

REVELSTOKE FOOD RECOVERY PROGRAM FEASIBILITY STUDY FINAL REPORT

CBT Social Grant 2016



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Introduction

In January, 2016, Community Connections (Revelstoke) Society received a CBT Social Grant of \$4300 to conduct a feasibility study into the development of a Food Recovery Program for the Revelstoke community. The aim of this program is to reduce the amount of food disposed in the landfill by redirecting food that is “fit for consumption, but not fit for sale” to our vulnerable citizens. The guide *Creating a Food Recovery Program: A Step by Step Guide* was used as a major resource for this study¹.

Background

Food Security exists when all citizens at all times have access to safe, affordable, nutritious food that meet their needs. Revelstoke is working at increasing its food security through different programs, events and projects. In 2014, the City of Revelstoke commissioned a Food Security Strategy (FSS) which looked at our vision for a food secure community, identified goals to reach this vision, evaluated Revelstoke’s current local foodshed, and analyzed the programs, policies and plans in our area that address food security. The authors then listed many recommended actions to reach our food security goals, listing appropriate leads for each recommendation.²

A key recommendation in the Revelstoke Food Security Strategy that addresses food waste is found under **Goal 2: Environmentally sustainable food production - Increase access to local and regional food that is sustainably and ethically produced through personal, business and municipal government actions**; *Objective 2: Reduce food waste whereby organic waste products are used as valuable agricultural inputs and/or products that are still edible are recovered and redistributed*. The recommendation listed is to “Expand the Food Recovery Program to enable increased participation from local businesses, and establish an efficient system for collecting and dropping off excess food to people in need. Consider new reception sites in addition to food bank”.

Food Recovery is an initiative to redirect food that is destined for the garbage to more appropriate end-users. Food Recovery addresses the environmental, social and economic issue of food waste by taking food that is fit for consumption but not fit for sale and finding the best use for that food. Food waste comes in three types: fit for human consumption, fit for animal consumption and fit for composting.

¹ Kalina, L., *Creating a Food Recovery Program: A Step-by-Step Guide*, Kamloops Food Policy Council, May 2007.

² Ross & Blythe, *Revelstoke Food Security Strategy*, Prepared for the City of Revelstoke & the Food Security Steering Committee, October 2014.

Food Recovery Programs partner with local farms, restaurants and food retailers to rescue food from being thrown away. Edible foods are directed through agencies that provide meals and food for hungry people, while inedible foods are composted or fed to animals. This program exists to decrease hunger and food waste via an efficient, safe, convenient food delivery system.

A waste survey completed in 2013 calculated the amount of food waste from curbside pickup in Revelstoke to be 32.2%³. This consisted of a mixture of compostables such as fruits and vegetables as well as non-compostables such as meat, bones, breads, non-liquid dairy and fats.

This food recovery program feasibility study was in direct response to the aforementioned FSS recommendation and hoped to establish the groundwork for implementation for an expanded Food Recovery Program. The Community Connections Food Bank has had a Food Recovery Program in place for years, as a means for collecting donations, however pickups were limited and there were no alternative distribution systems. This study exceeded our expectations as the pieces fell into place and Community Connections is now operating a successful small-scale food recovery program with room to grow in the future.

Program Values

- ★ Partnerships
- ★ A Secure Local Food System
- ★ Social Responsibility
- ★ Environmental Responsibility
- ★ Accessibility

Program Goals

- ★ **Decrease food waste in the community.**
 - ✓ We have kept over 16000 pounds of food out of the landfill.
 - ✓ Many community members have commented on how this program has made them think differently about their grocery shopping and the waste habits.
- ★ **Increase the nutritional value of food bank hampers.**
 - ✓ We have provided most food bank clients with meat each week since program inception.
 - ✓ Save-on-Foods provides weekly donations from all departments of the store.

³ 2013 Solid Waste Characterization Study Revelstoke Refuse Disposal Site, Prepared for Columbia Shuswap Regional District by TRI Environmental Consulting Inc. (2013).

- ★ **Provide alternative schemes for food collection and distribution in addition to the food bank.**
 - ✓ Families, clients and agencies receive food through this program.
 - ✓ Food is regularly taken to the high school for students to access.
- ★ **Provide employment through program operations.**
 - ✓ Young man hired to handle daily tasks of the program through the Supported Employment Program.
- ★ **Decrease food costs for social programs.**
 - ✓ Many of our programs and residential homes receive food on a regular basis, decreasing their food budgets.

