

Hub Kitchen Report- April 2021

Introduction

As we move into spring and the final weeks of the school year, our Hub Kitchen has 'gelled' into an efficient program. Many months of weekly operation have consolidated best practices, from administration through volunteer confidence/experience, as well as delivery and disbursement in the schools. This work is underscored by the impact of the Brewer bequest, manifested in several important ways.

Overview

We continue to serve children in five participating Inner City/Priority Schools: Centennial, Hazen White, Glen Falls, Princess Elizabeth, and St. John the Baptist/King Edward. Lunches are prepared three days a week -on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays- at the Hub Kitchen site (Threshold Ministries). Daily operations are supervised by the Inner-City Youth Ministry, with associated personnel from Anglophone School District South (i.e. Community Engagement Coordinator and Community Schools Coordinators), assisting as required.

Lunch Numbers (through Winter/Spring Covid Phases)

The last report was submitted as we moved into Red Phase in late January. A commensurate drop in lunch numbers at that point was experienced, though, interestingly, not as severe as was the case in previous transitions before Christmas. As schools remained open, parents became more comfortable sending their students, and numbers steadily rebounded as Saint John moved into Orange and then, to the current Yellow Phase. All schools have seen their lunch numbers stabilize and remain steady over the past many weeks, with around 400 lunches per day being prepared; 3667 lunches were packed in February, and 4313 in March. With spring days at hand, weather-related cancellations have also disappeared, and we anticipate steady, reliable numbers in the coming weeks.

Volunteers

Our volunteer base has gelled into an effective unit. It is interesting to see the 'cultural' shift that has occurred at Threshold as people who were previously associated with several different organizations have now come together as identifiably 'Hub Kitchen' volunteers and have formed new friendships among one another. Many of our retirees, moreover, have enlisted help from their own friend/family circles (with two new individuals starting this week). With the last return to Yellow Phase, we have also had people who had pulled back in the fall return to us.

Deliveries continue to be handled by volunteers from the JDI group, with Kent Line (Tuesday), Universal Truck (Wednesday) and Saw-Mill Division (Thursday) continuing to participate. Routines and schedules are well established.

Brewer Bequest: Current Expenditures/Investments

This amazing gift has enabled several important actions, most notably the hiring of a part-time employee to assist Inner City Youth Ministry with the program. Kate Selig was awarded the position at the beginning of February and has proven an indispensable asset. Capable and motivated, her work has facilitated more efficient processes at the kitchen, enabling Erin and the volunteers to get much more

done than was possible before. Kate has also been able to direct operations in Erin's absence, a major asset, and helps with office/administrative duties.

We have purchased an industrial slicer which can cut all the different vegetables used in lunches. Its importance therein cannot be overstated, freeing up considerable time and labour to be efficiently re-directed, resulting in a much greater potential capacity for the program.

We are next planning to purchase fridges and freezers to augment our current on-site equipment, as well as a mobile 'bus-pan' shelving system that would facilitate preparation by freeing up counter space.

The Future

As per our discussions with Bart, we anticipate expansion of the program in the fall beyond the five current schools. To those ends, and to facilitate the most efficient set-up, it has been decided to look for an alternative kitchen site for the 2021-22 school year; we will continue at Threshold through the end of the current school year in June. Erin has already been examining several options and anticipates securing a new location soon, well ahead of our needing it in September. We hope to keep operating on the East side of Saint John, as it easily accessible for most of our volunteers. We will keep you up to date on these developments as they arise.

Final Thoughts

We are now in the final 11 weeks of this year's program. It has proven a remarkable success, not least because of the help and support of the Brewer Foundation. What was theoretical a year ago is now a proven program that we look forward to carrying on into the next year and beyond. We are ready for the next step!