

Operating Report- 2023 Wrap up and looking ahead

This past year marked the busiest the Food Bank has been in its 11 years of operation. Long gone are the days of dealing with less than 20 clients a day. We have surpassed 70 clients a day on many occasions in the last few months. Our operation has been basically unchanged for a while, but we have managed to streamline things to the point that if needed, we could run a client day with 4 people. Mind you, it would not be fun and those four people would probably never return.

We provided service for 242 clients representing 553 family members, 169 of which were children. Those clients visited us a total of 2899 times during the year and picked up 4122 hampers of groceries valued at \$226,000. We purchased over \$140,000 in food and had another \$168,800 in food donated. Our food expenses were up 40% over the previous year. We prepared 105 Christmas hampers this past year and handed out all but 4 of them. It truly was a remarkable year.

We took every opportunity to take advantage of the SNAP program and the Waterloo Hub connections to provide us with pallets of protein and other staples. We received pallets of chicken wings, cases of pork ribs and pizzas and frozen vegetables as well as pallets of cereal and canned goods, and dry goods. We look forward to expanding on this in 2024. We have been extremely lucky in that Lyle Packham at Packham Poultry has not charged us for our bi-weekly egg pickup in over three years. He did finally break down at Christmas and asked us for a reduced cost on the extra eggs we needed for the Christmas hampers. Even with his overly generous help, we still need to purchase eggs once or twice a month to supplement our supply.

Looking forward to this year, we are working to combine the local Food Banks together to form a buying or bartering network so that we may be able to purchase in bulk at a cheaper rate. The 5 possibly 6 local Food Banks are having an initial meeting this month to discuss ways in which we can work together to rectify our issues and perhaps create our own hub. Efforts are underway to try and cut costs on what we are purchasing, and utilize more of the Waterloo Hub and SNAP as often as possible. This is difficult as our space and freezer capacity is limited.

There had been initial discussion of increasing hours or offering evening hours to our working clients, but we have found it difficult to find volunteers that wish to work evenings. Discussions of reducing client visits had also taken place, but these were put off for a year.

At present there are no expected changes or upsets to the routine expected for the year. The volunteer committee has done a great job of rounding up help on Wednesdays and is continuing to work on enhancing the Thursday teams as well. There are no anticipated issues for the coming year.

Dave