

The world's gone mad, or has it?

by SHERALYN ROMAN

What a difference a week makes. Heck, right now, what a difference a day makes! Last week we wrote seriously but with a side dish of sarcasm, about Co-Vid 19. This week, there's nothing funny about the virus and we're all facing at minimum, three weeks of isolation and that's if we're lucky. Who is not facing isolation? The helpers, those folks that we spoke about waaaay back in January, the ones who step forward in times of crisis while the rest of us take a step back. This time it's not just front line workers like paramedics and police but also perhaps, your son or daughter, your spouse or your best friend ? folks who continue to provide other essential services like keeping grocery stores open and regularly stocked. We have a lot to be grateful and thankful for. Speaking of groceries??

Last week in the midst of all the bad news about hoarding and re-sellers taking advantage of this current health scare, we started to hear from some of the helpers in our community. We heard from folks who were offering their services and assistance to seniors. We read about neighbours helping neighbours when that last diaper had been used and there had been no time to restock. These were good news stories and offset the bad. It got us thinking about those in our community experiencing food insecurity; folks who cannot afford to ?stockpile? essential items or might be facing difficult choices about which bills to pay because they are currently not able to work. It made sense to place a call to Caledon Community Services to see how we could help. The following notice was posted on as many social media challenges as we could and thankfully, may folks have since shared it widely:

Helping Us Help Others Through The Exchange

Hi Everyone - with the current stockpiling of goods like canned goods and toilet paper and rising concerns over Corona Virus, the vulnerable, elderly and those experiencing food insecurity are potentially at risk. If you are able, we are starting a food drive in Caledon to support The Exchange, located in Bolton. I have been in contact with them and they have expressed a specific need for child friendly items (with kids being home from school) such as peanut butter, granola bars, cereal, canned meat, soups and other items like diapers - all sizes. Please remember, not everyone can go out and stockpile! If you can help here's how: Valleywood and Southfields residents, pm me and arrange to drop off or I can pick up items for donation and I will deliver to The Exchange in Bolton. Bolton residents, you can attend The Exchange directly, ring the bell at the back of their location and bring items to them. You can call ahead if you wish. And YES, they could probably even use some toilet paper if you can spare a roll or two. Please help us, help The Exchange. Together we will ALL work toward a healthy Caledon, a healthy community and reducing the risk of Corona Virus spread. This is your chance to help others through the same sense of panic and crisis we are all experiencing. THANK YOU!!!!

This week, I would like to reiterate to all in Caledon that CCS and the Exchange could really use our help. We checked in with them again and have included here an updated list of what is most in demand right now: Canned proteins / tuna / ham / chicken etc., Granola Bars / Snacks / items like Goldfish, applesauce, graham crackers, Bear Paws, Peanut Butter, Diapers of all sizes., Toilet Paper, Cereal**/ Juice Boxes (**they need lots of cereal!), Canned Soups, Fresh fruit (that will last a bit longer) like apples and oranges, **Gift Cards**

Like us all, The Exchange is trying, where possible, to provide a little more than normal to families in order to help folks if this crisis continues for longer than currently anticipated. As well, CCS commented that there is an expectation that challenges might not only include food insecurity over the longer term, but also financial insecurity. If people are forced to stay home from work, become ill or face a shortage of work, already stretched finances will take a direct hit and then basic needs like utility and rent can't be met. With this in mind the community is also invited, if they are able to do so, to make a financial donation to CCS that will allow them to help manage and support these families over the longer term. You can do so with the simple click of a button on their website at www.ccs4u.org Finally, while CCS remains grateful for the outpouring of support they have seen so far, with everyone staying home there is currently a shortage of volunteers helping to sort food. It's a ?good? problem to have but as a result, CCS is also accepting grocery store gift card donations to help meet them meet the needs of the community over the short term.

Persons who wish to visit The Exchange are asked to call their Care Co-Coordinator to make an appointment as all visits will now be scheduled in a bid to help minimize contact and any overall risk for all. Those able to donate items are asked to call ahead if possible and to use the rear door for drop offs. Folks in the south end of Caledon, including Inglewood, Cheltenham, Southfields and Valleywood are asked to contact me directly and I'll drive drop offs from these locations to The Exchange. Additionally, a huge shout out to Butter and Cup, located in Southfields for volunteering their location as a drop off spot for The Exchange food donations. As long as they remain open (and this may change with daily updates) Butter and Cup are happy to collect donations on our behalf and I will ensure they are delivered to The Exchange by week's end. As our Prime Minister said just a short time ago (at time of writing) let us "Act Now and Act Together." Let's focus on the helpers, the good news and support our fellow Canadians, and our fellow Caledon residents!