Program Objectives

Collect surplus food and redistribute to vulnerable citizens.

- Host community meetings to present program rationale and process.
- Solicit donations from major grocery stores.
- Provide regular food distribution for vulnerable citizens.
- Connect with social agencies for distribution schemes.
- Direct a significant portion of donated foods to the Community Connections Food Bank to help feed our most vulnerable citizens.

Provide an affordable, reliable system for the donations of surplus food.

- Contract an individual to do daily food pickups.
- Provide part-time employment for one delivery driver.
- Record daily pickups (date, location, item).
- Communicate donation drop-off options to the public.

Help donors feel more comfortable about liability concerns.

- Educate food donors about Bill 10-1997, *The Food Donor Encouragement Act*.
- Have a lawyer present the bill at public presentations and include a letter from a lawyer in the food donor package explaining the law.
- Educate food donors that the liability of donating food for animal consumption lies with the farmer, not the donor.

Ensure that the food recovery program meets all food safety regulations.

- Research what municipal, provincial and federal food safety regulations are in place and design the program to meet or exceed the regulations.
- Invite a Food Safety Inspector to participate in the design of the program.
- Incorporate food safety training and policies into program operations.

Secure long-term funding for a food recovery program.

- Solicit local donations through fundraising events and donation requests.
- Apply for grants to help cover program costs.

Deliverables

Community Meeting - February 2016

A meeting was hosted at the Revelstoke Community Centre to present the program rationale and process. Over 75 individual invitations were sent out to food retailers, farmers and restaurateurs within the City of Revelstoke, yet only 12 people attended the meeting.

Food waste from a global and local perspective was presented, highlighting the environmental, economic and social benefits to redirecting our food waste. A lawyer, B. Jody Lownds, presented Bill 10-1997 and addressed liability concerns.

Discussion was held on how we could run a food recovery program in our community, looking at the logistics of collection, storage and distribution. The managers of the large grocer, Save-On Foods, were in attendance and stated that they were happy to donate their surplus food, but did not have room to store the food for more than 24 hours. Previously when approached, this business cited liability concerns as a barrier for them to donate food.

The Community Connections Food Bank currently operates out of the basement of the Royal Legion and is only accessible Friday mornings, when the food bank is open. This was seen as a barrier to collecting and storing surplus food.

Collection was not a barrier for a local sausage maker, BA Sausages. As a result of attending this meeting he felt comfortable to start donating directly to the food bank on Friday mornings.

Pickups Begin - March 2016

To overcome the barrier of food bank accessibility, the Executive Team of Community Connections (CC) suggested that we collect the offered surplus food from Save-On Foods and bring it to the Community Connections Main Office, then make it available to clients that are accessing services in that building. The board room in the basement of the building was used for this purpose.

We first began collecting from the bakery department of Save-On Foods twice a week. The bakery department staff were very grateful to see the food being used, rather than thrown in the garbage. Very quickly the meat department offered to donate their surplus food as well, followed by the dairy and produce departments. The non-perishable foods continued to be delivered directly to the food bank on Friday mornings as per previous arrangements.

By having the collected food available at the CC Main Office, it was accessed by a wide variety of clients including those visiting the parent and child programs. It became obvious that we could easily collect food from Save-On Foods daily and distribute through our clients, storing any leftovers in an already owned chest freezer, which would be taken to the food bank for distribution on Fridays.

Several media outlets picked up the story of our developing program, including the CBC morning show *Daybreak*, which interviewed the Food Security Coordinator on live radio. Articles describing the initiative were published on the CBC website, in the Revelstoke Review and the Revelstoke Mountaineer newspapers.

Supported Employment - April 2016

In order to create an affordable, reliable system for donations of surplus food we hired a CC client through our Supported Employment Program. Monday through Thursday, with help from his Job Coach, this young man collects the boxes of surplus food from each department of Save-On Foods. The food is transported to the CC Main Office using the CC van, the costs of which are covered through Community Living Services Funding.

