

Food banks feeling the effects of summer



Food Bank As the masses head out to cottages and campgrounds, local food banks are trying to keep up with early summer demand but are seeing their supplies dwindling earlier than usual.

John Rennison/The Hamilton Spectator

As the masses head out to cottages and campgrounds, local food banks are trying to keep up with seasonal demand but are seeing their supplies dwindling earlier than usual.

Staples are always a hot commodity, including peanut butter, canned fruit and vegetables, canned meat and fish, pasta sauce and Kraft Dinner.

"I can tell you that most of us, in the last three summers, have had to purchase (food) because people go on holidays, they forget that people need to eat," said Christina Ferguson, who supervises the Good Shepherd's food bank and clothing programs. "Very seldom do you ever hear of a food drive past Easter."

"We've already started to have to buy for our food bank, which is abnormal for the month of June, normally we don't have to buy until July," said Neighbour to Neighbour executive director Denise Arkell. "We always struggle during the summertime."

Two other factors contribute to the shortages: a recovering economy, and the rising cost of food.

"When you look at the logistics of what we do, it's also costing us enormous amounts of money for increased cost of food," said Joanne Santucci, executive director of Hamilton Food Share.

Most of the major food drives are in October and May. Arkell says people are also typically generous over the Christmas season and that food banks rely on these drives to take them through the summer.

According to Hamilton Food Share, which distributes supplies to local food banks, there were 18,432 people using such services in March.

Living Rock Ministries focuses on at-risk young people, ages 13-25.

Staffer Sandy King says they are busy in the summer because the kids are out of school and take to the streets. **In 2010, Living Rock averaged 116 unique food bank clients per month.**

For information on local food banks and how to donate, visit www.hamiltonfoodshare.org.

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