

# CONNECTIONS



## Family Time for the Holiday Season

As the holiday season approaches, we are all looking forward to sharing meals with our loved ones. For families with children, this can also be a time of year for gathering together, celebrating and spending a little more time with cousins and grandparents. At the same time, as many families are still getting used to this new reality, food insecurity continues to be a growing concern, more than last year

For Cheryl, a single mom with an eight-year-old son, losing her job just before the start of the

school year posed as significant challenge. With her budget stretched, not knowing how long she would be out of work, Cheryl turned to North York Harvest for the first time.

***“It’s been such a great assurance, knowing that even on days that I have nothing, I can look forward to coming to the Food Bank,” she says.***

Taking a creative, fun approach, with her son Cheryl refers to the food she receives as a “magic box”, one that makes meal prep a fun time for everyone. Cheryl

and her son have even come up with fun songs for a kitchen and cooking singalong. And during the holiday season her son is also looking forward to baking sugar cookies, an activity we can all relate to enjoying at this time of year. While the holiday season may look a little different for everyone once again this year, we can all enjoy some of the simple pleasures that this season has to offer.

Find out more about how your donation today can help Cheryl at [northyorkharvest.com](http://northyorkharvest.com) during this joyful time of year.



# Finding Meaning in World Food Day

Established by the United Nations in 1945, World Food Day signifies an annual opportunity to increase awareness of world hunger and poverty, inspiring solutions for change. At North York Harvest we know that for many families and individuals, meeting food needs is an ongoing struggle, one that we face and acknowledge each day. Through our programs, network of agencies and community partners, we hear heartbreaking stories of individuals and families in our community who are deprived of their basic human right in accessing food/accessing a secured food system?

As we continue to offer support to the community by providing emergency food, we also recognize that this is not a long-term solution to address food insecurity. Over the past 18 months the partnerships that North York Harvest has continued to cultivate have been vital. By working creatively and strategically with Toronto Public Libraries to accommodate pop-up food spaces that have transitioned to outdoor food, we have gone beyond the hurdle of closed venues and have established a new era of community food spaces. Offering dignified food assistance includes providing a welcoming space.

Through community arts partnerships including ArtStarts, our Albion Library Food Space has been transformed with a public mural thanks to local artists.

Through the sharing of our resources, best-practices, and knowledge, we have been able to better equip and our Member Agency Network. From finding relief staff to accessing additional food, we have helped more than 40 organizations continue serving North York residents without interruption. North York Harvest's continued access to donations, also meant smaller organizations within our network were able to obtain additional food as they saw demand rise in their areas.

As we work towards structural solutions to food insecurity, participating in World Food Day, not only continues the conversation but having a voice at the table enables us to further draw awareness to the impact of food insecurity. It's also an opportunity, for our community partners, and other community groups to consider their role as we work together to find meaningful solutions to poverty and a more accessible, equitable food system for everyone.

## Win for You and Our Community!

Giving back makes us feel good. Now, North York Harvest is offering an opportunity for you to feel good and win big with its inaugural Harvest Hero 50/50 Raffle! Proceeds from this raffle will help support North York Harvest network of agencies. The the Grand Prize Draw awarded on December 3, 2021. The 50/50 raffle gives participants the chance to win big while supporting the important programs and partnerships. The raffle will raise important dollars to be invested into North York Harvest's charitable programs at this crucial time. Don't miss out! Buy your tickets today and learn more about this new initiative at [northyork5050.ca](http://northyork5050.ca).





# Sharing the Abundance of the Harvest Season

When it comes to getting your children involved in their community some parents are making volunteering a family affair. Every October, for the past three years, Berry Meyerowitz and his family have been organizing neighbourhood food drives. Distributing flyers and bags to neighbours, the Meyerowitz's set a date for food donation collection and the entire family embarks on a one-day collection blitz. With the family collecting 2,700lbs in the first year, this year's food drive brought in nearly four times that amount—9,900lbs. In 2019, Barry even brought his daughter's soccer the Thanksgiving Family Food Sort.



At the same time many students back to fulltime classes, many schools have taken the harvest season as an opportunity to give back to our communities. At Havergale College, grade six students took the lead in organizing the food drive which gathered approximately 2,700 lbs of non-perishable food items.

Whether you're a parent or student group, a community food drive not only benefits those in need in our community, it can become a meaningful way of giving back, a reward for everyone involved. Interested in organizing a food drive? There's still time to be part of our Harvest Heroes Virtual Food Drive! Learn more now [northyorkharvest.com/harvestheroes](https://northyorkharvest.com/harvestheroes)

