

Feedback Canada: growing food for the needy



Feedback Canada volunteers tend to the crops at Marzalik Farms in Acton. Feedback supplements the area food banks with fresh produce from area farms and businesses.

By JAMIE HARRISON

Back in December of 1991, Humber College student Murray Russell had a revolutionary idea, what if he could find a way to feed 700,000 starving Canadian children?

That question led him on a search to find an answer to this problem, an answer which would let him put his talents in agriculture to good use, and let people help themselves and others to a better way of life.

This quest led Russell, along with his wife, Sherilyn Kirkpatrick, to form Feedback Canada, a non-profit organization concerned with the growing, harvesting and distribution of food to Canada's needy families, including those using the Love In Christ Food Bank in Georgetown.

"We're sort of like beggars, we have to take what the farmers can give us," said Russell who has a Horticultural Certificate from Humber College.

The entire operation depends on the generosity of others, as well as a barter system so that goods and services are exchanged for a fair 'price'.

Originally called Feed The People, Russell decided to change the group's name when he discovered that it was very similar to another charitable foundation, Canadian Feed The Children, Inc.

After contacting Feed The Children to find out whether it was possible to retain the original name of the group, he found that "they weren't too excited about the name, but they loved the project." Soon after, Feedback Canada was formed and a strong tie was bonded between Feedback and Feed The Children.

The next step in Russell's project was organization of resources and efficient distribution to food banks in Halton, Peel and Metro Toronto.

"Basically, it was listening to the constant food drives on the radio and being quite ashamed that this country couldn't feed itself properly," that gave Russell his incentive.

Participation in Feedback Canada is on a voluntary basis, with members of the community giving a few hours to weed, plant and harvest food grown as a result of the project.

Feedback also utilizes young offenders from nearby group homes who use the time they spend at Feedback to work off community service hours as part of their sentences.

Finding places to grow the food fell on Russell, who eventually struck a deal to use about ten acres of farmland between Acton and in Norval. Area farmers and businesses have donated space, time, and supplies to the project.

In April, Club 2000 hosted a concert featuring local acts Shadows of Laughter, Brass Bikini, and Bungled Coup, letting Feedback keep the night's receipts from the door.

Russell is also looking at other forms of fundraising, such as bingo, not only to raise money, but to raise awareness of the group in Halton Hills. Halton-Peel MP Garth Turner has lent his support to the group, as has Halton Hills mayor Russell Miller and other local politicians.

With hundreds of acres available to Feedback, courtesy of local farmers, the problem isn't finding space — it's finding the people to fill that space. Currently the group is working with about 50 volunteers, but would like to double those numbers in the future. Feedback is busy making pitches to various service and church groups, and will be targeting area high schools in the fall.

Georgetown District High School has already helped Feedback by washing bottles used in the group's Grow-Your-Own kits.

To this point, there has been no government funding of Feedback, though MP Garth Turner has promised he will look into it.

"Because it's an innovative program, there is no pre-existing funding channel for something like this," Russell said.

CRIME STOPPERS

By SERGEANT DAN FARR

The Halton Regional Police and Crime Stoppers are seeking information about the culprits responsible for stealing garden tractors from equipment sheds.

During the night of June 9-10, 1992, two equipment sheds in different areas of the Town of Milton were entered and expensive garden tractors taken.

The Kingdom Hall of Jehovahs Witnesses located on Third Line had their tool shed broken into and

a green and gold John Deere LY172 lawn tractor, serial MOL172X013-721 with bagger attachment was taken along with a power lawn mower and a weed trimmer.

The Herigate Inn on Chisholm Street also had their Dynamark lawn tractor stolen from the storage shed on the north side of the property.

A third tool shed located at Evergreen Cemetery was also broken into and a power mower, weed eater, and assorted tools were stolen.

Total value of stolen property is 18,700.

If you have any information that leads to an arrest in this, or any other case, you may be eligible for a cash reward of up to \$1,000. You need not give your name and your information will be treated with complete anonymity.

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Warning to parents

Halton Regional Police in Georgetown are reminding parents to tell children not to accept rides from or talk to strangers after a man "acting in a suspicious manner" was reported in the area of Raylawn Cres.

According to Detective Keith Woudstra of One District Criminal Investigation Bureau, police received two reports of the suspicious activity on June 15.

A man driving a red pickup truck with Ontario licence plates stopped to speak to several girls who were playing outside.

Police believe the truck may have been a GMC model without a cap.

The suspect is described as a male, white in his early to mid-20s with straight, dark hair down to his ears. He has a slim build, a smooth, clear complexion and a round face.

Anyone with information about the suspect or having seen the suspect vehicle is asked to contact One District CIB at 878-5511, ext. 2115.

HALTON HILLS THIS WEEK 873-2254