

Good Food Box Program coming back to Limerick Township



by MICHAEL RILEY Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Good Food Box program has started back up in Limerick Township again after a hiatus due to the restrictions that arose due to COVID-19. The program was started in Limerick back in 2019 as part of their Foodshare program, was well received, and they are glad to have it back, according to Jennifer Trumble, the clerk and treasurer for Limerick Township. The Good Food Box program began in Belleville back in 1995. According to Ruth Ingersoll, the executive director of the Community Development Council of Quinte, the initiative arose from a realization several years earlier that food insecurity was a big issue in that city. This started CDC Quinte's work in food programs to improve the availability, accessibility and affordability of fresh produce. From their first order of 40 Good Food Boxes in Belleville, the program has grown rapidly, now including 20 different communities in Hastings and Prince Edward counties and moving approximately 1,000 boxes a month. This worthwhile initiative has also started back up in Limerick Township after a hiatus due to COVID-19. Ingersoll says that the Good Food Box Program has been impacted by COVID-19 on a large scale. "Previously, we packed all our boxes in one day with about 60 volunteers. With social distancing, this has changed the way we pack produce. Currently we pack in paper bags a \$10 all veggie bag and a \$5 all fruit bag. We pack two to three days a week, as we have a limited number of volunteers to pack and distribute the bags. We start at 8:30 a.m. and pack until about 11 a.m., then in the afternoon we deliver to the communities in Hastings county," she says. Usually there is a large box available at \$15 but due to produce and volunteer shortages, it can not be ordered until conditions allow the volunteers to pack with a large amount of people and a larger production capacity. Ingersoll recommends ordering the fruit and vegetable bags together in one order. "Our produce supplier, Deodato and Sons, has connections with many farmers from Ontario and Quebec that provide us with the freshest produce possible. We are excited to start purchasing produce from Melrose Market Garden for local produce this summer," she says. Ingersoll is very appreciative of all of the CDC Quinte's community partners. "We would like to thank the Town of Bancroft, the Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini Algonquin First Nation, the North Hastings Community Cupboard, the North Hastings Community Trust, North Hastings Children's Services and Bancroft Community Transit. As well, we wish to thank all of our awesome volunteers at our packing location as well as in the communities we serve," she says. Trumble says that despite the hiatus, the program seems to be picking up interest. "We are exceptionally grateful to Jim Mallabar, program coordinator for the Community Development Council of Quinte and his valuable drivers for allowing us to participate," she says. Trumble says that orders are

submitted by the public by the second week of the month and 10 orders were placed for July. They are hoping to promote this program so that it will continue to grow. She says that orders can be placed by contacting the township's administrative assistant, Victoria Tisdale at admin@township.limerick.on.ca or by calling the office at 613-474-2863. The Foodshare program will likely start up again after summer when COVID-19 restrictions start to ease. Proposed events include Food Bingos, Recipe Swaps, Coupon and Budgeting Seminars, the Good Food Box and Good Baby Box Program and Seed and Plant Swaps in the spring. Suggestions for other healthy living programs are greatly appreciated as well as in kind or monetary donations toward future events. Our goal is to promote healthy living and reduce food poverty, she says. Cheyenne Wells is a resident of Gilmour, in Limerick Township, and is glad to hear that the Good Food Boxes are back. I personally haven't used it yet. I had planned on it, then COVID-19 started. I think it's a great idea for fresh produce, much more affordable than big box stores. I do know a few people that use it and it's much more affordable for families. A friend of mine does get it regularly and often brings me some because she gets so much sometimes, she says. It's a great way to help people on a budget and convenient to get your fresh produce in one place.