

Bluffs Food Bank (BFB) is twenty years old this year!

The food bank, located near Kingston Road and Warden Avenue in Scarborough, was founded on September 11, 2003 when five neighbourhood churches, concerned about growing food insecurity, opened a food bank in the basement of Birchcliff Bluffs United Church. Bluffs Food Bank is non-denominational and open to all. The local community provides tremendous support for BFB, contributing money, food and many volunteers.

Bluffs is 100% volunteer-run, with no paid staff. This means that all financial donations are used to purchase food for food bank clients and for operating expenses such as rent. BFB is proud to be an agency of Daily Bread Food Bank. Daily Bread is Bluffs' primary supplier of food, although BFB purchases about 20% of the food it distributes using much-needed financial donations.

In its first week of operations, Bluffs served just twenty-four families. The food bank now provides food to over 250 households, representing almost 1 000 people, each week. The client base is diverse, so Bluffs provides culturally appropriate food (such as Halal) and customizes its offerings to meet the needs of clients with specific dietary requirements (such as vegetarian and non-dairy). Many clients are on social supports such as Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program. Recently, BFB has seen an increase in the number of clients who are working but struggling with food and housing costs, as well as newcomers to Canada who have nowhere else to turn for support.

The food bank is fully accessible, with ramps providing access to the building for clients in wheelchairs and scooters. Bluffs offers clients the choice of service inside or outside, which suits clients who prefer to avoid entering enclosed spaces with others.

Demand for BFB's services has increased by over 40% in the past year. The food bank could not have managed this growth without the work of its team of over fifty volunteers, whose many jobs include procuring and receiving deliveries, preparing food hampers, serving clients, translating, recording client visits into an online food bank database and keeping the food bank clean. These volunteers allow BFB to provide an income tax service to clients and a seasonal free clothing "store". Clients' needs are at the centre of everything Bluffs does; the food bank offers friendly and efficient service to its clients and works hard to provide a safe and welcoming environment to everyone who needs food.

Bluffs Food Bank is hosting a function on September 9th to recognize their twentieth anniversary, to say "thank you" to all its supporters in the community, and to acknowledge two decades of service. All supporters, neighbours and volunteers are welcome to attend.