



Red Door

FAMILY SHELTER

*Ending family homelessness...
one family at a time*



Shelter News Dec. 2010

In this Issue

Who's Hungry in 2010

Stephen's Story

Donor Spotlight

Volunteer Spotlight

Thank you to United Way
Donors of 2009-2010

Gifts to Empower



Gifts to Empower

Make a difference, one gift at a time

Over 20 different gifts you can give for the holidays to help make a difference for a woman, child or family at the Red Door

see reverse for details

Who's Hungry 2010 in the GTA: Key Findings

At the Red Door, we are seeing more and more families needing to come to our weekly food bank.

Food bank use is an important indicator of the economy as well as how well social policies are working or not working. For over five years, Toronto's Daily Bread Food Bank has published its annual research report, "Who's Hungry, a profile of hunger in the GTA". With results gathered

from almost 2,000 one on one food bank client interviews, Who's Hungry offers a quantitative and qualitative glimpse into the hunger crisis in the Greater Toronto Area.

In 2009, food banks across the GTA experienced an 8 per cent spike in client visits, largely attributed to the economic crisis that began in 2008. While economists were optimistic that an economic recovery was well

underway, food bank clients were the first to get hit by the recession — and the last to recover from it. No one was prepared, however, to see an increase of 15 per cent in 2010 — the largest increase in food bank use since social assistance rates were cut by 21.6 per cent in 1995.

The key findings from the Who's Hungry 2010 Report follow.

continued from page 1

This past year, food banks experienced the largest increase in client visits since 1995. The percentage of children 18 years of age and under requiring food banks remains the same, while the percentage of people 45 years of age or older using food banks is getting larger.

Number of client visits to GTA food banks: 1,187,000
Increase in client visits since 2009: 15%
Children 18 years of age and under using food banks: 34%
Adults 45 years of age and older using food banks: 28%
Children who go hungry at least once a week: 15%
Adults who go hungry at least once a week: 39%

Food bank use is an important indicator of the state of the economy as well as how well social policies are (or are not) working. The increase in this year's food bank use shows that financial recovery for people after a recession is a long process, and that there are severe limitations to Ontario's current income security programs that are effecting this recovery.

Percentage of clients who have used a food bank for six months or less: 35%

Of the food bank clients who have been coming six months or less, the reasons for visits include:

Losing their jobs or reduced hours at work: 46%
Living on savings: 13%
Employment Insurance ran out or refused: 11%

If social assistance is a household's primary source of income, food banks often become a necessity. Almost three quarters of clients get their income from one of Ontario's social assistance programs – Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program. The rules and regulations of these programs, as well as the low income levels provided, have created barriers for clients.

A Look Behind the Red Door

The Red Door's Food bank provides support to families who have moved back into the community from the shelter. Due to the ongoing shortage of subsidized housing in the city, more than half of the families who leave the shelter must enter the private rental housing market. They pay an average of 56% of their income on rent alone.

In 2009, we provided food support to 170 unique families, or approximately 400 unique individuals. More than half of these individuals were children 18 years of age and under. The food bank saw an average of 50 visits per week and distributed more than 150,000 lbs worth of food.

Median monthly household income: \$1,000
Percentage of clients receiving Ontario Works: 46%
Percentage of clients receiving Ontario Disability Support Program: 23%

The cost of housing is another key driver of food bank use. Almost three quarters of food bank clients pay market rent, with most of their income spent on housing costs. Since the mid-1990s, the shelter allowance allotted by social assistance has declined drastically as a percentage of average rent.

Income spent on rent/mortgage including utilities: 68%
People who pay market rent: 73%
Shelter allowance of social assistance as a per cent of average rent (2 bed room apartment in Toronto):
- 1994: 90%
- 2008: 55%

With no adequate income security system, food bank clients are going into debt in order to meet their basic needs. Increasing levels of debt will make recovery from recession much more difficult.

In order to make ends meet, food bank clients have:
Borrowed from friends or family: 59%
Worked outside the formal economy: 28%
Used a credit card or line of credit: 28%

Food banks were still seeing more and more families walking through their doors for the first time. Personal financial recovery for people after a recession is a long process, and that process is being extended because of the severe limitations around Ontario's current income security programs.

Changing a complex system such as social assistance doesn't happen overnight, and cannot be limited to band-aid solutions. A major transformation of the income security system, in which social assistance is a part, is needed.

A crucial step is making sure people are able to pay their rent AND put food on the table. Unlike other expenses, the rent must be paid at the beginning of the month. People can skip meals or go to a food bank, walk instead of taking transit or put off buying clothes and other necessities, but they cannot decide to skip paying their rent, or pay just for the living room and not the bedroom. If they do, they can be evicted, have their credit impaired and at worst become homeless.

There is still a long way to go in the fight against hunger. Join the fight. Learn more about hunger and poverty and how it is affecting your community. Reading the full report is a good first step. It can be downloaded at dailybread.ca. Volunteer at Red Door's food bank. Share the valuable information you are learning about poverty and hunger with friends, family and neighbours.

