

NETWORK NEWS

What's happening at York Region Food Network



FOOD FOR HEALTH *by Kate Greavette, Executive Director*

Like so many people in our communities, York Region Food Network is struggling. As a registered charity, we have been experiencing funding cuts and a decrease in donations. We have had to reduce programming and cut staff hours. We are grappling with the skyrocketing food and packaging costs, and at the same time, seeing more people come through our doors in need of support. After three years of working tirelessly to support our communities, we are being pushed to do even more, with much less.

Despite the hardships, the exhaustion and the constant worry we have about whether we have enough resources to meet immediate needs for services that offer fresh food access, mental health supports and social inclusion, we are committed to building the infrastructure for a food secure York Region.

This is what you'll see from us in the months ahead:

- Because everyone has the right to food, we will be sharing information about the Canada Disability Benefit and participating in Community Food Centre Canada and Disability Without Poverty's postcard campaign.
- The creation of a food asset map to help understand food programming that currently exists, so we can better support folks to access services now while also planning for the future.
- The development of a York Region food system report card so we can work with partners and governments to better track progress on food system issues.
- Expansion of our Good Food Box program, making it more accessible across York Region.
- The coordination of 7 gardens throughout York Region because land-based programming and food gardens are important for positive physical and mental health.
- A return to in-person dining at York Region Food Network's drop-in breakfast. Indoor and outdoor seating will be available.

We are working magic with every dollar that comes in, stretching it as far as we can to make sure we are offering programs that provide food, empowerment and social connections.

If you are in a position to do so, please consider supporting York Region Food Network this spring through our Afternoon Tea Box and Golf Fore YRFN fundraising initiatives, or with a financial donation. All proceeds earned from our fundraising initiatives will go back into supporting our communities.

YRFN'S GOOD FOOD BOX IS BACK!

by Marissa Wiltshire, Director of Operations

We are excited to announce that after our winter hiatus, the Good Food Box program will be returning on May 3rd, 2023!

YRFN has been running the Good Food Box program for over 15 years. Its purpose is to make fresh food accessible to all. We do this by purchasing fresh produce at wholesale prices from Markham-based 19th Avenue Farmer's Market, and passing that price along to the consumer.

The Good Food Box is available on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month, and is open to everyone. The box consists of 6-8 vegetables and fruits, and costs \$18.

There is a high demand for this program, especially with the cost-of-living crisis we find ourselves in today. As we recognize this, we are working diligently to expand the Good Food Box program across York Region, especially to areas where there are not many community food assets.

We currently have distribution/pick-up sites in Aurora and Markham and are working to build a new site in Stouffville (expected to open in June).

We also work with community organizations who purchase Good Food Boxes for their clients in Vaughan. Our ultimate goal is to reach all nine municipalities across York Region.

Good Food Box customers tell us the program has them trying new fruits and vegetables, being more creative in the kitchen, connecting them to seasonal eating and has been an affordable way to increase their fresh produce intake.

To learn more about the Good Food Box, to order a box or to become a distribution site in York Region, visit our website at <https://yrfn.ca/good-food-box/>.



YRFN'S TABLE TO GARDEN INITIATIVE

by Maxine Knight, Culinary Program Director

Thanks to the Seniors Community Grant, through the Province of Ontario, YRFN's Table to Garden Initiative provided opportunities to build social connections. We worked in partnership with three established community groups to reach older adults (55+ years of age) across South Markham.

Through consultations with each group, we identified interests and delivered programs best suited to each of their needs. Being able to participate in local activities, healthy eating and gardening were top of the list.

With the Island Breeze Seniors group, we provided accessible transportation to visit the Markham Museum. At the Museum, we viewed exhibits, learned how to pinch clay and wheel throw to create pottery bowls for our culinary creations. With the Markham Tamil Organization we used the Canada Food Guide to discuss healthy eating, made a variety of dishes and created a recipe cookbook that captured our time together while honoring their culture. We also delivered a vibrant workshop to the Markham Older Adult group sharing basic gardening tips. Participants were engaged, asked many questions and took seeds home to get a head start on their gardens.

In the end, all groups were invited to be part of the Kirkham Collective Garden in Markham. The Table to Garden initiative allowed a diverse group of cultures, ages and demographics to come together to share knowledge, grow food and build community. We see our older adults as the backbone to the vibrant communities found throughout York Region. Through this project we honoured and celebrated the skills, knowledge and experiences of older adults in York Region.



YRFN'S KIDS IN THE KITCHEN PROGRAM

This winter, we have been thrilled to offer in-person Kids in the Kitchen workshops! Designed for kids 7 to 13 years of age, York Region Food Network's Kids in the Kitchen programming teaches life skills, develops confidence, creates opportunities for kids to try new foods and builds reading and math skills.



Massive thanks to the Awesome Foundation Newmarket and Town of Aurora for sponsoring our Kids in the Kitchen classes.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

June 8, 2023
7:30 pm

350 Industrial Parkway South, Aurora

RSVP to
kima@yrfn.ca



SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS

