

WESTON AREA EMERGENCY SUPPORT 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



Full Fridge and Freezer 2021

“You have no idea how much you have helped my family.” WAES Community member, family of 4

OVERVIEW:

In reviewing WAES in 2021 one word comes to mind, and that is “thankful”. The Steering Committee for WAES are thankful to our wonderful, dedicated volunteers, many of whom have come in every week all year long. This group of people unload trucks, sort food, date check all items, stock shelves, pack fruits and vegetables, drive from Barrie to Burlington to purchase food, shop each week for fresh produce and other perishables, answer the phone to make appointments, disinfect everything, distribute food outside in all weather, and any other task that needs doing. This work is physical, and at times exhausting. Our managers during the year: Amanda, Christine and Noellie, have ensured things ran smoothly at a time when rules change constantly. They must keep people safe, both inside the food bank and those that come to receive food support.

We are also profoundly thankful to our donors. People in our community, and beyond, have seen the growing need and have responded with generosity. Schools, faith and service organizations, foundations and businesses have done food drives and made financial donations. Individuals have brought in food once, or many times. People have made financial donations to a level we have not seen before. We have received grants through North York Harvest and Food Banks Canada. All this wonderful support has enabled us to continue to keep serving the community.



Produce delivery 2021, with volunteer support

STATISTICS, DONORS AND FINANCIALS:

1. WAES continues to distribute food out of doors, as we have through all COVID. Though this is not ideal for the community members, or the volunteers, it helps to keep everyone safe. We can ensure that people can select food that they need, and want, through our appointment system. Each person can request food that is best for their family. Whether they have gluten free, vegetarian, vegan, halal, nut free or other requirements, we do our best to accommodate these needs.

“I have my two children home trying to do school online. I have nobody to look after my children so I can continue to work, so I must stay home. I am barely able to keep my apartment. The Weston food bank (WAES) has really helped me. I feel I can give my children enough food each day, and that is a huge relief for me. Thank you for all you do.” WAES single parent community member, 2021

2. WAES saw an average of 1,800 visits per month from January to October 2021, which was lower than the 2,200 visits in 2020, but still much higher than the average of 676 per month in 2019. Then in November we saw an increase in need rise again, with visits at 2,350 for the last 2 months of the year. Those coming to WAES for help are older: 16% of visits are from seniors versus only 8% in 2019. Just over 30% are under 18, which is consistent with prior years. Only 33% are single person households, which is down from 48% pre-Covid. We are seeing more families, and larger families. Each week those in 5+ person households seem to increase. And 76% of those we help are BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour).
3. Financially WAES is in a solid position heading into 2022. Our total donations increased by 25%. Even though our expenses increased by 53%, we have enough money in the bank to carry on doing our work of increasing food security in our community.
4. Serving this large number of people week in and week out has resulted in our need to purchase a significant amount of food each week. On Monday and Thursday mornings volunteers drive to MVR Cash and Carry to purchase milk, eggs, vegetables, fruit and frozen protein including chicken. We have increased food spending from \$4,300 month to \$6,600.



Produce purchase from Lincoln Orchards

5. We received deliveries each Monday from Second Harvest. They supply us with reclaimed fresh and frozen food. On Wednesday mornings North York Harvest delivers skids of non-perishables, as well as some perishable food. Back in 2019 these two sources of food were close to 60% of our food needs. During COVID these deliveries represent about 25% of our food requirements.
6. Central United Church has continued to be a great place for WAES to call home. The church staff, and congregation, all support our work. We continue to use much more space than we originally were allocated. Our 1,000 square foot area has increased by at least 3x so that we can purchase, store, sort and distribute enough food for each Tuesday and Friday, and to be able to keep everybody safely distanced.

7. This year Weston Park Baptist re-instituted their annual door-to-door food drive. It was cancelled in 2020 and replaced with a GoFundMe financial drive due to COVID restrictions. This is a tradition that started in 1986 and gets all the community involved. This year was a big success with about 10,000 pounds of food collected by a great group of volunteers.



