



GOOD FOOD BOX PROGRAM

Your Food Dollar Goes Further in Cardinal

By Lisa Crandall

Stretching the food budget is a time honored tradition and the Good Food Box program in Cardinal has become a popular way to do just that. For \$15 a month you accomplish two things. First, you will receive a box filled with the best possible quality of grocery produce year round. Second, by participating in this program you make it possible, through the power of bulk buying, for all the other participants in the program to enjoy the increased spending power of their grocery dollar. It's a win-win.

Originally created by the Salvation Army the Good Food Box program has existed in communities across Canada and the United States for several years. It has been happening in Cardinal for just over four years and they've gotten their process down to a well-organized system. Once a month (on

the morning of the 3rd Thursday) there is a flurry of busyness at the local Ingression Center as the delivery truck arrives with boxes of fresh produce and the volunteers, mostly from the local youth group, swing into action, dividing it into the waiting boxes. Depending on how promptly the truck arrives, this task is complete and the portions of food are sitting in tidy piles waiting for the program participants to arrive with their shopping bags in hand. Occasionally the truck is late and the volunteers are still rushing to get it sorted when people start arriving. According to volunteer coordinator, Marcy MacJoustra, the number of boxes depends on how many people have signed up each month. During the hot hazy days of summer many folks have their own gardens and participation drops off but during the

winter it climbs back up to 50+ households.

When everything happens on schedule people have a 30 minute window to come by to pick up their orders. They bring their own bags and the volunteers transfer the produce to the bags and often help carry them out to waiting vehicles. Many participants sign up for the next month on the spot. Conversations are animated as people wait their turn. Everyone is curious to see what is included this month. One woman quipped that she has to remember not to go grocery shopping in the days before the delivery so she does not end up with too much of something seasonal. Another confessed she hesitated to join because she thought of it as being for people who needed extra help with their grocery budget but now she likes knowing her participation helps make the program better for everyone else who participates.

Potatoes, onions, carrots, oranges, apples and bananas are standard each month. The rest of the fresh fruit and vegetables reflect what is seasonal in the grocery store. The produce comes from a regional wholesaler and the volume of the order guarantees the best possible prices and that means every household gets more for their money. The value of the \$15 box ranges from \$25 to \$40 depending on the season.

This program is important in Cardinal because there is no local grocery store. Registration forms are available at the local Mac's Convenience Store. Registration must be prepaid each month. There is a Facebook page at Cardinal Good Food Box with all the necessary information. There are also Good Food Box programs in Prescott and Brockville but they are in need of additional volunteers to make them as vibrantly successful as the Cardinal program. The communities of South Dundas have a similar program called The Green Food Box. [LH](#)

