



Community partners rally behind CCD's Community Food Box program

The program helps residents live independently in their homes

When Community Care Durham (CCD) launched its Community Food Box Program (CFB) earlier this year, organizers knew they were starting something that was going to make a real difference in the lives of local residents.

What they didn't know was how many other organizations and community partners wanted to help. They've been pleasantly surprised.



The Town of Ajax donated program space at the Audley Recreation Centre (ARC) and **Ajax Councillor Ashmeed Khan was the first elected official who visited the site,**

to check out all the great work the staff is doing to help get boxes of food into the community.



The Community Food Box Program was developed to support vulnerable members of the community, unable to safely acquire the essentials for healthy eating such as milk, eggs, bread and baked goods, pasta

and soups, beverages, paper products and fruits and vegetables. It was also developed to take the pressure off immediate family members who weren't able to provide the necessary care to their loved ones.

Right from the start, **local food producers took up the challenge, donating many of the products**



included in the food boxes. Organizations lent their staff and trucks to help with weekly deliveries. Dedicated CCD volunteers signed up to deliver the boxes across Durham Region.



Whitby MPP Lorne Coe, Pickering-Uxbridge MPP Peter Bethlenfalvy, and Oshawa MPP Jennifer French joined the team to deliver Community Food Boxes to their constituents.



Oshawa Mayor Dan Carter, who visited the facility in July, pledged his support for the program and, like his political colleagues, congratulated the CCD team for supporting older residents who want to remain in their homes.



The CFB program initially started at CCD's Pickering location. The first week about 30 boxes were delivered. When the Province shut down businesses and schools in March just after the program launched, the demand for food boxes took off, rising to over 150 per week, so CCD had to find a larger location. The Town of Ajax offered dedicated space at the Audley Recreation Centre, where CCD staff had more space to assemble the boxes and coordinate the Region-wide distribution by CCD volunteers.



Currently, six months after the program's launch, just over 130 food boxes go out across Durham Region every Friday. Since the

program started, **CCD and its partners have provided 447 clients with 2,317 boxes of food.** Seventy percent of the CFB clients have been over 70 years of age and have had an average of more than seven risk factors, highlighting the significant contribution the program is having during COVID-19 to help at-risk populations stay in their homes as much as possible.

In September, with Durham Region in Phase 3 and Town programming resuming at the ARC, the CFB program will come full circle, moving back to CCD's Pickering location in purpose built space.

Erin Harvey, CCD's Community Food Box Service Coordinator, coordinates the purchase and donation of food for the boxes each week and gives credit for the program's success to CCD's volunteers and partners.



"Everyone's been really fantastic. The established rapport we have with our volunteers, our suppliers and our partners has been phenomenal," she said.

Oshawa Senior Community Centres is one of CCD's partner organizations. Teresa Shearer, OSCC's Manager of Community Support Services, said she is pleased her organization has aligned with CCD to help with food security.

"It works well with the other programs we've been trying to do with the groceries and frozen meals, and the Community Food Box is such a great fit," she said.



OSCC lends its vehicles to help with deliveries.

"With us having some time in between with our vehicles when they're not being used, it made perfect sense to work with a community partner agency to be

able to have great utilization of the vehicles and increase and expand our reach," Shearer said.



The W. Galen Weston Centre for Food at Durham College is another community partner, donating much of the produce from their greenhouse as the program got underway. Each week,

Harvey sends the Centre an itemized list of what will be in the food box and their culinary students create recipes using those ingredients. Recently the recreationists from CCD's Adult Day Program began including a weekly crossword puzzle in the boxes.

"We've received wonderful feedback from our clients who look forward to the recipes and the crossword puzzles," said Harvey. "It gives them something to do, something to look forward to."



Clients are charged \$30 for a food box and delivery is free.

CCD tries to subsidize the cost of one out of every five food boxes to support clients who many have financial challenges.

For more information about CCD's Community Food Box program, including ordering or sponsoring, please visit <https://communitycaredurham.on.ca/food-nutrition/community-food-box/> or call 1-888-255-6680.