

## Hunger 'runs deep,' not easy to spot

BLAIR MCBRIDE

You may not realize that the nice attendant at the gas station is hungry because he didn't eat today, or yesterday.

May 6 to 10 is Hunger Awareness Week in Canada. Hamilton Food Share (HFS) is encouraging the community to open its eyes to a problem. Joanne Santucci, executive director of HFS, gave some hard numbers that illustrate the scope of hunger in Hamilton.

"We have about 18,000 (people) every month who turn to a food bank for help," she said. "That represents 7,918 households; 7,673 were children. Forty-two per cent of the people served are children."

The Neighbour 2 Neighbour Food Bank notices the spread of hunger every day and it's not always easy to spot.

"Hunger runs very deep in Hamilton," explained Sara Collyer, operations manager at Neighbour 2 Neighbour. "We have a group of people who come to see us who work two or three part-time jobs at minimum wage and who struggle to feed their families. We see a lot of people who — it usually comes down to a decision to either pay rent or buy food."

Service agencies are encouraging people to go beyond reading alarming statistics and take action. "Volunteer at a food bank or donate a bag of non-perishable food," Collyer said. "I think fasting for one day is a poignant way of putting yourself in (other people's) shoes and understanding what people live through every day."

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