

HELP STOP HUNGER



Hamilton Community News

Food Share reaps benefit of new Hamilton Harvest

Program works with area farmers to bolster food banks

By MARK NEWMAN
NEWS STAFF

Users of the nine area food banks served by Hamilton Food Share should be seeing a noticeable increase of fresh vegetables available.

About a year ago, in conjunction with the Ontario Association of Food Banks, Hamilton Food Share teamed with several Hamilton area farms to begin the Hamilton Harvest program with the goal of getting more fresh produce to food banks.

"We knew that to do so we had to not only increase the volume of food that we were getting into Food Share, but we felt very dedicated and very strongly about the fact that we needed to increase the quality of food that the

people who are hungry in our community receive," said Rachel O'Reilly, resource development director at Hamilton Food Share.

O'Reilly said an arrangement was worked out with growers where Food Share volunteers would go to the farms and glean or pick vegetables that were not destined for sale.

"There's a lot of produce that does not make it to market," O'Reilly said. "It's very clean, but it may not be the right shape, it may not be the right size."

The result was that Food Share collected some 90,000 pounds of fresh produce last year and another bountiful harvest is expected this year.

O'Reilly said volunteers have been out since August picking tomatoes, carrots, potatoes, pep-

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Rachel O'Reilly



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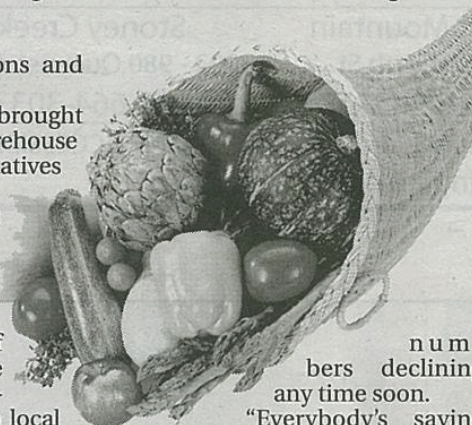
Rachel O'Reilly, resource development director at Hamilton Food Share, with some of the fresh produce being sent out to area food banks through the Hamilton Harvest program.

pers, corn, eggplant, onions and other vegetables.

Once the produce is brought back to the Food Share warehouse in Stoney Creek, representatives try to get it out to the local food banks as quickly as possible, O'Reilly said.

Since Food Share has developed a good relationship with area farmers, phase two of Hamilton Harvest will see the organization begin purchasing food directly from local growers at a good price.

O'Reilly said the move will keep money in the local economy, as



numbers declining any time soon.

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In order to help close the poverty gap, *Hamilton Community News* is once again taking up the fight against hunger by teaming up with Hamilton Food Share for a month-long food drive and fundraiser. Representing the *Ancaster News*, *Dundas Star News*, *Hamilton Mountain News*, *Stoney Creek News* and the *Real Estate News* and *Buyers Guide*, *Hamilton Community News* and its generous advertisers are spearheading an initiative to fill the shelves at Hamilton Food Share and its food bank affiliates throughout Hamilton.

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