



ANNUAL REPORT 2012

OF

The Table Community Food Centre

A Message from the Chair and the Executive Director

In early 2012, the Perth & District Food Bank re-launched as The Table Community Food Centre, and began offering a new set of innovative, integrated programs aimed at addressing poverty, hunger and poor health in our community. Our vision and plans, so long in the works, came to life in our new home at 190 Gore Street East, and the results have been amazing. Since the launch of these programs, our building has been hopping with children chopping fresh vegetables and adults discovering the joy of simple, whole foods shared with others, and ringing with discussions of how our community can best fight hunger and homelessness. Throughout the summer, the gardens overflowed with beautiful produce enthusiastically tended by experienced and novice gardeners. We've also seen a marked increase in levels of volunteerism and community engagement. Every day at The Table good food connects people, builds health and empowers our community.

Our transformation was accomplished with support from Community Food Centres Canada, a new national organization that is working with partners across the country to build Community Food Centres that will bring people together to grow, cook, share and advocate for good food. We are proud to have been the first rural and the second Community Food Centre in the country, joining The Stop Community Food Centre in Toronto and now The Local Community Food Centre in Stratford in working towards a healthy and fair food system.

We couldn't do this important work without the generous support we receive from the local community; from volunteers; in the form of grants; and as donations from individuals, businesses, our local municipalities, faith groups, foundations and other organizations. We would also like to thank Community Food Centres Canada for their very significant, ongoing funding and support, and to everyone else who lent a hand this year. Without you, the milestones and success stories in this report would not have been possible. Thank you.

Lynn McIntyre

Chair, Board of Directors

Nancy Wildgoose

Executive Director

What is important at The Table

Recognizing the value of every person

We have worked hard to create a welcoming space where everyone feels accepted, and where every person who comes to The Table is encouraged to share what they have learned, their skills and their knowledge. We all have much to give and much to learn. *A Story from The Table:* One of our Community Kitchens participants told us about a clam chowder recipe he had created. This fall, we featured his recipe in one of our sessions, modifying it just a bit to add more vegetables and make it a bit healthier. He led the group as they prepared the dish and beamed as his new friends came back for second helpings!

The community welcomed our programs

Response to our new programs by those living on low incomes has been **very** positive. In 2012, 1,741 Perth-area community members — 1,167 adults and 574 infants and children — were impacted by programs at The Table: 919 through direct participation in CFC programs and an additional 822 through food sent home from the Good Food Bank.

“The Table is like a home away from home. They don’t judge. Everyone is welcomed here with a smile, a little humour and compassion.” — Volunteer

Volunteerism has grown along with our programs

Volunteers are essential to the running of successful programs at The Table. We have seen a 57% increase in the number of volunteers since the Perth and District Food Bank transitioned to The Table Community Food Centre. We have put an emphasis on recruiting program participants as volunteers, and many have become indispensable. In all, 115 volunteers contributed 8,335 hours of work over the course of the year, the equivalent of four additional full-time positions. By donating time valued conservatively at almost \$83,000, our volunteers contributed to the capacity of The Table and built social capital.

“The Table has provided me with a positive connection to my new community. I love the concept of an inclusive Community Food Centre! It is so very rewarding to witness the growth of the children and adults in respect to their knowledge of food – its sources, its preparation, its flavour – in a cooperative setting. I receive more than I give as a volunteer.” — After School Program volunteer

Focused on building integrated programming

We have worked to build a mix of programs that improve the health of the community. Some, such as the Good Food Bank and our Community Meals, reach many people and provide them much needed immediate access to food. By housing a range of programs under one roof we also are immediately able to connect people using those services to other programs and resources at The Table and in the community. Providing depth in programming, including food skills and advocacy/social justice programs, adds to the positive outcomes and positive impacts on participants.

