

CONNECTIONS



April showers bring May flowers, and here at North York Harvest, we are certainly looking forward to the new beginnings of spring.

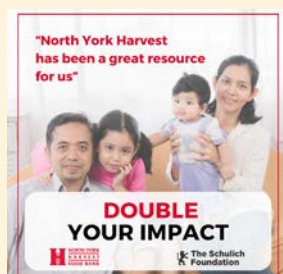
Events

We've had a busy month! From reaching out to our stakeholders to partnering for campaigns, here are some highlights of the month so far!

Spring Campaign

Supported by Schulich Foundation, donations will be matched dollar for dollar, up to \$200,000, ending April 30. We are grateful for Schulich Foundation's ongoing support of community members who are experiencing food insecurity.

Read more about how you can Double Your Impact [here](#).



Annual Report

Following our Annual General Meeting, our Executive Director, Ryan Noble, met with some of our donors and shared highlights and challenges North York Harvest faced in the past year. We were happy to see a lively conversation, with many insightful questions from supporters. You can read our annual report [here](#).



Give30

The Give30 Campaign is about everyone, regardless of faith or background. The annual campaign begins on the first day of Ramadan and, this year, will run until June 30. The campaign puts an emphasis on community spirit and supporting neighbours that are in need. To learn more about the campaign, visit <https://northyorkharvest.com/give30>.



Links Between Us

Boots drag through the cold puddles as snow melts on the grey tarmac. The clouds hang low, threatening rain or snow, but the line of colourful coats is a spot of colour against this grey backdrop. On a day as grey as today, the atmosphere should feel somber, but the chatter that reach ears is as cheerful as the coats people are wearing. The line moves steadily as people enter the community centre, where they are greeted by cheerful volunteers and supportive staff members. Welcome to North York Harvest Food Bank.

Most people view food banks as a place to go when you're at your lowest, when there's no other road to take. Society has deemed this bandage solution as something we shouldn't talk about, as something that no one should be proud of. But that isn't true.

"I've heard of so many things like 'Oh, I would never go to a food bank,'" Ms. S said, "I don't have that impression because for me, being able to get help from the community that wants to make sure that everyone has what they need to survive is something that I think is really important."

M. S is a newly single mother with a young child at home. She is currently working part-time after taking mostly free online classes offered by colleges. It's been a big adjustment and the journey hasn't been easy as she navigates working and the rising costs of living in Toronto. Things have become more expensive and, she remarks, having the opportunity to go to the food bank has been a real blessing.

Going to the food bank is nothing to be embarrassed about, for Ms. S, it's been brilliant. "Waiting in line is always a pleasure because each time I go, there's always different people," her voice is cheerful as she talks about what happens when she visits the Bathurst-Finch Food Space. "People strike up a conversation in order to get to know someone... I bring my child sometimes, and for me, I'm glad he's able to see that there's nothing to be ashamed of to ask for help when he needs help."

Noemi agrees with this sentiment, "The food bank isn't only providing good food to us, it is a way to create and form friends. I have become good friends with those who are accessing the food bank, they became a part of my family."

Noemi came to Canada in 2009 as a live-in caregiver and is now married with a young child of her own. She is a family of three living in Canada, far from any other family members. To supplement her husband's income, working

in building maintenance, Noemi works part-time as a lunchtime supervisor at her child's school. She found out about North York Harvest through the nurse that helped bring her son into the world.

"She was my angel, she introduced food banks to me."

Noemi's initial apprehension about food banks was formed on opinions that food banks were for people who were low income and she wasn't sure that her family applied. But, after hearing about her situation, the nurse gave her information on some resources that may be useful to her family, and Noemi has never looked back.

"It's amazing, because the people who work and volunteer, including the manager, are so very nice and helpful to us, they make sure we get what we need."

Food banks need not be something that carries negative connotations. Food banks can also be a vibrant and positive service, a helping hand and a part of our community.

**Names and pictures have been changed to protect clients' privacy.*



Raising Awareness: MPP Meeting at Queen's Park

At North York Harvest Food Bank, we know that solving the problem of food insecurity requires more than direct food assistance. As food bank use hits record levels - and continues to increase - we are urging our provincial government to take action on poverty and food insecurity. That's why we were at Queens Park last month talking with MPPs about why more and more people are accessing our services and what kind of policies the government should implement to reduce poverty, in particular:

Raising social assistance

More than a third of the people accessing food banks are receiving social assistance, which hasn't seen a real increase since the 1990s. As a result, people on social assistance are falling deeper and deeper into poverty and are experiencing chronic food insecurity. We're asking the government to immediately double social assistance rates.

Increasing and protecting affordable housing: The number one reason why people come to the food bank is because they can't afford their rent. We're asking the government to protect tenants by bringing back rent control, and investing in rent-geared to income housing.

Access to decent work

The number of people accessing food banks with paid



employment is dramatically increasing. One third of people using a food bank have paid employment. We're asking the government to increase the minimum wage to a living wage and implement permanent paid sick days for every worker in Ontario.

At NYHFB we will continue to do everything we can to respond to record levels of food bank visits, but we know that we're not the solution to poverty. That's why a big part of our work and responsibility is advocating for the policy changes that we know will have a lasting impact on the more than 20,000 people currently depending on our services every month by addressing the real issue: poverty.

Did You Know

Our Virtual Food Drive, Harvest Heroes, is back! Invite your family, friends, and coworkers to work together or as a friendly contest and build your virtual food drive. This is a great way to support North York Harvest Food Bank, enabling us to provide support to those experiencing food insecurity. Click [here](#) to learn more!



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