

Keep on Trucking: delivering food to our community

It's 8 a.m., and George is hauling boxes. One by one, he packs them into a truck parked outside North York Harvest Food Bank's distribution centre. Some boxes are light and an easy lift—like the hot drinks and cereals. Some, containing nourishing soups and canned protein beans, weigh 35 lbs and take some muscle.

Lansing United Church, one of North York Harvest's biggest member agencies, and Mount Zion Fillipino Church, which has seen a steady increase in clients over the last year.

"Two Sundays ago, we had over 55 families with children come to get food. Our numbers have increased with the many new immigrants and refugees that have moved to the area," explains Eden Vizcarra, Mount Zion's food bank coordinator. Eden runs this location as a volunteer, alongside her husband Armando, and assistant Orly. Armando explains, "We enjoy helping other people, and do this instead of staying home."

From this Keele and Sheppard food bank, it's a bit of a trek to our newest agency, the Bathurst Finch Community Food Bank located in Northview Heights Secondary School. This long drive, and the resultant wear and tear, is part of why having sturdy trucks is essential to our work at North York Harvest. Food deliveries and pick-ups have our vehicles driving 1,000 kilometres each week and even more so during food drives.

Once we drop off over 3,000 lbs of food at Bathurst Finch Community Food Bank, we stop for food drive pick-ups from places as diverse as the lobby of St. Francis De Sales School, the basement of Loblaws, and the 14th floor of a Service Ontario building. With our list checked off, it is 2pm and time to head back to North York Harvest.

With all this driving, can you blame us for being excited about getting a new truck? In April, we purchased a Freightliner M2 truck for our daily deliveries, with the generous help of Mackenzie Financial Charitable Foundation and the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Other key donors include Harper Truck Centres Inc., Canada Cartage Systems, the Harold E. Ballard Foundation and individual donors. The Freightliner is fuel-efficient, refrigerated (perfect for fresh produce donations), and ready to hit the road! Keep an eye out for us this summer when you're on the streets of northern Toronto.



Rob (left) and Shariq (right) ensure that thousands of pounds of food are delivered to North York Harvest member agencies across northern Toronto.

Today and every day, North York Harvest's warehouse and truck crew deliver thousands of pounds of foods to member agencies across northern Toronto. From volunteer food sorting, to packing and loading up, getting the truck on the road takes many hands.

"We enjoy helping other people, and do this instead of staying home."

Then, the wheel is in the capable hands of our drivers. Today is Tuesday and Shariq is driving. He is adept at managing corners and tight spaces. In the passenger seat is Rob, who has volunteered with North York Harvest since the mid-1980s and provides excellent navigation. Shariq calls him: "Our live GPS."

The first stop is Unison Health and Community Services. Here, the food will be used in the Streets to Homes community kitchen program and given out as food hampers to those who visit this Keele St. location.

The next stop is down the street, at York Memorial Presbyterian Church where smiling volunteers come to help unload the food into the depths of the church, strangely quiet on this weekday. Similar stops during the morning are



Left: Eden, Armando, Jayjay and Orly unload food at the Mount Zion Food Bank. Right: Student decorations accompany food drive donations from St. Francis De Sales School.

A Garden In Our Backyard



By guest writer
Sabrina Malach,
PACT intern

Where can food bank clients get their fresh veggies? From a community garden conveniently located right outside Lawrence Heights Community Food Bank! This 2.3 acre garden is run by PACT, a charitable organization whose goals are to empower, support and encourage youth. The garden is located on the school property of John Polanyi Collegiate Institute, which also houses North York Harvest.

While PACT generously donated the fruits of their labour all last summer, a growing partnership between North York Harvest and PACT has lots of potential. This includes jointly working with students from John Polanyi to grow fresh, local, organic produce for food bank clients. As well, this spring, PACT and North York Harvest staff united to build a garden shed. The intention for the 2012 growing season is to transform the garden into an abundant oasis of food crops and native plants that will nurture and nourish our community.

PACT hopes you will get involved by volunteering at the garden or making an in-kind donation such as gardening tools, wheel barrows, rain barrels and compost.



North York Harvest Highlights



At our February **Annual General Meeting**, North York Harvest awarded Mackenzie Financial Charitable Foundation an "Exceptional Giving Award" for their outstanding support of our new truck purchase, as well as an incredibly generous operating grant.

On March 25th, the second annual **Seedy Sunday** was a big hit for gardeners and community members alike. North York Harvest was proud to host and kick-start the growing season.

North York Harvest launched its **Food Friendly Neighbourhood Plans** on May 10th at the new fresh produce market in Lawrence Heights. The launch coincided with Hunger Awareness Week and marked the culmination of a year-long initiative to map the local food needs and future food solutions in three priority neighbourhoods. Check out the project findings online at www.northyorkharvest.com/ffn.



This summer, we welcome fresh fruit and veggie donations.



If you have your own garden, consider sharing your bounty, which you can drop off directly at the North York Harvest office. Please call 416-635-7771 or email tanya@northyorkharvest.com or for more information.

Annual Report Wins Platinum

For the second year in a row, Krieger + Associates design of our Annual Report has won a prestigious Hermes Creative Award. This time around, we've gone platinum. Special thanks to the entire K + A team and K + A Creative Director, Bruce Wrighte.



Big thanks to the People Bank for helping to recruit our newest staff members

CONNECTIONS
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