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Spoons help students think about hunger

BY LISA QUEEN
Staff Writer

It may seem like a simple child's craft, but the York Region Food Network is hoping it will help teach the next generation about food and hunger in our society.

"Our feelings at the food network, food drives are important and they are a great way of getting help to people in the community," executive director Lisa DiSera said.

"But we want to go beyond that. We also want to do public education about the causes behind hunger."

Ms DiSera and the network's director of communications, Rosanne Rodgers, visited a Sparks troop Thursday.

After receiving food donations from the five and six-year-olds to help with this annual Easter food drive, which began this weekend, the women taught the girls about the Spoon Project.

The girls decorate wooden spoons and learn about food security issues.

"The Spoon Project gets young people thinking about the ways they can make a difference in their community by combining a fun craft activity with some learning about hunger and poverty," said Ms DiSera, who wants to expand the program to schools and children's community groups across York Region.

"We decorate spoons. When you see a spoon, you probably think of eating."

"The Spoon Project reminds us that it is also important to think of those who are not eating."

It is important to teach youngsters hunger exists in their own communities, but they can help solve the problem, Ms DiSera said.

"The Spoon gets us to think about ways to help our less fortunate neighbours. The Spoon Project shows us that we can all make a difference in helping to end hunger."

Children can help by displaying the

BY THE NUMBERS

6 per cent of food bank recipients are newborns to age two

25 per cent are three to 12-year-olds and 13 per cent are 13 to 18

54 per cent of food bank users are adults between 19 and 65 while the other 2 per cent are seniors

34 per cent of visits are from single parents with children. Two-parent families with children aren't far behind, making up 26 per cent

spoons in their classrooms or at home as a reminder, talking to friends and grown-ups about hunger, participating in food drives or fundraisers, donating vegetables from their own gardens to food banks and eating nutritious food so they grow up healthy.

"We ask them to imagine what it is like to be hungry and what they can do," Ms DiSera said.

"This is not just an inner city issue. This happens in our communities too."

Last year, more than 41,000 food packages were handed out at York food banks to needy residents and families.

More than 3,400 people rely on food banks every month, 45 per cent of which are children.

Residents are asked to donate to the food drive by dropping off contributions at firehalls and participating grocery stores during regular business hours.

Donors can also send cheques to the food network and, if desired, designate which food bank receives their donation. They will receive tax receipts.

The address is York Region Food Network, 194 Eagle St., Newmarket, ON, L3Y 1J6. The website is www.yrfn.ca and phone numbers are 905-967-0428.

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