

YORK REGION FARMERS HAVE DONATED 15 ACRES OF GRAIN TO HELP COMBAT WORLD HUNGER

# SHARING THEIR HARVEST

BY JOAN RANSBERRY  
Staff Writer

York Region farmers are going to share their harvest with Ethiopia.

A farm grain drive, designed to combat world hunger, including famine-stricken Ethiopia, has been launched in York Region.

Local farmers, including the 125 members of the York Soil and Crop Improvement Association, are expected to rally behind the cause.

"It seems like the right thing to do," Stouffville farmer Rod King said.

"We'll share the harvest."

The need is astronomical.

More than 7 million people die of starvation every year. About 33,000 children perish every day from hunger and preventable diseases.

Malnutrition accounts for more deaths than any infectious diseases, war or natural disaster.

Yet, most malnutrition can be prevented through the provision of basic needs such as food, King pointed out.

And targeting starvation seems like appropriate action for York's farming community.

*Last year, York farmers donated about 15 tonnes of grain valued at \$5,000.*

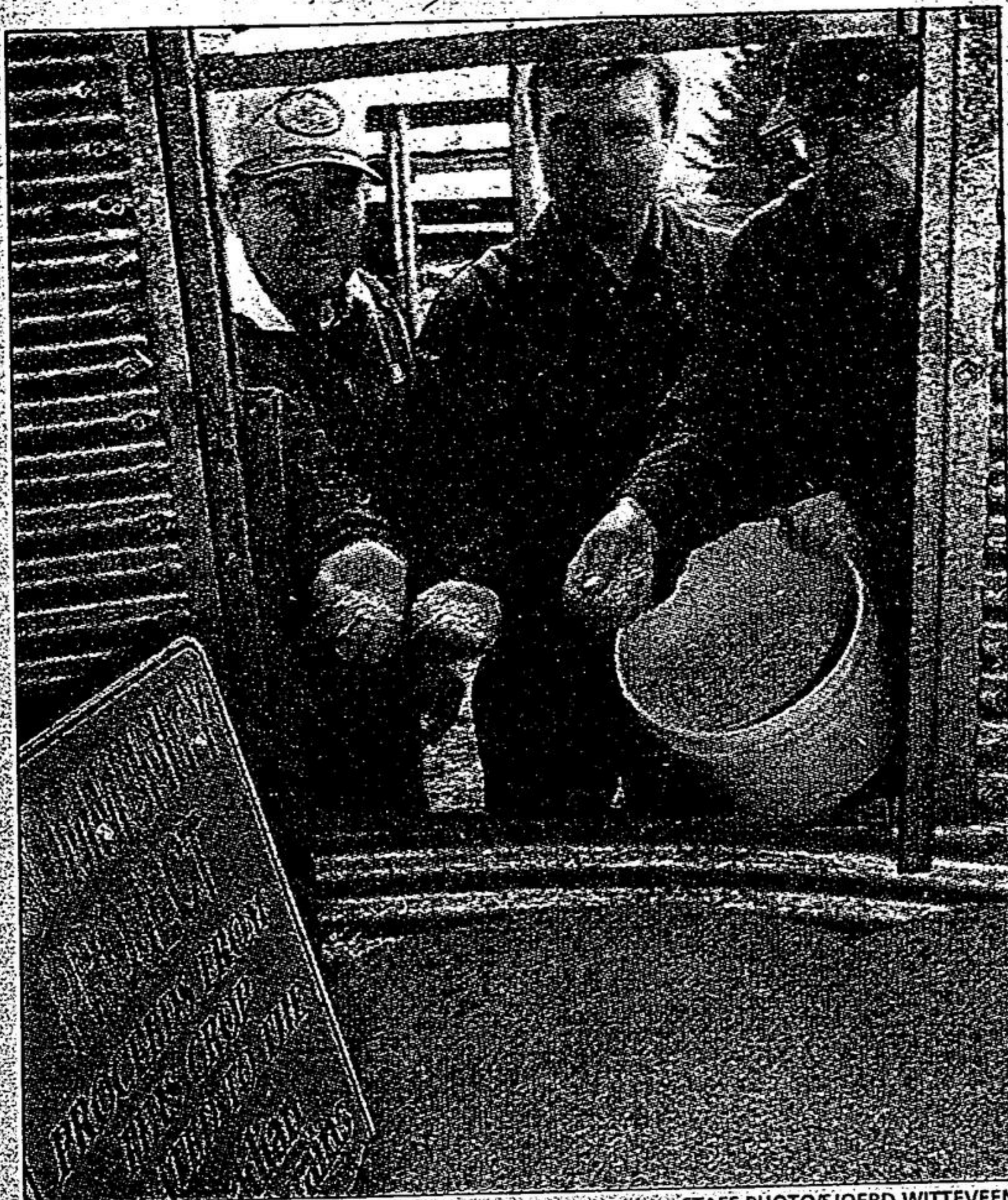
Besides Ethiopia, Canadian-grown wheat helps food shortages in Bangladesh, Kenya, Niger, Rwanda, Guinea, Bulgaria, Uganda, Zambia and Madagascar.