Food is a powerful tool

We use food in all our programs to build good health, teach skills and build a stronger community. In 2012, we purchased almost \$73,000 worth of healthy food. Our generous community donated another 101,800 pounds of food from their gardens and farms and through food drives and donations. Buying local is also one of the ways we try to support a more sustainable food system. We spent \$13,588 of our overall food budget on local, local-organic and local-sustainable food in 2012, and we plan to double our local food purchases in 2013. In addition to the food we bought, we harvested 734.7 kgs. of fresh produce in our community gardens. 62% of the harvest was brought home by the 76 garden members for use in their own kitchens and 38% was donated back to The Table.

We try to find the ground where nutritious and delicious meet while connecting with people “where they are.” One taste at a time, we hope to expand our participants’ understanding of good food by prioritizing offering healthy food in the food bank, offering balanced, beautiful meals at community dinners, building food skills and knowledge in community kitchens and gardens, and giving participants a chance to grow and savour their own produce around a table with friends.

2012 Program Highlights

Good Food Bank

- 619 distinct households (representing 1433 individuals) visited the Good Food Bank. A total of 2,646 visits were made by the 619 households including 262 delivery visits.
- 207 households visited the Good Food Bank for the first time (1/3 of all household visits).
- 4622.4 hours were invested by Good Food Bank volunteers.
- Over \$46,600 was spent on healthy food, of which \$8,130 was spent on food from local sources.

Community Meals

- 7,052 healthy meals were served to a total of 397 meal patrons.
- 1,881 volunteer hours contributed.
- More than \$26,200 was spent on food for the community meals and food for other food skills and social justice programs.
- In addition to regularly scheduled meals, 1,013 meals were prepared for 21 special events, including a Volunteer Appreciation dinner, the 20th Anniversary Lunch at the Perth Farmers’ Market, and school group visits.

“It got me over a stigma of the type of people who came here. I always thought that anybody who needed to use these programs were in the worst of shape. But now that I have had to, it has opened me up to something that I couldn't have found any other way and maybe it's a godsend that it did.” - a Community Meals diner.

Community Kitchens

Simply Good Food

- 264.4 volunteer hours dedicated.
- 400 healthy meals were eaten and 185 healthy meals sent home.
- 118 different healthy recipes shared.
- Nutrition skills transmitted: cooking with what's in the food bank, nutritious greens, seasonal cooking, whole grains, reading food labels, sodium content, etc.
- Cooking skills: measuring properly, cutting vegetables, marinades, cooking meat and fish, biscuit baking, slicing, jam making, using leftovers, making pastry and more.

"I made the bean salad twice and really liked it. Once I made a big bowl of it and took it to a fish fry, and the bowl was cleaned out. The other time I made it for myself and it was great because it lasted a few days." — Community Kitchen participant

Dads and Kids in the Kitchen (launched fall 2012 and still growing)

- 52.75 volunteer hours dedicated.
- 11 sessions were held, with a total of 14 participants.
- 162 healthy meals and 22 healthy recipes shared.
- Sample menus: pizza and lentil & barley salad; chicken and tofu stir-fry with rice; Cajun meatloaf, buttermilk mashed potatoes and Brussels sprouts.

"My 10 and 11-year olds, along with my husband have now attended three classes. Food is prepared, recipes are shared and great enthusiasm comes home. The program has inspired my husband and children to head off to the grocery store to buy the food, come home and prepare it, and insist that I stay away from the kitchen. This is all done both happily and proudly." – a Mom.

Good Food for a Healthy Baby (launched October 2012 and still growing)

- 6 mothers and 7 children participated in the program: 71.5 volunteer hours donated.
- 71.5 hours were devoted to the program by volunteers.
- 20 healthy meals & 1 healthy snack were served and 14 healthy meals were sent home.
- 20 Good Food Bags distributed from the food bank, including milk, eggs, potatoes, apples, legumes, squash, broccoli, almonds, raisins, turnip, oranges and celery.
- 24 grocery store vouchers were sent home.

