

APUC, UNITED WAY HELP TO FEED HALTON'S HUNGRY RESIDENTS

With approximately 31,000 Halton residents living without proper access to healthy meals, children and their families struggle now more than ever to

break the cycle of poverty. Food insecurity is a common barrier that often goes unnoticed. It can be missed meals or a decision between paying the heat-

ing bill and buying groceries.

When Halton resident Melanie was 15, she was living on her own with no income. To put some food on

the shelves, Melanie visited a United Way-supported food program. After using its services for a couple of years, Melanie chose to give back to her communi-

ty and began volunteering at the same food bank. Now, Melanie has the resources she needs to have a healthy meal and tackle the day, and also reaps the benefits of giving back to her community.

For years, United Way Halton & Hamilton (UWHH) has linked corporate resources and social responsibility with local need.

Last month Algonquin Power & Utilities Corp (APUC) staff rallied to support food insecure households across Halton Region.

Currently, one in 10 people living in Halton are food insecure. On behalf of gracious donors, UWHH invests in six local agencies addressing hunger. Together, these programs support the distribution of more than six million meals annually.

APUC hosted a competitive food drive for its employees in July, donating skids of food for the cause and gathering at Sheridan Conference Centre to create food sculptures that represented sustainability out of the donations as a part of a corporate team building event.

More than 180 APUC staff participated.

"We know that students who eat healthy food during the school day are better prepared to focus on their studies and to achieve higher grades," Brad Park, president and CEO of United Way Halton & Hamilton, said during the event. "We also know that food insecurity can be a factor in driving mental illness and isolation."

Companies and employers often seek meaningful engagement and volunteer opportunities that align with corporate social responsibility and team building objectives.

UWHH provides a solution that connects local company resources with local need, resulting in 55,951 volunteer hours created last year at a value of over \$1.3 million.

"It's always been important to us that we are good corporate citizens, especially for the communities

in which we operate," David Pasioka, Chief Transformation Officer, APUC, said during the event. "We are always excited to work with the United Way and find meaningful ways to give back to the community."

Many households are one circumstance away from battling hunger, as simple as a job loss, disability or mental illness. Combined with the cost of housing and a weaker Canadian dollar, residents can find themselves requiring more disposable income to meet basic needs.

In particular, the growing senior population is of great concern as more than 30 percent live below the poverty line in Halton.

With seniors now representing a larger percentage of the population than youth, it is imperative the community rally together to support this at-risk group.

There has also been a spike in the working poor as precarious employment continues to skyrocket, with permanent, full-time work unavailable.

This year, more than 212,000 people will rely on a United Way-supported program and receive the opportunities they need to live a healthy, prosperous life.

United Way has a history of community collaboration and convening ability to bring together government, private, non-profit, labour and volunteers to mobilize community change.

By working alongside community partners, United Way is able to understand root causes, thus leading the way to developing strategies to address them by bringing together the right resources to get the job done and measure results.

United Way Halton & Hamilton funds nine programs dedicated to providing access to healthy food for families and residents of all ages.

When food security is achieved, families are able to focus on school and work while mental wellbeing is improved.

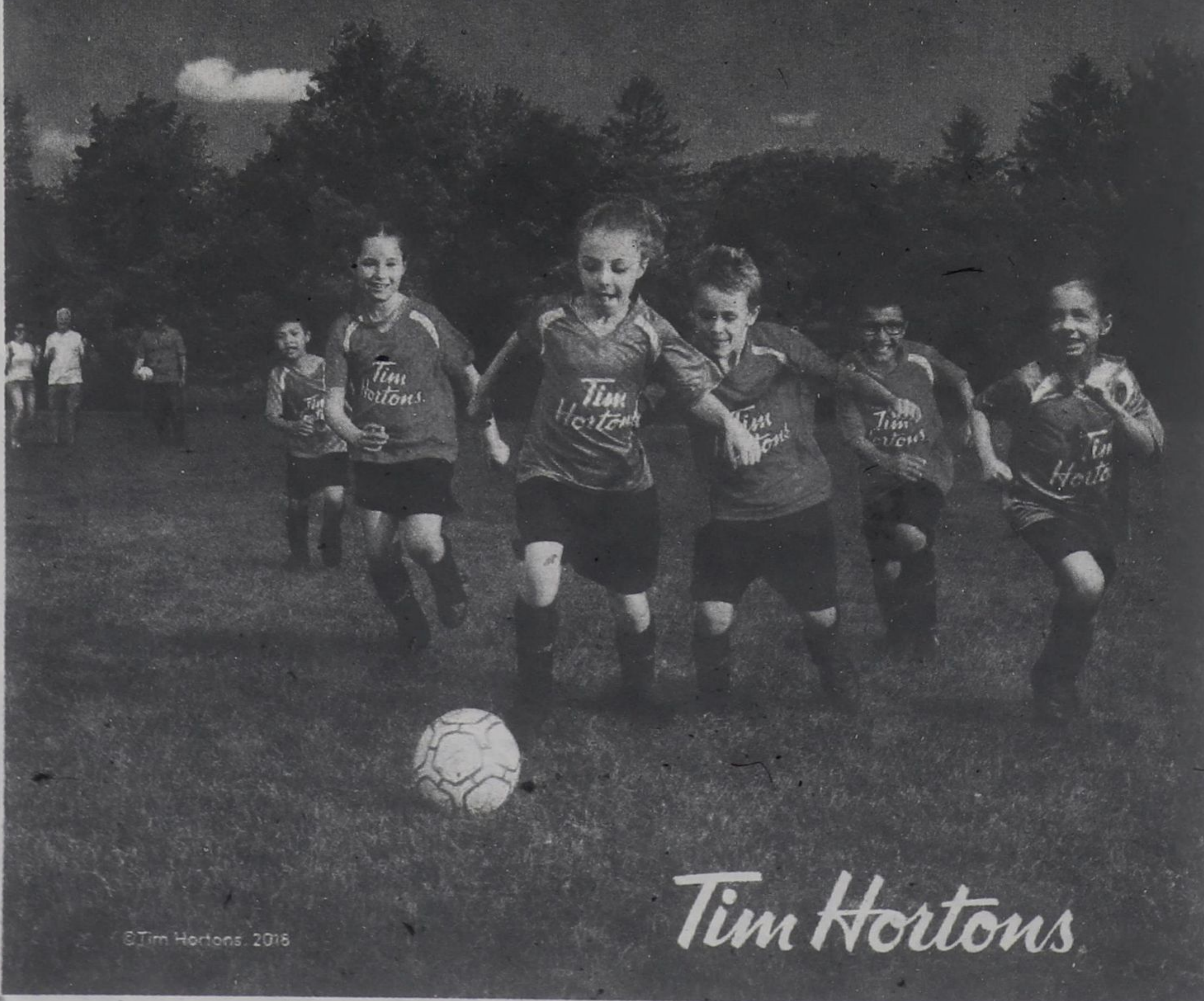


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