



**Spring** is a favourite time of the year for many as excitement for gardening and eating the fresh bounty coincides with warm enough weather to get at it, and it's no different for the Food Cupboard community. We've been busy getting our Hoover Street garden ready and our garden box outside the Food Cupboard, we've harvested kale that over-wintered and used it in our cooking program, and we're talking with farmers and gardeners about this year's crops. There has been more demand than ever for our food bank lately, and we look forward to stocking the shelves with loads of local produce very soon.

Read on through this newsletter for more information about our programs, ways to contribute, and where to find us out in the community.

## **Food's Expensive and the Highest Impact is on Households with the Lowest Incomes**

That's the take home message from the new Food Costing in BC Report published by the Provincial Health Services Authority and what we are hearing from our community members. The 2015 report determined the average monthly cost of a nutritious food basket for a family of four in the Kootenays is \$989, which helps explain why more and more people are needing to use our food bank. The stress from not being able to afford to buy food for oneself and family is significant; here are comments from some of the people we serve:

*"Because I can come to the Food Cupboard, I can eat more often."*

*"Stress levels go down when you don't have to worry about food."*

*"Since I've been coming to the Food Cupboard, my mental health has been improving – my meds are going down and my healthy eating is going up."*

*"No matter my issues, I have a place to go and feel welcome."*

*"If you eat more, you are balanced."*

## Good Food Tuesdays

Good Food Tuesdays is a food skills program we launched in January, and it's already getting great reviews from participants.

The groups meet every Tuesday for two months to talk about building more nutrition and less waste into their diets, which are restricted by a lack of access to healthy food options due to rising food costs and other barriers. Participants also spend a couple hours in the kitchen learning to cook healthy and delicious meals from scratch before sitting down to share them for lunch.

We've been very pleased with the results so far, including

- 100% said the program made a difference in their lives - learned new recipes, improved social skills, and became more organized and courageous in the kitchen,
- 84% of participants said they are more confident preparing healthy meals at home,
- 67% are eating more fresh produce,
- 100% learned cooking skills they will use in the future, and
- 100% enjoyed the social experiences.

As we move into summer, foods from our garden will be incorporated into the meals, and some classes will be taught in the garden's outdoor meeting space.



### Participant Story

Even though Bob had learned to cook when he was young, after suffering a brain injury he'd fallen into a routine of eating cheap take-out food or things that just needed reheating. After just a few weeks of joining Good Food Tuesdays, he was so inspired to cook again that he was cooking all his meals from scratch and sharing many of them with friends in his apartment building. He then started volunteering as a cook for the Salvation Army's hot breakfast program and even replicated some of the recipes he'd learned in the cooking class. He says he's feeling great now; he's put a bit of weight back on, is enjoying all the social outings his cooking provides, and is looking into taking the culinary program at Selkirk College.

## Our Garden is Back in Action

After such a successful start to our garden program last year, our crew of staff, volunteers and customers were eager to get their hands dirty and start gardening once again this year. This early, warm spring has been a gift to them and their gardening season is already in full swing.

Under the leadership of our Garden Coordinator, Kim Charlesworth, volunteers have been busy weeding beds, digging in manure, and planting seeds and starts. They've been excited to report spring greens are sprouting and the strawberries are blooming. Currently, regular volunteer work parties happen Wednesdays from 10am – 12pm and Fridays from 11am – 1pm. As summer approaches, times will change, so interested volunteers should contact Kim at (250) 354-1633 for more information.

We've also welcomed interested school and community groups to participate. On Earth Day, 27 volunteers from local co-operative organizations came out to do some of the work, including planting onions, broccoli, cabbage, chard and kale, as a 'Random Act of Cooperation' for which we were very thankful.

We're looking forward to the start of Thrive, a supported employment program we offer in partnership with Kootenay Career Development Society, to begin later this month. Through the program, four people with barriers to employment will work in the garden two mornings a week with the support of a job coach and Kim, and will learn gardening skills, practice communication and team work skills, and benefit from the physical activity in a safe, healthy place.



## Grow a Row, Buy a Row

You can help your community by growing one row of your garden to donate to the Nelson Food Cupboard or by making a donation to purchase a specific amount of a specific vegetable from a local farmer. **Stop by our booth at the Garden Festival on Saturday, May 7<sup>th</sup>** to pick up some seeds to plant or to make a donation, or call us to arrange an appointment. Our customers love fresh produce and appreciate locally grown food.

**Grow a Row:** Any fruit, vegetables and edible herbs are welcome. At any time in the growing season when the produce is ripe, please rinse it and drop it off at the Food Cupboard. Stop by Mondays or Wednesdays from 9am to 1pm or call us to arrange a time.

### Buy a Row:

Donation amount	Produce options	
\$10	4 ft. row of carrots = 4 bunches	10 ft. of potatoes = 20 pounds
\$20	8 ft. row of beets = 8 bunches	9 ft. of cabbage = 25 heads
\$30	30 ft. row of lettuce = 30 heads	4 ft. of zucchini = 17 pounds
\$40	5 ft. of peppers = 40 peppers	16 ft. of carrots = 16 bunches
\$50	50 ft. of broccoli = 50 heads	33 ft. of beans = 17 pounds
\$100	39 ft. of squash = 100 small squash	100 ft. of potatoes = 100 pounds
\$200	26 ft. of cherry tomatoes = 64 pounds	15 ft. of cucumbers = 230 cucumbers

## Farmers' Markets Season is Almost Here

The Garden Festival kicks off the Farmers' Market season. The following Saturday, May 14<sup>th</sup>, the Cottonwood Community Market will resume, and the Downtown Local Market on Baker Street will begin on Wednesday, June 15<sup>th</sup>.

## Announcements

### Become a Perennial Partner

You can make a difference in our community all year round by supporting our programs through monthly financial donations.

We're excited to announce our 'Perennial Partner Program' which we have set up through the Bank of Montreal to facilitate monthly donating through direct debits.

Benefits include:

- It's convenient, you never have to write a cheque again,
- You won't receive regular fund raising solicitation from us,
- It may be easier for you to budget for smaller monthly contributions, than an annual donation, and
- We can better fund our programs.

Call us to set up a plan that works for you.

**Board Members Wanted** – We are currently looking for two people to join our board of directors. Requirements include a commitment to our vision and mission, a contribution of at least ten hours of time per month, and ideally some relevant experience, such as human resource management, policy development, or previous board experience. Call us to learn more about this opportunity from one of our Board Co-chairs.

**Our 2015 Annual Report** was recently released at our Annual General Meeting. It includes information about our programs, supporters and plans for the future. You can read the report on our website at: <http://foodcupboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/2015-Annual-Report.pdf>

### Stay connected

We'd like to send you our seasonal newsletters via email. Please let us know your email address at: [foodcupboard@shawbiz.ca](mailto:foodcupboard@shawbiz.ca).

Like us on [Facebook](#) and receive regular updates on our programs and activities.

### Nelson Food Cupboard Hours of Operation:

We are open to the public Mondays & Wednesdays 9am - 1pm or by appointment, however staff are on site working most week days, so please call for information or assistance.