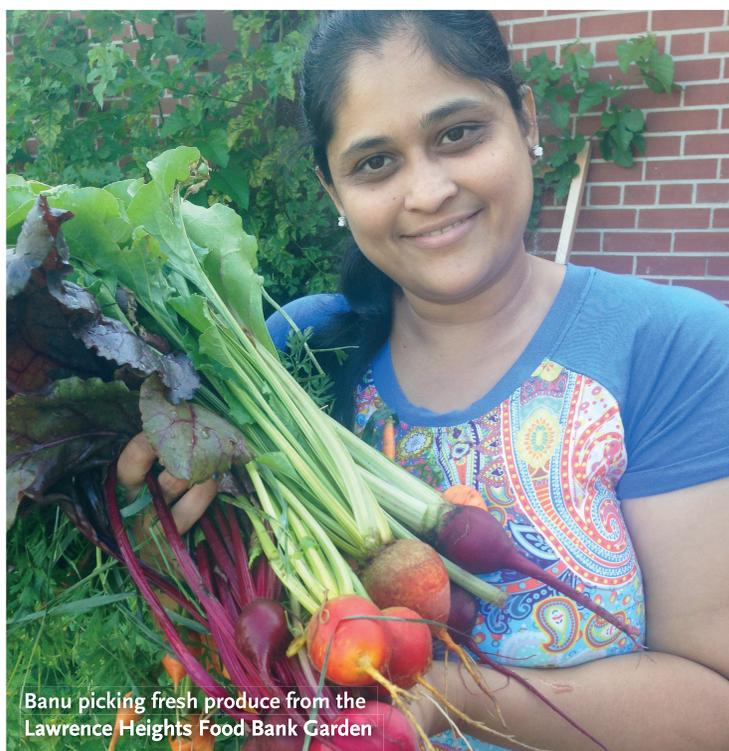
In a world with so much conflict and division, it is a wonder that there are still things that cut across the barriers and bring people together. Food is one such thing. Even though there are so many divisions we can still come together at the dinner table and share a meal. Yet for many families in Toronto, food is a point of stress, stigma and isolation. Together we have been working to change this.

Banu and her family have been dealing with this stress for several years. “Both my husband and I are university graduates and work but we still find it difficult to make our income stretch,” she shares. “It’s tough not to be able to give my kids the type of food they want and frustrating when I don’t have enough food to feed my family.”

For Banu, food has always been more than just a basic need. Food is central to our relationships with other people. It’s where we gather and how we celebrate, it brings us joy.

Your support enables us to us to not only provide food for Banu and her family but it also allows us to focus on some of the other issues related to food insecurity. Whereas food can cut across barriers, not having enough food can lead to isolation. If you’ve

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## Banu's Story continued

ever felt cut off you know it can be debilitating. We thrive in belonging, it's where we grow, learn and find our successes. While addressing food insecurity and poverty is complex, food and community go together.

Our garden program, where we grow fresh produce and teach people about urban gardening also serves as a place to bring people together. Banu has recently taken on a volunteer leadership role at our Lawrence Heights Garden. "It's not just about coming to the food bank for the food my family needs," she tells

us, "where things grow there is life, it connects people." Through the program she has connected with other people in her community. They have shared both

*Food is central to our relationships with other people. It's where we gather and how we celebrate, it brings us joy.*

stories of struggle and stories of hope. "We trade recipes of how to use the different vegetables we grow and even

though we may speak different languages or come from different cultures, this is a common ground."

Your support of North York Harvest provides food and builds community. They are small but significant steps to addressing the larger issue of food insecurity in our city.

If you would like to learn more about food insecurity in Toronto or hear more about Banu's story visit [www.northyorkharvest.com](http://www.northyorkharvest.com)

## Join Miguel in Giving Back



Miguel volunteers weekly at our Oriole Food Space

Things that we struggle with, once they are overcome, can become areas where we want to make a difference. For Miguel, who grew up using a food bank, giving back only seemed natural. We met Miguel in one of our corporate engagement activities. As an employee in financial services at Canada Protection Plan, Miguel was very interested in the work that North York Harvest Food Bank was doing.

*"It's not just about the food, but also because I know how it feels to be isolated, not only from family but from the rest of society."*

"I grew up just outside of Hamilton and my dad passed away when I was only 3 and it was a very big struggle for us."

Miguel, an introvert but clever boy, went to an inner city school and tried to focus on his studies. "My mother did her best, I always had clothes and she made sure that I was provided for but

we couldn't have made it without help." Miguel's mother accessed a food bank and he recalls that it was a very humbling experience. "I can't imagine what it was like for my mother to basically say that she wasn't able to provide for her family. I always appreciated how important it was especially when I had to use it myself as a university student."

Determined, Miguel took out student loans to go to university. "We didn't have money to put aside for my schooling. My loans were only enough to pay for tuition, rent and transportation. Food was always a bit of a struggle so I had the food bank program and it was a huge help at that point in my life."

"It's not just about the food, but also because I know how it feels to be isolated, not only from family but from the rest of society. It's why I personally support the food bank and spend time volunteering at the community food bank outside of our engagement as a company. I have been on both sides of the spectrum and know what an important role the food bank plays."

To join Miguel in giving back to your community go to [www.northyorkharvest.com](http://www.northyorkharvest.com) or call Shirah at 416-635-7771 ex33

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