



COMMUNITY

Easter an ideal time to help food bank

Kids' snack foods in especially high demand

By Stephanie Hounsell
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

With the Easter weekend approaching, many of our minds are drifting to the big family dinner we'll enjoy in just a few days.

Ham, or maybe turkey, a few side dishes, and of course, a decadent dessert.

It's easy to forget there are many people in town who aren't sure how they'll manage regular meals this month, never mind plan a fancy one for the holiday.

But Jennifer Carter, family services director with the local Salvation Army, doesn't forget. She can't.

Every week, Carter meets with individuals and families who don't have enough to make ends meet. Some of them are on disability support, others are single moms trying to stretch resources.

For still other people, a car breakdown, a job loss, or another unexpected happening has caused them to wonder just how they'll get by.

Fortunately, through the Salvation Army's food bank at 100 Nipissing Rd., Carter is able to help alleviate some of that stress.

Most of us are familiar with the organization's Christmas food drive, which it depends on to stock the pantry for the majority of the year.

Can donate year-round

What some people don't know, though, is that the local Salvation Army gratefully accepts — and depends on — food throughout the year.

"In January and February, they (clients) get all kinds of goodies. But come May, we're running short of certain things and they just get the basics," Carter explained.

There are three year-round food collection locations — at Wal-Mart, A&P on Thompson Road and the Loblaws Superstore — around town that help replenish the food bank shelves.

Something that always seems to be in need is school snacks for kids, Carter said. These include granola bars, fruit cups and drink boxes.

Also needed are cereal and instant coffee, as well as diapers and toiletries like toothpaste, soap and shampoo.

Getting groceries from the food bank on a regular basis requires making an appointment with Carter and meeting certain financial criteria.



PLEASE PITCH IN: Salvation Army family services director Jennifer Carter holds a few of the much-needed school snacks — as well as the always in demand items — in the local food bank. GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

But Carter is quick to point out people who stop by without an appointment aren't turned away, and the Salvation Army tries to help everyone who needs it, whether or not they meet the criteria.

Although Milton is known as being a fairly affluent community, Carter knows all too well what goes on behind the scenes.

Each month about 70 people use the food bank. Roughly 80 per cent are families and the remainder are individuals.

There's no "typical" client, she added. They come from many walks of life.

Fortunately, Miltonians are extremely generous with their giving.

"I was blown away this Christmas," Carter said, referring to the food drive.

Something else that's needed throughout the year are volunteers. Drivers are needed to pick up food donations from the three store locations, as are people to work in the warehouse, sorting and bagging food.

Each Monday night from 7 to 9 p.m., the Salvation Army holds a volunteer night for people who'd like to help with the food bank. It often attracts students eager to get their required volunteer hours, Carter said.

And people with administrative skills are needed to work in the office.

For more information, call the local Salvation Army at (905) 875-1022.

Stephanie Hounsell can be reached at sthiesse@miltoncanadianchampion.com.

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