

20 with Bonnie Pidgeon-Gommert

QUESTIONS

By Jonathan Vickers

Bonnie Pidgeon Gommert is The Executive Director of the South Grenville Food Bank (Food for all Food Bank) since 2002.

The Food Bank has 3 locations for clients:

- Cardinal (Cardinal Public Library)
618 King St Hwy #2, 613-657-1967 (Wed 10am-2pm),
- Prescott 136 Henry Street W. 613-925-2444 (Tues/Wed/Thurs 10am-2pm),
- Spencerville, (Spencerville United Church)
16 Centre St. 613-925-2444 (Tues 10am-1pm)

LH: Is Prescott your hometown?

B: No, I moved to Prescott at the age of 7 from Alexandria, Ontario

LH: What can you tell us about growing up in Prescott with your family?

B: Throughout my childhood and teen years, I was very busy. My family organized the Prescott Majorette Core and I took Dance, Figure Skating and Swimming lessons until I was 13. After that I volunteered at many different activities, but mostly enjoyed volunteering at the Brockville General Hospital.

LH: Where did you go to High School and any particular accomplishments or memories?

B: I completed High School at South Grenville, where I was in the production of the "Black Donnelly's". I also played the flute in the school band. Mr. Hoffman, one of my teachers taught me, that if you really want something, then you have to work hard to achieve it.

LH: What high school jobs or activities did you have?

B: I didn't have a job in high school because my mother was very ill and I needed to be home after school to take care of her while my dad went to work. My mom and dad ensured that I was still able to attend all my extra activities at school. I played in the school band and was in drama club. I also played on the volleyball team.

LH: Any lessons from your first job (or activity) that you can relate to now (successes or failures)?

B: My first real job was with Pizza Hut. I think that job taught me how to form the friendships I have with the community today. I have had many interesting jobs over the years including working at the Banff Springs Hotel in Alberta.

LH: What did you study in College and what was your first career choice?

B: I studied business and marketing at St Lawrence College. I completed a two year diploma. One of my diplomas is in Hotel/ Restaurant Management, and the second is in Human Resources Management. Education and learning have always been important to me.

LH: So how did you go about becoming the Executive Director at the South Grenville Food Bank?

B: The very first time I had heard about this wonderful organization was at Brock Telecom. Tracey Faber Hoogwerf was working on the Food Bank Board and asked if I could help. That was nearly 12 years ago and I am honored to still work in my local community to help feed those in need in South Grenville. I value the continued support of our community, the generosity of our donors and partners, and of course, our fantastic volunteers.



Top: Bonnie Pidgeon-Gommert in her office.

Right: Bonnie Pidgeon-Gommert & Joan Rupert-Barkley (Admin. Assistant) in the food bank warehouse

LH: What does an Executive Director do at the South Grenville Food Bank?

B: There is a lot that goes on in my job and I carry out many tasks, but I would have to say my top priorities are client services and maintain donor/volunteer relationships. Every day can be different at the food bank. The need for our service has grown over the past decade. We are always looking outside the box to find new ideas on how we are going to stay open.

LH: What is the best part of your job?

B: Helping people and feeding the needy in our community. When people don't have the basic foods to eat and children go to school hungry, we have a very serious problem. Helping families just to have food on their table is very humbling. No one should go hungry in Canada, period.

LH: Why should young people and really, everyone, have an interest in the work the Food Bank does here in the South Grenville area?

B: The Food Bank is a vital service in the South Grenville area and we have 3 locations to better serve our clients. We offer many different volunteer/donor opportunities to help assist us with providing this great



service. This organization runs mostly on volunteers. Without their help, we could not do the great work needed in our community.

LH: What types of donations are truly needed at the Food Bank? Separate from food items, is there anything in particular the public could really help with?

B: We are a nonprofit organization that relies on the generosity of our donors as well as our volunteers. We are a registered charity that can issue tax receipts. There are three different ways you can support the food bank; you can donate money, donate items or you can become a volunteer. The food bank can be reached @ 613-925-2444 so you can find out more about how you can help.

LH: Now for the more personal stuff: How did you meet your partner Darrell?

B: Darrell and I met over 20 years ago on a camping trip. We have been friends for many years but only recently have we started dating.

LH: What is family life like for Bonnie and Darrell when you have off time and where /or what activities do you both like when you spend time together?

B: We both enjoy traveling to cottage country where we can fish and enjoy the peace of the countryside and the outdoors. It is our hope someday to buy a small piece of land where we can spend our weekends and relax.

LH: If you could visit any place in the world, where would it be?

B: This is easy, I have been lucky enough to travel to many places in this wonderful world but I would still really enjoy going to Italy.

LH: What is your Favourite Guilty Pleasure?

B: My guilty pleasure is milk chocolate (ok actually anything) chocolate or sweet

LH: Favourite TV Shows?

B: Murdoch Mysteries. This is a Canadian production. Everyone should watch it.

LH: Favourite book or Author?

B: Danielle Steel

LH: What is a characteristic in people you dislike?

B: I really dislike people that are dishonest. I enjoy people and most people I meet are fantastic.

LH: If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

B: I would like to be taller; thank God I can buy heels! (lol) But I will never be taller.

Bonus question:

What's the best part about "LIVING HERE?"

B: I grew up in Prescott and now I reside in Maitland. I think that the South Grenville area is the best place to live because it's so beautiful. I have always been involved in the community, even as a young girl.

Editor's Note:

In all our communities Food Banks play a vital role in helping out families in need. Below is a contact list for Local Food Banks and Organizations that will help and also accept food or monetary donations.

In Brockville, the Brockville & Area Food Bank is located at 58 Buell St (James St) 613-342-0605 it is open 2nd Monday every month from 6pm-7:30pm and Tuesday to Friday 12pm-3pm.

The Salvation Army Brockville, Brockville Community Church 175 First Ave 613-342-5211 Tues/Thurs 10am-3pm by appointment

In Gananoque The Gananoque Food Bank is located at 55 King St East 613-382-4434 (basement of the Legion)

Salvation Army Gananoque Care & Share Food Bank (Soup Kitchen) 120 Garden St. 613-382-3105 (serves Gananoque/ Lansdowne/Seeley's Bay/Lyndhurst/Rockport) Mon-Fri 10am-4pm

In Athens contact; Athens Ministerial Food Bank/ Crisis Fund Association Monday 10:00 am - 12:00 noon, except for holidays. Free Methodist Church on Elgin Street Food vouchers for temporary needs

For information contact Shirley 924-2625, Bernice 924-9112, or Jessie 924-9048