

MEDIA RELEASE



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National Hunger Awareness Day HUNGER COUNT 2010 SHOWS NO RELIEF IN SIGHT

HAMILTON (June 1, 2010) – **What's it Going to Take?** National Hunger Awareness Day arrived this year on the heels of our local Hunger Count Survey. The survey highlighted the pressure food banks experienced throughout the year to deliver emergency food programs in our community. The 2010 Hunger Count Survey indicates a slight decrease of 5% of total people accessing a food bank in MARCH 2010 over the prior year. With a 26% increase last year the modest decline will have little effect in easing the system-wide strain that runs at maximum capacity every day. Currently there are 18,500 people who turn to a food bank each month and 40% are children (Hunger Count Snapshot 2010 attached).

Hamilton Food Share, our community's emergency food distribution hub serving nine local emergency food providers, is asking the question, **"What's it Going to Take?"**. According to Food Share, it is going to take the exact same policy changes that were recommended 30 years ago when the first food bank was established. The list of recommendations; increasing Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program benefits to actually reflect current cost of living, the creation of more affordable housing units and increasing minimum age. There is no silver bullet but rather an anti-poverty strategy combining a series of actions that have been documented, referred to and submitted to the provincial government by food banks and anti-poverty groups alike. Still, we have more hungry people than in any other time over the 20-year existence of Hamilton Food Share.

Additionally, Santucci stated "It's going to take getting personal with hunger". Hamilton Food Share is asking their community for a **"Hunger Intervention"** to make one day this year a hunger-free day. **Give up your lunch and donate the money to help feed someone in need.** One lunch one time @ \$7.00 can feed a person nutritionally for one day. All money raised on hunger awareness day will go to bulk food purchases for the summer months.

"It is also time to think outside the hamper", says Santucci. "Everything around us is changing. There are more people who go hungry amidst a climate of declining food resources." Hamilton Food Share isn't waiting for food that may never come. They are organizing food banks and hot meal programs to undergo a strategic plan, bulk buying staple food items at low rates, and implementing their food recovery program. "If it means we have to start producing the food needed for local programs then we will do that too", says Santucci.

Hamilton Harvest is a new program where we work with area farmers to grow nutritious produce especially for the food banks. With 32 acres to start, this growing season will produce potatoes, onions and carrots. Hamilton Food Share sees this as just the beginning. "It is a strategic shift", stated Santucci. "If we are going to meet the need it will require a change in direction from receiving incidental food supplies to producing intentional food sources." Partnering with the Ontario Association of Food Banks, this program is underway. Go to our website for more information - www.hamiltonfoodshare.org

Hamilton Food Share is a non-profit charitable organization advocating for the hungry, adding supports to front line emergency food providers, increasing awareness of poverty issues, and strengthening our community's response to hunger. Hamilton Food Share acquires and distributes over 2 million pounds of food annually to 9 hunger relief agencies representing 10 food banks and 6 hot meal programs.

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For further information, contact:
Rachel O'Reilly
Resource Development Director
Hamilton Food Share, (905) 664-9065 x222

Hamilton Food Share
339 Barton Street
Stoney Creek, On
L8E 2L2
905-664-9065
www.hamiltonfoodshare.org