Upon arrival at CC Main Office the food is weighed, sorted, UPC codes destroyed to avoid products being returned for cash refunds (upon request of Save-On Foods), and laid out on a large table. CC Staff is notified when the food is ready for distribution and they collect items for individual clients, group homes and programs. The room is then opened to those accessing the parent and child programming in the adjacent rooms.

A volunteer seeking a work experience was trained to help with a variety of tasks, including dealing with the recovered food once it was delivered to the CC Main Office. This volunteer took care of the weighing, sorting, storage and clean-up of the food for two months.

A standing fridge with freezer was purchased to allow safe storage of potentially hazardous foods.

Community Engagement - May 2016

With only one food retailer donating to the program regularly, it was felt that a second community meeting would be helpful in soliciting more food donors. Invitations were sent out to food actors in the community, but again only fifteen people attended. A similar presentation to the previous community meeting was delivered, but to a different audience. This time a representative of the Columbia Shuswap Regional District Environmental Health Services Department presented on the new Organic Waste

Diversion Pilot Project, the upcoming ban on commercial organic waste and the future plans for curbside organic waste collection.

At this meeting, the owner of the local Tim Horton's restaurant indicated that he would like his business to participate in the program. In the following weeks we began pickups at this location, collecting nutritious donations of bagels, muffins, eggs, sausage patties, and soups.

Interviews were conducted with social agencies throughout the community to evaluate their program and clients' food needs and how they could be supported through this program. Seven partner agencies were identified and a pickup time established for consistency. Because CC does not have groups in their building on Wednesdays, there was an opportunity to open the food to other families in the community that do not access the food through the groups. We established a "Family Food Pickup" day on Wednesdays from 12-1pm, in which both families and agencies can pick up food. Advertisement for this offering slowly grew over time.

Health Inspection & Protocol Development - June 2016

Our local Health Inspector, Helen Lu, was invited to visit our program and help us to establish appropriate protocols. Several suggestions were made for proper handling and storage of the donated foods. It was also suggested to provide cooler bags and ice packs to program recipients so that they could store their selections properly while attending CC programs and during transportation home. CC has ordered cooler bags and will provide them to clients for a small donation. We have received a donation of ice-packs from local businesses.



Image 1: The cooler bags that we began offering to program recipients in exchange for a small donation.

Funding was received from the Revelstoke Community Foundation Disability Fund and the Revelstoke Credit Union to cover the wages of our Supported Employment helper. With this funding we were able to increase his hours to include the weighing, sorting and storage of donated foods in addition to his pickup duties. These expanded duties will begin in July, upon proper training on the program protocols. He will also be given a CC t-shirt with "Food Recovery Program" written on the back for clear identification. This additional support will alleviate the workload on the Food Security Coordinator, allowing the program to continue beyond the feasibility study.

Scaling Up - July 2016

In order to capture surplus foods from the Revelstoke Farmers and Crafters Market on Saturday mornings, a trial pickup program has begun. Volunteers request donations from vendors at the closing of the market, collect them in a clean bin and then pass them on to a local farmer to store over the weekend for distribution to vulnerable citizens on Monday.

On Wednesdays, leftover foods from the program are delivered to Monashee Court, a subsidized housing complex that is managed by Community Connections. On Thursdays all of the meat collected through the program and any leftovers from that day are taken to the food bank for distribution in the food hampers the following day. On Friday mornings, Save-On Foods delivers all non-perishables collected through the week and any recovered foods from that day directly to the food bank, which is located directly behind the store.

There is opportunity to partner with many more food businesses in Revelstoke as this program grows. The program is operating almost at capacity for the space available in the CC Main Office, but we are exploring opportunities to build a new, larger building that will house all of its services, including the food bank, which currently rents the basement of the Royal Canadian Legion. The space and storage required for the Food Recovery Program will be incorporated into the building plans, allowing the program to grow in the future.

Partnerships

Donors:

- ★ Save-On Foods
- ★ Tim Horton's

- ★ BA Sausages
- ★ Terra Firma Farm
- ★ Mountain Meals
- ★ Farmers Market Vendors

Implementation

- Employment Contract for food donation pickup has been signed for six months.
- Protocols have been established for the safe handling and distribution of foods.
- Copies of the Food Bank Canada’s Guidelines for Distributing Food Past the Best Before Date are available during food distribution.
- Agencies, healthcare providers and community leaders have been informed of the program.
- The program continues to operate!