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Stephen's Story

Stephen was only 6 years old when he and his young sister were forced to watch their mother being beaten. Living in a duplex with their mother and aunt, both who had violent partners, the abuse was frequent and severe. Sometimes the phones would be taken away from all the rooms so the police couldn't be called when the violence started.

After a particularly brutal incident that left his aunt hospitalized, the police intervened and the family was provided with temporary shelter, but it wasn't long before they had to move again. Due to space limitations and the pursuit of their mother's abuser, for the next two years, the family was constantly having to shift between different temporary shelter locations. Stephen recalls the unsettled feeling of always being in transit.

"I remember waiting in a bus shelter in the middle of the night with all of our clothes in garbage bags, not knowing where we were heading next or how long we could stay. It was not an easy time for us."

"Where you are now doesn't limit where you can go tomorrow"

The Red Door was one of a series of shelters where the family sought refuge. "It was a big relief for us when we arrived at the Red Door", Stephen remembers. "It sticks out in my memory as the first place that felt like a home for us." At the Red Door, Stephen's mother got connected to the medical and legal resources she needed and was helped to develop a new safety plan for her family.

Shortly after, the family was briefly separated as Stephen's mother had to be hospitalized due to medical complications, and the children were taken into foster care. When they were reunited they were finally able to settle into a new home and were fortunate enough to secure a subsidized apartment in the city's west end.

Donor Spotlight

We are pleased to recognize a tremendous bequest in the name of Gertrude Milrod Gotlib. Ms. Gotlib's niece, Glenda Milrod selected the Red Door to receive the funds from her aunt's estate since one of the charities chosen by her Aunt was no longer operating. In 2006, our Moving Program accepted furniture from Ms. Milrod's parents when she was helping them move to a seniors' home. She was so impressed by her experience and with the Red Door's work that she decided to direct her aunt's available estate funds to us. Her aunt had always been a strong supporter of charities that focused on the needs of women and children. The funds will be used to help the Red Door increase the level of direct support to families and their priority needs over the next year.

"It was a difficult way to grow up, but my mother always instilled in us that 'where you are now doesn't limit where you can go tomorrow'". Twenty two years later Stephen's motivation to make a difference led him to receive a law degree from Osgoode Hall Law School, and he is now a practicing criminal lawyer. In his spare time Stephen is also a semi-professional rapper and motivational speaker, speaking out about male violence and issues of social justice. He has also helped establish music recording programs for youth at the shelters where his family stayed.

"Coming from a marginalized community myself, I want to be able to make a positive impact and do what I can to make sure that everyone has a voice in our society."

Volunteer Spotlight

On September 26th, Red Door staff, volunteers and board members walked and ran in this year's Scotiabank Waterfront Marathon Charity Challenge to raise funds for the Red Door. Together they helped raise just under \$15,000 from almost 200 supporters. "Our initial target was \$10,000 since it was our first year involved, so we were very pleasantly surprised at the great level of support we received" said board member and Treasurer Ben Pham who ran the marathon for the shelter. Thank you to everyone who supported and participated in making the event a huge success!



Red Door's youngest supporter shows her medal with pride

A belated thanks to our United Way donors of 2009/2010!

Our gracious thanks to those who gave to us through the United Way in 2009/2010. We unfortunately missed including these donors in our annual report this year and we would like to take the time now to recognize their generous support. Thanks to you all!

Toni Amato
Shaen Armstrong
David Atkison
Catherine Bates
Rosemary Bishop
Benedict Collinge
Cathryn Collyer-Holmes
Barb Crawford-Cook
Frances Cunningham

Eric Davitt
Stephen Dawson
Lorna Ferguson
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Nermeen Mikhail
Asha Patel
Carolyn Percy
Lisa Richter Davey

Tim Ryan
James Sanderson
Susan Shepherd
Carrie Smith
Glenn Stadtegger
Jonathan Toll
Kristopher Wentzel
Hilary West
Tai-Lin Woods

Gifts to Empower

More ways to a help families during the holidays

This holiday season, you can help make a vital difference in the life of a family at the Red Door. Gifts to Empower are ways that you can provide the essential items and services to help keep a woman safe from harm, brighten a child's life, or assist a family to start a new home in Canada.

Give Today! reddoorshelter.ca/gifts-to-empower



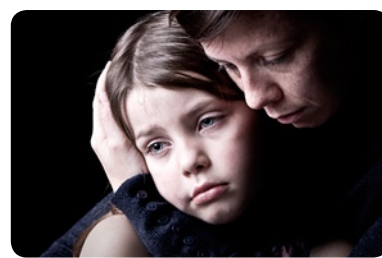
Arts and Crafts Kit **\$25**
Help brighten a child's stay



Personal Care Package **\$50**
Provide comfort with the necessities of life



Immigration Support **\$180**
Help a family make Canada a safe home



Safety Plan **\$300**
Help keep a woman and her children safe

A Meaningful Holiday Gift

A great way to show someone how much you care is to help support another on their behalf.

There are over 20 different gifts to choose from, and each one comes with a certificate that you can give as a gift to someone special in your life.

There's something for everyone on your shopping list!



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