

Orangeville Food Bank partners with Grand Valley under 'Dufferin Food Share'

By **Sam Odrowski**

The Orangeville Food Bank is joining forces with the Grand Valley Food Bank to create the 'Dufferin Food Share.'

The Orangeville Food Bank announced on January 12 that it is partnering to better address food insecurity within Dufferin County, as the Grand Valley Food Bank has seen a 47 per cent increase in need over 2022. This is even larger than the 37 per cent increase seen at the Orangeville Food Bank over 2022.

The merger between the two food banks in Orangeville and Grand Valley extends their long-standing relationship, sharing resources and helping with administrative tasks.

'As the need for food banks increases across our community, we can better support area residents when we consolidate our resources, expertise and efforts to better serve the residents of Dufferin County who are facing food insecurity. Through Dufferin Food Share, we will continue to uphold our dedication to serving our community with compassion, dignity, and efficiency,' said the Orangeville Food Bank in a press release.

The Dufferin Food Share will continue to serve residents of Grand Valley and the surrounding area in the same location it always has, Trinity United Church (12 King St., Grand Valley). It is open Mondays from 1 to 2:30 p.m. and Thursdays from 5 to 6:30 p.m. There is also a new contact number '519-415-9400' where people can leave a message and arrange an appointment to access food. The email contact is dfsgv@orangevillefoodbank.org.

With the increasing number of people accessing the Grand Valley Food Bank, its volunteers have struggled to manage all the different aspects of running the organization. To be effective, the food bank would have had to become a not-for-profit with a board of directors, which is challenging to find and manage in a smaller community like Grand Valley. Its population is just under 3,000 people.

'That was not something they [the volunteers] felt they could take on,' said Heather Hayes, Executive Director of the Orangeville Food Bank. 'At the end of the day, they just wanted to provide food to those in their community.'

The Orangeville Food Bank is now handling the administration of the Grand Valley Food Bank through the Dufferin Food Share and continuing with technical advice as it always has.

'The Orangeville Food Bank and the Grand Valley Food Bank have been partnering for years supporting the residents of Orangeville and Grand Valley through programs like the Seniors Market and sharing food resources,' said Hayes.

'The dedicated volunteers of the Food Bank have consistently gone above and beyond to serve their community and those in need of food assistance. They also wanted to ensure that they could support all the incredible community members who are the donors behind their incredible work. Moving forward this partnership will enable donors to receive tax receipts on an annual basis,' she added.

The partnership also better enables the flow of fresh and perishable foods to those accessing food in Grand Valley, noted Hayes.

'Working together and sharing resources is always a benefit,' she said. 'Both food banks have been doing the same work for many years; they are made up of incredible volunteers and dedicated community members; bringing all that experience and passion under one banner makes the community a stronger place.'

When looking at other community partnerships, the Orangeville Food Bank is excited to have support from the Community Kitchen

Program at the Westminster United Church.

?Margo Tasker and her incredible team of volunteers are making food for the vending machine to allow our chef more time to prepare meals from the reclamation food for our clients,? said Hayes.

The Community Vending Machine at the Mill St. branch of the Orangeville Public Library offers quality meals at 25 cents each to help with food insecurity. It has been there since November of last year.

?[We're] so thankful for their support and all they do for the community,? said Hayes.