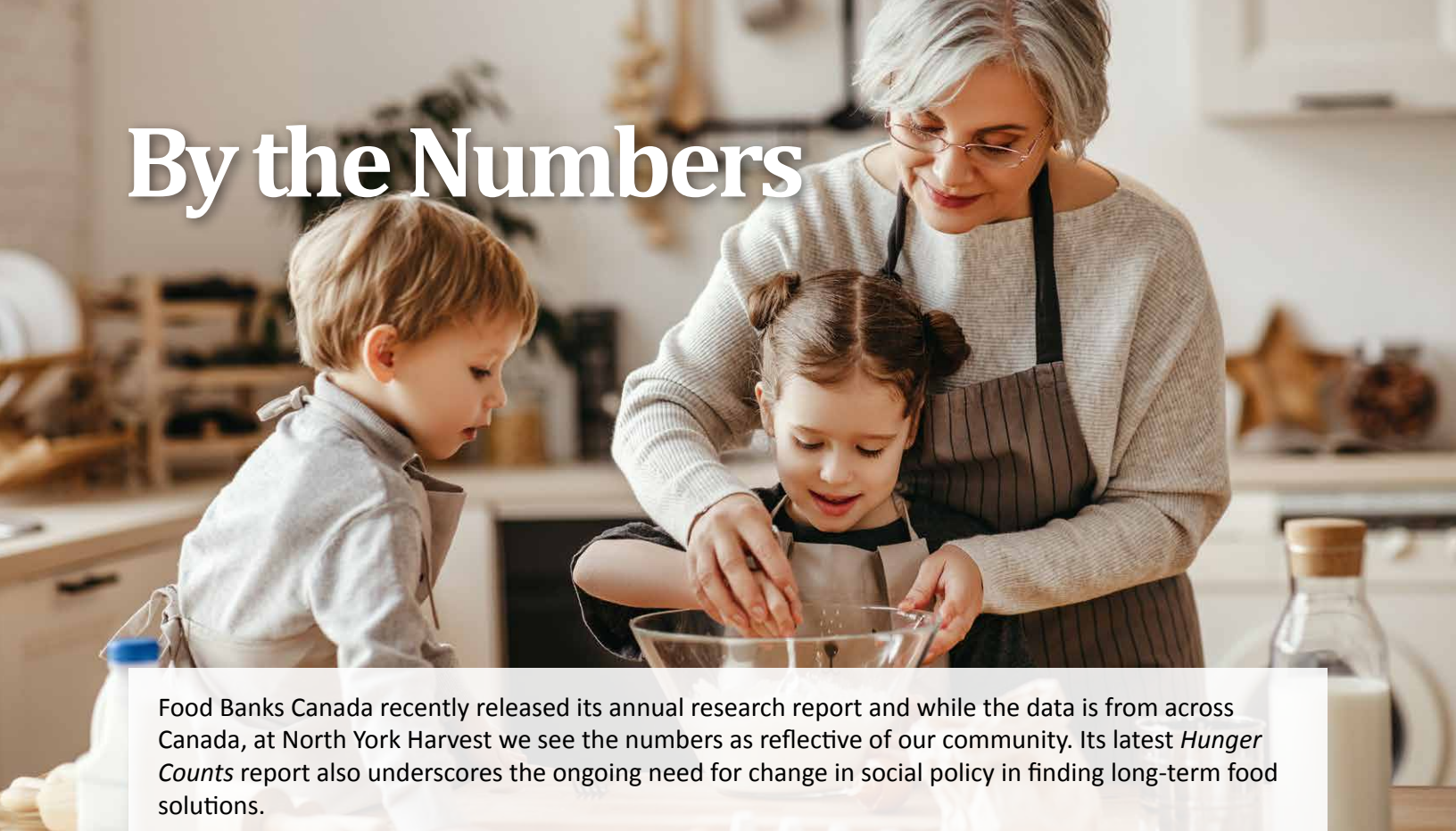
## Education at the Heart of Community

Food insecurity has been a longstanding concern in North York's Keele and Finch neighbourhood where ANIDA Foundation is located, but over the past year and a half the organization's executive director Samuel Donker says that need has grown exponentially. "Pre-pandemic we served 30 to 60 people bi-weekly, now it's 350 depending on the needs of seniors," he says. According to Donker, the way in which North York Harvest responded to its member agencies during the pandemic helped keep their program running in very real ways. "There was a lot of uncertainty but the resources we had access to allowed us to continue to serve clients safely," he says. Shifting their operations from indoors to outside required tents, vests for staff and access to technology, all of which were facilitated by North York Harvest. Grant funding also helped ANIDA launch a seniors delivery program which



continues to serve 100 seniors on a bi-weekly basis. Along with providing nourishing food, ANIDA is also focused on feeding minds through educational programs. "We have a reading program for children along with a book bank thanks to our partnership with Indigo," explains Donker. "Having the food bank allows us to offer access to our other resources and programs which people wouldn't otherwise know were available." As with other member agencies, food is the connection to education and so much more as we all work towards building healthier communities together.

# By the Numbers



Food Banks Canada recently released its annual research report and while the data is from across Canada, at North York Harvest we see the numbers as reflective of our community. Its latest *Hunger Counts* report also underscores the ongoing need for change in social policy in finding long-term food solutions.

Recent news about the increase in the minimum wage along with the acknowledgement of housing issues are all much-needed steps that will contribute to a more sustainable and accessible food system for everyone. When it comes to the reality for Canadian food banks, the numbers offer a vital snapshot of the clients served and highlight the need to find more ways to support the most vulnerable in our community.



**33%** children

**8.7%** seniors

**17.8%** single parent households

**50.5%** social assistance or disability support recipients

**1 in 8** currently unemployed

Source: Food Banks Canada *Hunger Counts*.



116 Industry Street, Toronto, ON, M6M 4L8

416-635-7771

[www.northyorkharvest.com](http://www.northyorkharvest.com)

Registered Charity No. 11906 2495 RR0001

