

FARMERS FEED THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

It's safe to say that farmers like to see people eat, and they hate to see anyone go hungry. That's not just because food is their livelihood; it's also because they're more aware than most of us of how food is produced.

At Kawartha Lakes Food Source and its member food banks across our area, we are well aware of the generosity of local farmers because we see it all the time in their donations to help families in need. They don't do it for publicity; they do it because they don't want to see food go to waste, and because they want to help. For many, their generosity is rooted in their faith and a deeply held belief in the importance of helping others.

Now, any effort to name and thank every farmer who has donated to the Food Source or a local food bank is bound to miss someone, so I'll apologize in advance for any errors or omissions. To all farmers who provide food to the Food Source and its members: Your kindness is deeply appreciated, and your donations are enthusiastically received because they represent the things that are hardest and most expensive for food banks to obtain and distribute: fresh produce and meat.

Local Amish and Mennonite farmers deserve particular note. Many of these families have bountiful market gardens, and are more than happy to share that bounty with food banks and the Food Source itself. Other farmers share vegetables from their personal gardens or their commercial operations.

The Food Source benefits from potatoes from Daniel Frey; squash from the Gingrich family; assorted produce from Mark Martin; peaches from the Brubacker family and a wide range of veggies including peppers, cabbages and cucumbers from Alva Stoll. The Paynes (no relation!) regularly donate a side of beef; the Reed family gives a whole lamb. A quick check with a few food banks reveals donations of peaches to the Dunsford Food Bank, which also received potatoes and turnips from Ron and Verna Page. Staff at Lindsay's Dream Centre are grateful for the produce that arrives unasked from local Mennonite and Amish families. The Omeme Food Bank receives tomatoes, pumpkin, potatoes, squash and even watermelon.

The Woodville-Eldon Christian Food Bank is especially fortunate in its neighbours. It has received two pigs and dozens of ears of corn from area farmers. Woodville Farms provides potatoes, onions, carrots and cabbage for Thanksgiving and Christmas, and makes other donations through the year.

Through the Ontario Association of Food Banks, local dairy farmers have donated many hundreds of litres of milk. Local food success story Mariposa Dairy recently gave goat cheese.

Again, this is not a complete list, but it gives you some idea of how generous farmers are to those in need. We are indeed lucky to live in such a caring community.

And because these farm families are so unstinting in their support of the hungry, it's important that the rest of us in turn do all we can to support local farmers. When you eat in a restaurant, ask whether the meat is locally produced; if it isn't, tell them you'd like that to change. Visit local farmers' markets for preserves, crafts and more. Buy local fruits and vegetables when they're at their glorious height. It's the least we can do.

Radiothon: Call BOB-FM on Monday, Feb. 14 between noon and 2:00 to dedicate a song to your beloved by making a minimum \$10 donation to support the Food Source at the same time. There will be guest appearances and prizes to bid on throughout the day, including a membership at Whitetail Golf and platinum Raptors tickets. Tune in from 6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Valentine's Day to help spread the love!

Nancy Payne is president of Kawartha Lakes Food Source. If you're interested in donating to KLFS or becoming a volunteer, call 324-0707.