"I think just getting out and putting us in touch with other moms and other resources. I think it's a great program and they're doing a wonderful job. I'm going to be sad to leave when my daughter turns six months." - A Mom in the program.

After School Program

- 19 participants in the first session and 17 participants in the second session.
- 961.75 volunteer hours dedicated.
- 443 healthy suppers and 737 healthy snacks served.
- Nutrition skills shared: balanced meals, alternative sugars (maple syrup), vegetarian cooking, food safety
- Cooking skills shared: measuring, mixing, altering recipes, stove safety, using greens, making bread and pies, using a kitchen scale, slicing, menu planning, hosting, serving a meal, etc.
- Gardening skills shared: planting seeds indoors, composting, re-potting, soil testing, garden prep, bugs, thinning, succession planting, trellis building, hilling potatoes, etc.

"This program is the best thing. Before this, I used to play video games after school. Here I have made new friends and got to know kids from my school that I didn't know before." — a Young Participant.

Shovel and Spoon

- 29 participants were in the program with T.R. Leger and Big Brothers and Big Sisters.
- 8 sessions were held in 2012.
- 63 healthy meals were served, 31 healthy meals sent home and 12 healthy snacks served.
- 123 volunteer hours were committed to the program.
- Recipes taught included: lentil soup, spinach apple salad, carrot-potato pancakes with dill-yogurt sauce, vegetarian shepherd's pie, mushroom and tuna melt, etc.

Community Gardens

- 76 garden members contributed 887.5 hours of garden work over 66 garden sessions in 2012.
- 34 healthy meals were served and 13 healthy meals sent home.
- 2012 harvest of over 737 kg included 29 different products
- 213 people attended 13 special events, including, for example, yoga for gardener workshops, a 2-day workshop for local campers to build a composter, a square foot gardening workshop, a Three Sisters workshop for grade 3 students, a garden party, a canning workshop, and garden planning.

"I get to meet other people (for) stimulation and conversation." - a Community Gardener.

Social Justice Training

- 25 community members attended Social Justice Training, including 4 who had also completed Community Advocacy Training.
- 187 healthy meals and 187 healthy snacks were served.
- 45 volunteer hours were dedicated to the training.

Community Advocacy Training

- 16 community members attended Community Advocacy Training in the winter of 2012.
- 134 healthy snacks were served.
- 24 topics were covered in the training sessions including: housing, empowerment, Ontario Works, attitude, choice, change, communication, harm reduction, values, goals, social justice, social action, mental health services, legal aid, conflict resolution, problem solving and more.

“It's broadened my perspective on being a human being and what we have as a community. My eyes are a lot wider now to the programs we have outside in the community...” - a Participant.

Community Advocacy Office

- 111 visits were made to the Advocacy Office in 2012 by 47 distinct visitors.
- 118 referrals were provided in response to issues brought forth to the Advocacy Office, including: housing, addiction, medical and mental health services, income and employment supports, legal services, settlement services, and The Tables' other programs.
- 6 Community Advocates worked a total of 629 hours.

“I'm working in an area that I have a lot of passion in and I can see the differences that it makes in a lot of peoples' lives. When you are with people who share your same values and when you are in a larger group of people, there's a lot of laughter and there's a lightness that does make a difference.” - A Community Advocate.

The Impact of Programs

In February 2013, a face-to-face survey was conducted with 60 adult participants from across many of the organization's programs. The survey helps us to better understand the outcomes of programs for participants in areas such as healthy eating and social inclusion and to gather suggestions for how we can improve.

Healthy Eating & Physical Health

56.6% of participants surveyed have changed their eating habits since attending programs at The Table. 80% of those people reported that they are eating more fruits and vegetables. Other dietary changes mentioned included being more aware of nutrition overall; watching food intake; trying different kinds of dishes; cooking more at home; and eating less salt.

