



CCSAC NEWSLETTER

CENTRETOWN CHURCHES SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

February 2023

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St. Teresa's Roman Catholic
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Trinity Anglican

Our Mission:

To unite Christians of all
denominations through joint
participation in social projects and
prayer.

Get in Touch!

We would love to hear from you!
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Who Uses the Food Banks?

By Martha Musgrove

The number of people who rely on receiving groceries every month from their local food bank keeps rising, prompting questions about who these neighbours are and why they visit a food bank. A recent survey conducted by the Centretown Emergency Food Centre (CEFC) provides some answers, and they might surprise you.

Each summer, the Food Centre conducts a client survey to determine the level of satisfaction among those who use the service, to understand the demographics of clients, and to focus on areas of improvement. This year's survey was conducted in person and online from July to August, with a total of 161 clients participating from among the 544 visitors to the centre that month (a roughly 30% participation rate).

In answer to the "who" question, the survey reveals that the largest demographic group (65%) of visitors to the Centre were men. Just over 30% of visitors identified themselves as a member of a racial or ethnic minority, and of these, 28% identified as Indigenous. Most visitors (58.8%) were collecting supplies for themselves; the



*Michael Hatfield and Bill
Stauffer, CEFC volunteers*

remainder collected food for their households. Counting all members of households relying on the Centre, the distributed food supplies served 833 individuals, of which 159 were children and 57 were seniors.

In one sense, the "why" response is obvious: people who visit the Food Centre have severely limited incomes. Ontario Disability Support Payments (ODSP) were the primary source of income for 38.5% of respondents; a further 23% relied on Ontario Works; and just over 11% on Old Age Security/Guaranteed Income Supplement and/or Canada Pension Plan. However, at least 10% of survey participants held full or part time jobs, but their salaries or hours worked were insufficient to cover household expenses.

A recent study conducted by the Ottawa Department of Public Health, *2022 Nutritious Food Basket*, indicates that those living on limited incomes cannot afford to eat a nutritious diet. For example, a nutritious diet costing \$392 a month for a single person is beyond the means of someone receiving a monthly Ontario Works payment, especially considering that the average rent for a bachelor apartment in downtown Ottawa is \$1059/month.

While reporting general satisfaction with the services provided by CEFC, survey participants logged several constructive suggestions for improvement including better accessibility, longer opening hours, foods appropriate for restrictive diets, and larger quantities of supplies offered per visit. The Centretown Emergency Food Centre is currently examining a new site for its operations that will allow it to introduce practical responses to these suggestions.

CCSAC's Winter Warmth Program

By Martha Musgrove

Shelter, sustenance and sociability are the themes of this year's Winter Warmth program sponsored by the Centretown Churches Social Action Committee.

Donations of \$500 each were provided to the following:

- Daybreak Housing for the purchase of bedding for new residents. Founded in 1982 by several Centretown churches, Daybreak provides a family style home for men and women who have had difficulty finding accommodation.
- Cornerstone Housing for Women to assist with the effects of a fire at an apartment building for women on Booth Street.
- Public Foods and Fridge to stock the facility with items unlikely to be donated or rescued, notably dairy products. The Public Foods facility on MacLaren Street in Ottawa has been very popular as a supplemental food source for those living on limited incomes in the neighbourhood. Nearby businesses are now being solicited for donations, but the CCSAC donation has been an aid to "kick start" the program.
- Centretown United Church to assist with funding its Christmas Hamper Program. Each year, Centretown provides food baskets or grocery cards to families in need so that they, too, can enjoy the warmth of the season.
- Anglican Day Programs to help with unexpected costs associated with severe fire damage at St. Luke's Table. Because the Table has had to close for an extended period, its programs and services have been transferred to The Well, necessitating additional spending. The Table is an important centre where those living on low incomes can meet for a meal and the opportunity to socialize with others.

CCSAC thanks members of its Community Outreach Committee for suggesting and implementing the Winter Warmth projects this year.

Catherine Street Community Service Hub

Stephanie Bordage and Michael Reynolds of the Catherine Street Community Service Hub (CSCS Hub) were guest speakers at the Centretown Churches Social Action Committee meeting on October 3, 2022.

The Hub, located at 370 Catherine Street, opened in August of 2022. It provides an accessible person-centre space which offers residents access to City and community social support in one location.



A wide range of services are provided, including crisis support, financial and social assistance, immigration and settlement, childcare, housing and employment training. Case management is integrated with municipal and community partners and onsite Somerset West Community Health Centre staff.

The Hub is open Monday to Friday 8 am to 4:30 pm. No appointment is necessary. Resources such as WiFi, phones, chargers, computers, washrooms, printers and fax machines are all available at the facility. This safe resting place also offers coffee, snacks and printed materials.

For further information, email cscshub@ottawa.ca.

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