Some of the food collected by Weston Park Baptist Church's door to door food drive, Nov.2021

8. WAES also was the recipient for food collected by the Toronto Miracle food drive. This was the second year of this city-wide initiative to collect food door to door through a Facebook campaign. Volunteers went to homes to collect the food, and then it was brought to WAES. We received thousands of items from this one-day event in Dec. 2021.



Volunteers delivering food collected from the Toronto Miracle Drive

9. WAES received financial support from the following foundations and service organizations: Kindred Foundation, York Lions (from proceeds raised at the Delta Downsview Bingo 1868 Wilson Avenue North York, ON M9M 1A5); Weston Lions; Rotary Club – Parkdale, High Park, Humber; Knights of Columbus 3945 (from proceeds raised at the Delta Downsview Bingo 1868 Wilson Avenue North York, ON M9M 1A5); Hylcan Foundation; CMS Hockey.



York Lions and Weston Lions financial donations in 2021

10. Financial support was received from the following businesses: Mount Pleasant Group; CastlePoint Numa; Irving Tissue; Mechanical Inc.; Landscape Plus; Stratus 360; Weston Golf Club, 8th Orchard Golf Inc.



Mount Pleasant Group financial donation in 2021

11. Financial support was received from the following faith organizations: Central United Church; St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church; St. Phillips Anglican Church; Knights of Columbus; Weston Presbyterian; Weston Park Baptist.
12. We received food support from: Salaam Foundation –100 halal chicken were delivered each month; Gerdue Metal Inc.: Home Depot Stockyards; Voortman Cookies; RBC Weston Rd; REIT/No Frills; Dynamic Dance; 12 Division Cram a Cruiser; Weston Minor Hockey; Fiera Foods; Central United Church; Weston Park Baptist Church; Weston Presbyterian Church; St. John the Evangelist Catholic church and school; Rexdale Alliance; Beulah Church; Our Lady of Victory Catholic school; St. Gregory’s Catholic Women’s League; St. Philip Neri Catholic Church; Father Serra Catholic school; St. Bernard Catholic Church; St. Andrews Presbyterian Church; St. Mary’s and St. Martha’s Anglican Church; C. R. Marchant School; Pelmo Park School; Weston Superstore; RBC Weston; P&M’s; Weston King Neighbourhood Centre; Weston Frontlines; Michael Verrelli and Brigitte Contento (faithful Tuesday volunteers) ran several outdoor food drives, and a fall door-to door food drive for WAES bringing in trunk loads of needed food; the Lambton Square Condo residents and too many individuals to mention.
13. This year we were very fortunate to receive 2 grants from the Federal Government via Food Banks Canada totalling \$48,500. This is the first time WAES has received any kind of government financial support.
14. We received support through our MP’s office. Staff checked in to see if there was anything they could do to support WAES. After a call for emergency support in December they brought in halal turkeys.



MP Hussen staff brought WAES halal turkeys in Dec.2021



Michael and Brigette (Tuesday volunteers) ran a Halloween treat drive in October.

DELIVERIES:

WAES teamed up with Shakespeare in Action, then Etobicoke Seniors Services and finally Jane Alliance to deliver food hampers to shut in seniors each week throughout the year. Many of these seniors were unable to get out due to health issues, so getting their food delivered was a huge relief. It also made the WAES volunteers happy they could help provide this service to our vulnerable neighbours.

“Bless you for being there for me. I have so many health problems having fresh food I can rely on helps me. You are the best!” WAES Senior Community Member on receiving food deliveries,2021

FINAL NOTE:

Poverty is the root cause of the food insecurity that leads to food bank use. Inadequate social assistance and disability benefits negatively impact individuals in our community and across our country. COVID has laid bare the inadequacy of our social support systems. Remember to talk to your local politicians and tell them you want supports that will help raise people up so they can feed themselves and their families. Supports like affordable housing, universal childcare, living wage, accessible education, and training programs. Then maybe one day we can close our food bank. Until that day, thank you to everybody for supporting WAES

WAES Steering Committee

Diana Stapleton Chair, W.A.E.S.

Established in 1986

1 King St, Central United Church

416-247-3737

www.waes.ca

Charitable Organization #119295202RR0001