35% of participants surveyed reported that their participation in programs at The Table has contributed to positive changes in their physical health. Stories of change that we heard included:

- "I've lowered my cholesterol and my blood pressure has gone down now that I'm not eating a lot of salt..."
- "There's more motivation to eat healthier when there's an environment like this and it's so important to so many people. And you see tasty things that you'd like to try to cook."
- "Walking to and from The Table and the garden, I have lost weight and am eating better.""

Friends, Community and Mental Health

75% of participants surveyed have made new friends at The Table and 88.3% of participants surveyed felt like they belonged to a community at The Table.

50% of participants surveyed reported that their participation in programs at The Table has contributed to positive changes in their mental health. Reasons they provided included:

- "It has helped me to not feel isolated. Dignity is one of the main ingredients in what they do here. The fact that you don't stand in a line-up and the food they cook is not filler. This place feeds the soul."
- "I have more in control of my life. I am able to stand on my own two feet. I am stronger."

And some parting words by participants at the end of the interview:

- "I feel like I learn something new every time I'm in the building."
- "This is light years ahead in the food and there's no pressure here to do anything or be anything which makes it very relaxed and of course you absorb more."

Staff

A key resource is our talented staff with diverse post-secondary education and experience in social services, community development, organic gardening and farming, nutrition and cooking. For the first year as Community Food Centre, the staff was composed of the Executive Director and six full-time and part-time Program Coordinators, for a total of approximately 5.4 full-time equivalent positions. In 2013 we have budgeted to increase the Food Bank Coordinator and Community Gardener from four to five days per week.

Collaboration

Working collaboratively with other organizations increases our capacity, extends our reach and promises greater program stability. It also can offer some significant economies. Our affiliation with Community Food Centres Canada is vital, and we also value our local partners. In a small community it just makes good sense to work together. This year we collaborated with T.R. Leger Adult Alternative High School, Connections, and Big Brothers Big Sisters on the planning, delivery and assessment of several programs. The Town of Perth made 8,000 square feet of space in Last Duel Park available for us to create a garden, which has helped them to reach their environmental goals and has given us wonderful growing space. We also enjoyed the support of over a dozen organizations that came to speak to groups, referred their clients, accepted referrals, etc.

Governance

In June, our new Supplementary Letters Patent which include the adoption of both our new name and purposes were approved by the Government of Ontario.

Finance

We updated our financial systems to support an organization of our current size and complexity, and upgraded the payroll system.

There were concerns that the new programs would be built by taking resources away from the Good Food Bank. On the contrary, we have attracted more funding to pay for the new programs **and** to grow the food bank service. We are providing emergency food supplies to an increased number of people at the food bank in a self-serve format that is widely appreciated by participants.

We continue to aim to diversify our funding sources. Re-launching as a Community Food Centre has allowed The Table to unlock new sources of funding, most notably grants by Community Food Centres Canada. Other funders and individual donors have also responded positively to the integrated programs we are now offering.

Major Grants in 2012:

Community Food Centres Canada	\$232,000
Earth Day	\$ 11,366
Empty Bowls	\$ 5,650
Ontario Association of Food Banks	\$ 4,800
Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport: Healthy Communities Fund	\$ 47,725
Nature's Path	\$ 15,000
Perth and District Community Foundation	\$ 6,000
Rotary	\$ 6,750
Stone Cellar Restaurant	\$ 4,590
Valley Heartland	\$ 12,140
3M Canada	\$ 4,725
And 3 of the municipalities we serve (including \$15,000 from the Town of Perth)	\$ 18,350

We would like to acknowledge the very significant contribution **of Hugh Colton and Brad Kyle of Town and Country Chrysler and Brian Perkin of Lake 88** who organized the Mountain of Food, as well as Barnabe's Independent, Metro, Foodsmiths and Giant Tiger for their year round support.

Many more have given generous donations as well as time and talent.

Thank you to everyone for your interest and support in 2012.