Most of us watch in helpless horror as the media focuses on Ethiopia. Pictures of starving children aren't easy to forget. But farmers aren't sitting idle. In an effort to stop the suffering, the farmers have joined the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

Canada's input makes a difference. Last year, Canadian farmers donated \$5.8 million worth of grain, providing food assistance to 24 countries.

Through the special food bank, community growing projects are popping up across the country. In Ontario, there are more than 110 growing projects under way. Each project averages about 16 acres.

So far, 15 acres have been



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Howard Burkholder, Rod King and Terry O'Connor check out the barley in this bin. The men are the movers and shakers of the York Region farm drive, which collects grains to be sent to countries where people are dying of starvation.

donated in York Region. Grain growers include King, Markham farmer Howard Burkholder and Hugh Mitchel of Oak Ridges.

On a national scale, the projects involve growing wheat, beans, corn, barley, oats, soybeans, sunflowers and sweet corn.

As well, the community projects need donations of money, time and labour as well as commodities such as fertilizers, chemical sprays and short-run trucking.

King said if the word gets out, more farmers from Stouffville, Richmond Hill, Markham, East Gwillimbury, Newmarket, King Township and Keswick will earmark some of this year's grain crop to help ease the suffering.

Last year, York farmers donated about 15 tonnes of grain valued at \$5,000.

"We expect to exceed that," Burkholder said.

Last year, grain for famine-ridden

countries was grown on Jack Warriner's farm in Markham and Lawrence Smith's Sharon farm.

Donations to the Canadian Foodgrain Bank are matched by the Canadian International Development Association (CIDA) at a ratio of four to one.

Thanks to the efforts of York Region farmers, \$20,000 worth of grain reached the world's hungry last year.

In this situation, the buying power of the Canadian dollar is impressive.

"One tonne of grain feeds 2,500 for a day. A \$100 donation will feed a family of five for three months," said project co-ordinator Dr. Terry O'Connor.

While 1999 was a tough year for many Canadian farmers, it didn't dampen their commitment to fighting world hunger, O'Connor stressed.

Canadian Foodgrains Bank is a

Christian-based organization that collects and distributes grain and other raw agricultural goods, Burkholder explained.

The special bank is a coalition of 13 church members and is a federally incorporated non-profit corporation registered as a charitable organization. It impresses Burkholder because it's not too heavy with administrative costs.

The Canadian Foodgrains Bank is helping to break the cycle of recurring hunger by providing food and development assistance to those who need it most while working to implement long term solutions to hunger.

*In the past 17 years, Canadian Foodgrains Bank has provided more than 700,000 metric tonnes of grain to the hungry in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas.*

A member of the Wideman Mennonite church, Burkholder is encouraging his and other churches to get involved. The York Region project could be extremely successful if it snowballs, Burkholder said.

In the past 17 years, Canadian Foodgrains Bank has provided more than 700,000 metric tonnes of grain to the hungry in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas.

O'Connor is spending much of his time reminding farmers that donations of grain, cash and other agricultural goods are urgently needed.

"Of course, we take cash donations too," O'Connor said.

O'Connor is a familiar face in the local agricultural community. Before retiring to a small farm on Bethesda Road, he was a veterinarian, serving Stouffville and surrounding areas for 30 years. Before retiring, O'Connor practised veterinary medicine for two years in Nicaragua, where he came face to face with hunger.

"I saw it. I understand why there's such a need for help," said O'Connor.

For more information on the local Canadian Foodgrains Bank, call 640-1171, 640-5162 or 640-4636.

## REGIONAL News Digest



### WHAT'S HAPPENING

**Music Mania**  
Thursday through Saturday  
Stouffville District Secondary School

Sharon Brazier has been performing in the Music Mania variety show for 37 years, and holds a poster promoting this year's event — the 40th — entitled *Still Crazy After 40 Years*.

### Senior Games registration

Dust off the golf clubs, get out the walking shoes and sharpen your card sense — the York Region Senior Summer Games come to Georgina May 23 to June 9.

This is an opportunity for seniors across the region to socialize, show off their skills and enjoy themselves in events from euchre, tennis and bowling to shuffleboard, golf, snooker, cribbage and swimming.

"We're expecting about 1,100 people to take part from all municipalities in York Region," said Laura Harding of Georgina's leisure services department.

Other events include a Prediction Walk along the shore of Lake Simcoe — where you predict how long it will take you to complete the walk — swimming, lawn bowling, table tennis, bocci, darts, horseshoes and even a choral competition.

Although Georgina is the host community, events will be taking place elsewhere in the region, five-pin bowling in Newmarket, 10-pin bowling in Richmond Hill, carpet bowling in Holland Landing and bocce in Woodbridge.

Registration forms and details of the events are available at all municipal offices in the region. The deadline for registration is May 5.

For more information, call 476-4301, ext. 240.



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