

January 14th, 2021

Dear 100 Caring Women

The North End Harvest Market (NEHM) opened in July 2014 with the primary funding generously provided by the Guelph United Ministries for a Pilot project that would provide fresh produce free to low income families in the north end of Guelph with only asking for name – address and phone number. With some fundraising and some personal donations and a couple of small grants, the NEHM was able to complete the project and have been continuing for the past 6 years without any city or government funding. The market is now a program of the Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition which is an amazing organization in itself hosting 14 neighbourhood groups providing amazing programs to neighbourhood residents.

Pre Covid, the market welcomed the community to seasonal activities and treats for the kids and constant projects assisting parents and adults in cost saving and Living on Less. There was often community resources available on site as well as entertainment and refreshments and the chance to socialize with neighbours and volunteers and everyone left the market with a smile and a bag of fresh fruits and vegetables. That is now on hold except the market is able to now put resource material in the produce bags and managed to hold virtual bingos and add treats for the children at holiday times and even COVID Santa paid a visit and waved as the cars came in for pick up. Pre Covid the NEHM was able to support 50 to 60 individuals and families who would come to the actual market and choose their produce but since the pandemic hit – they we were shut down for two weeks. They made a safety plan and presented it to the Public Health inspector and Upper Grand District School Board, (since the market runs out of a school portable), for approval and they allowed the market to open up the doors again, but with a whole different method of distribution. The market now offers curb side pick up – where the marketer drives up and the volunteer puts the food in the trunk of the car as well as they had to adapt to a delivery service for those home bound or not able to make it out to the market. We also have expanded where we deliver as the need has grown outside of the north end.

NEHM is able to prepare the produce bags inside, (with social distancing and limitation of number of volunteers in the space and public health protocols) but our delivery of the bags all happens outside – whether it be hot, cold, raining, snowing or sunny – the volunteers are out there. Pre Covid – we were able to get produce out to 45 to 50 families weekly but since the pandemic, we are now up to 160 bags a week – 80 to 90 on home delivery and the rest on drive through pick ups. So the weekly budget went from \$600.00 a week to \$1500.00 a week (NEHM was lucky enough to receive support from the Emergency Food dollars through the GNSC), but of course is not enough to be sustainable and the market cannot do any of their previous fundraising activities except for the re-launch of the adopt-a-week program.

The NEHM also now has additional costs for the PPE materials, including lots of sanitizer, masks and gloves that we offer our volunteers and our delivery drivers and all the extra bags that we now have to use purchase.

The NEHM has now partnered with the Guelph Police Services who pick up resources from Zehrs and Cobs Bread to also provide a small market on Sunday where marketers can access fresh bread, treats and a few fruits or vegetables.

I used to volunteer at the market as the person who took the registrations, but that job is no longer a possibility on site, but I have found other ways of doing stats from home and donating when I can.

Nominating the NEHM and being selected this year, is such an honour and a thrill for me and I know the funds if the market is successful could give them the well deserved opportunity to be able to keep providing the much needed food security to many struggling individuals and families and continuing in the safe and beneficial way they are accustomed to providing and I ask you to consider the NEHM for your support .

Our slogan "Thankful Hearts gather here and Hungry Souls and fed" says it all.

