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# Family goodwill project turns into Guinness World Record

Most food collected in 24-hour period

By Steve LeBlanc  
 CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

From a simple inquiry to a world record.

That pretty much encapsulates a rural Milton family's efforts to aid GTA food banks, which culminated with last week's establishment of a new Guinness World Record for the most food collected by one community in a 24-hour period.

Breaking the old mark by more than 40,000 pounds — set by Regina two years ago — the Greater Toronto Apartment Association's (GTAA) eighth annual Spring Hope Food Drive brought in a whopping 262,499 pounds.

At the heart of the record-setting feat is Campbellville's Bonnie Hoy, whose contacts with the majority of GTA landlords — as the owner and operator of one of Canada's biggest marketing and public relations companies in the property management industry — provided the fuel for the lofty endeavour.

But the spark and inspiration came courtesy of her children.

"The firefighters were having their Christmas food drive one year when my daughter Beverlee asked why they



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**HEFTY HAUL:** Spring Hope Food Drive founder and co-ordinator Bonnie Hoy (second from left) joins principle participants (from left) Samantha Wilkinson (GTAA Marketing Director), Brad Butt (GTAA president and CEO), Christopher Hatch (president of Mississauga's Foodpath), Gail Nyberg (Daily Bread Food Bank executive director) and Tania Principe (North York Harvest Food Bank) amid the tons of collected food.

didn't collect at apartment buildings," recalled Hoy, founder and co-ordinator of the GTAA's annual drive. "I tried to explain the logistics of it, but then Brad and Bianca quickly jumped in about how I knew all the landlords and pretty soon they were ganging up on me to do it."

But they certainly didn't leave all the work to mom.

"It quickly became a family project, and I give my kids all the credit. They came with me to visit landlords all over the place and really talked up the idea. It's harder to say no to a child than an adult."

And while there were some initial reservations about door-to-door canvassing at apartments — something many landlords shy away from — the project eventually gained momentum, thanks to some key players like close family friend Lauren Harvey.

This year roughly 1,000 GTA apartment buildings participated in the food drive — and subsequent world record — with another 1,000 taking part across the province.

"That's awesome. The record's nice, but what's really thrilling about this is the impact it'll have on people who don't have enough food," remarked Hoy. "In the GTA alone there were 905,000 people who used food banks last year, and 34 per cent of that number was children, which is a scary statistic. The magnitude of that makes this drive so important."

The GTAA's involvement spanned from Whitby to Milton, with Hoy's hometown doing its fair share for the cause.

About three dozen high school students pitched in to collect donations, while many other Miltonians volunteered to drive the food to its destination point of Toronto's Daily Bread Food Bank for the overall weigh-in.

Donations will be redistributed back to their individual food banks.

A half-dozen local apartments were part of the event.

"I'd say about 60 per cent of our tenants took part, which is great," noted resident manager John Burns of Vertica Resident Services, which recently purchased Bronte Street's Glen Eden Court Apartments. "I couldn't get into my office that night. There was a lot of food."

Added Hoy, "To think this all started in Milton, this town should really give itself a pat on the back. I'm so grateful and proud to come from Milton."

Steve LeBlanc can be reached at sleblanc@haltonsearch.com.

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