Successes

The feasibility study of a food recovery program has been a great success for the community of Revelstoke. Over the course of 3.5 months, we have diverted 16,718 pounds of foods (and their recyclable packaging) from entering the landfill. This food has been distributed to vulnerable individuals, families, youth, and seniors, totalling \$41,800 worth of food. The variety

Month	Weight (lbs.)	Value (\$2.50/lb.)
March 15-31	2245	\$5612.50
April	4165	\$10,412.50
May	4931	\$12,327.50
June	5377	\$13,442.50
TOTAL	16,718	\$41,795.00

Table 1: Total weight and monetary value of food collected through the Food Recovery Program Feasibility Study. Monetary value is based on Food Banks Canada average food price per pound of \$2.50.

Month	Dairy & Juice	Bread	Protein	Produce	Non-perishables
March	1409	836	-	-	-
April	1228	1517	795	420	205
May	1640	1759	547	662	323
June	1221	1889	374	1325	567
TOTAL	5498	6001	1716	2407	1095

Table 2: Breakdown of the pounds of food collected through the Food Recovery Program Feasibility Study, by category.

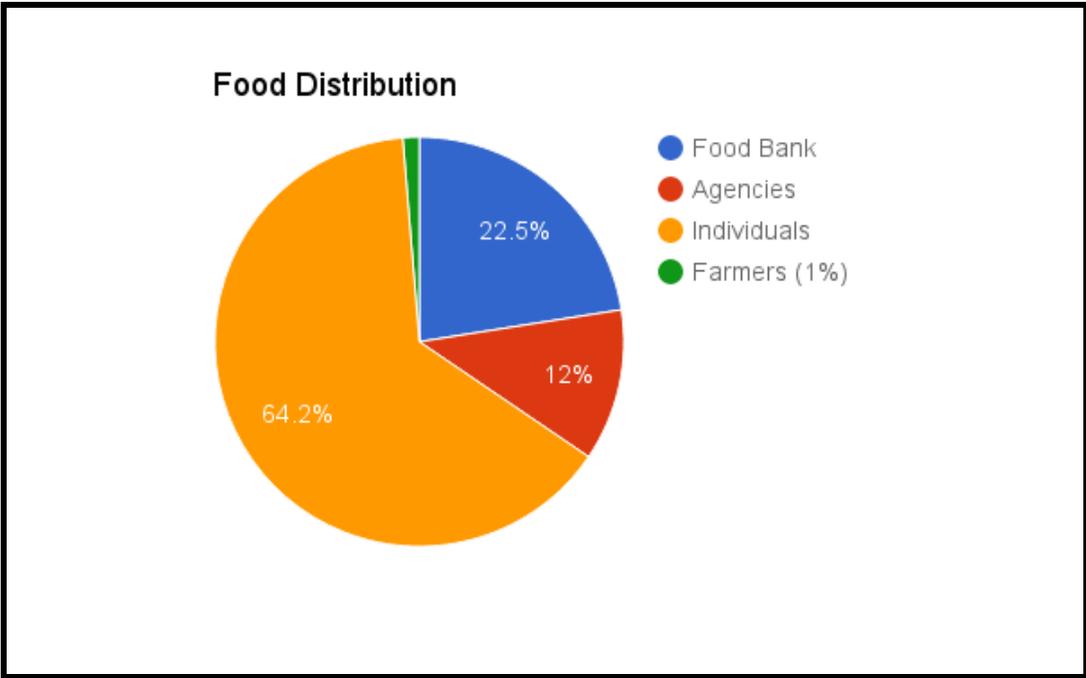


Chart 1: Estimated distribution of food collected through the Food Recovery Feasibility Study.



Image 2: Donated foods laid out for distribution in March 2016.

Testimonials:

Comment boards were posted in the food distribution area to capture the sentiments of those receiving the food. A sample of testimonials collected from clients:

“The recovered food really provides a stress relief for my family. Thank you!”

“Thank you so much. I really don’t like wasting food and this is a great way to feed people and stop from wasting it!”

“I now have new items on my shopping list because I sampled them here and really loved them.”

