

A Hand Up in Fenelon Falls

When the rest of Ontario thinks of Fenelon Falls, they think summer relaxation. But residents of the village know that it has its share of hurting people who need a bit of support every now and then. For their sake, it's a good thing the compassionate folks at the Salvation Army food bank are ready to help.

Behind the church on Bond Street sits a small white building. It looks like it could be a seniors' club, perhaps, or a spot to store the Christmas decorations. Inside, though, is something much more valuable to the community's needy: food.

The first small room houses a refrigerator, freezer and small area where volunteers sort food into boxes for the people who use the food bank. The second, larger room is lined with metal shelves full of donated food, most of which comes from Kawartha Lakes Food Source.

"It's very important," says Captain Michael Simpson, who heads the church and its community services. "It's our main source of food. Sobey's helps us out, but for fresh things like milk, bread and eggs, the Food Source is the sole source."

The food bank, which is co-ordinated by Salvation Army community and family services worker Denise Auger and staffed by volunteers, is open two hours on Monday and Wednesday mornings and afternoons. Simpson estimates it serves about 25 people every week; clients are encouraged to come every other month for a few days' worth of food, but families facing an emergency may come again. Church staff are also available by appointment to provide food outside food bank hours if the need is urgent.

Like virtually everywhere else in Kawartha Lakes, the Fenelon food bank has seen a sharp increase in users: 25 to 30 per cent more people are coming through its doors now than a year ago. The Salvation Army food bank is the only one available to area residents. "Without us here, there would be a huge hole. The demand would spill over to Dunsford, Bobcaygeon, even Lindsay."

Simpson and his family came to Fenelon Falls from Georgetown, Ont., just over a year ago. The food bank there supplemented the town food bank in emergencies. Here, it's something those in need have come to rely on. When he and his family arrived in Fenelon, Simpson's first reaction to the food bank was that it was "a very good thing." Hungry families in the community no doubt agree.

Nancy Payne chairs the Kawartha Lakes Food Source's communications and public education committee. If you're interested in donating to KLFS or becoming a volunteer, call 324-0707.