“Thank you so much. My husband and I were having a hard time making ends meet, and this helped us so much. We were able to feed our son and pay rent this month. This community has been a helping hand when we had no one else. Please keep up the program and the great work. Every bit helps.”

The Farmers Market Nutrition Coupon Program:

Because we are able to provide families with food through the Food Recovery Program, we have been able to direct more of our farmers market coupons to seniors and families in need.

Nutritional Considerations:

To best provide our clients with good nutritional options we have created several protocols. The nutritional quality of our donations will continue to be a priority when we enter into new donor partnerships.

- All meat products are set aside for the food bank. Food bank clients are typically our community's most vulnerable citizens and the food bank budget does not allow for the purchase of meat. Since this practice began the food bank has been able to provide meat to almost every client each week.
- Cakes are set aside and frozen for special occasions. Many cakes (5-10+) are received each week. We continue to find creative uses for these cakes such as birthday celebrations for low-income families, community events and celebrations, program wrap-up parties, etc. We put out smaller portion treats for our clients.
- Restricted donations from Tim Horton's. When they first became a donating partner we requested only their healthier options. We collect bagels, muffins, eggs, sausages and soups from them. We do not collect donuts, cookies, etc. We made this decision because we would like to provide nutritional options and guessed that we would be inundated with donuts and cookies that would not freeze well.

Moving Forward

Funding success:

- Revelstoke Community Foundation Disability Fund: \$2500
- Revelstoke Credit Union: \$1000

Healthcare Providers:

Letters have been sent to the healthcare providers in the community to inform them of the program and to invite them to refer their food insecure clients to access food through our programs. Information about the program has been featured in three print/online newspapers, in the newsletter for Settlement Services and in posters throughout town.

Highway Collisions:

Being located along the Trans-Canada Highway, Revelstoke citizens are often the recipients of the spoils from transport truck accidents. In the past the food bank has sometimes been contacted, but is limited in its ability to respond to these events.

The local towing companies, highway maintenance personnel and police have been informed of this program, giving them another point of contact when there is food to rescue. This program offers an alternative means for distributing such foods.

Program Support:

This program enjoys relatively few expenses. Through a small amount of funding support this program will be able to continue in the future. There has been much verbal support expressed to CC and the Food Security Coordinating commending the program. We expect to grow over time, bringing on new food and funding donors.

The Long-term Vision:

Currently it is very challenging to direct produce and dairy to the food bank as it is received too early in the week to last until food hamper day on Friday. Without a kitchen space available to utilize the food we are forced to give it away as quickly as possible.

In the new CC building we hope to incorporate a commercial-grade kitchen where we can offer freshly prepared meals using the foods donated through this program. Once we are in this space we may be able to offer additional food bank services and could then direct the vast majority of the foods received to the food bank.

Acknowledgements

This study would not have been successful were it not for the tireless efforts of Cynthia Routhier, Jackie Morris, Jenna Fraser, Patti Larson, Leroy Bridge, Maralee Faurot, Shannon Moorhead, Jody Lownds, and the rest of the team at Community Connections.

A special thank you to the granting team at Columbia Basin Trust for believing in this project. Without the generous funding from the Revelstoke Credit Union and the Revelstoke Credit Union, we would not have been able to pay Leroy for his daily delivery and sorting work that has allowed this program to continue beyond the study phase.

Appendices

1. Food Recovery Feasibility Study Budget
2. Disclaimer posted at pickup locations
3. Program Procedures
4. Information Letter to Healthcare Practitioners

Appendix 1: Food Recovery Program Feasibility Study Budget

	Expenses	In-Kind	Income	Notes
CBT Social Grant			\$4,300.00	
Wages				
Pick-up & Sorting	\$678.00			
Job Coach		\$6,052.00		2 hr/day x 4 day/wk x 28 wks
Program Oversight	\$2,772.01			
Transportation				
vehicle maintenance, fuel, insurance		\$182.50		Community Connections
Supplies				
Revelstoke United Church Hall Rental	\$50.00			For Community Meeting
B. Jody Lownds Law Corp.	\$237.75			Lawyer consultation and presentation
Administrative Support	\$100.00			For Community Meeting
Lakeside Printing	\$67.20			For Community Meeting
Packaging Bags		\$25.00		Save-on-Foods
Storage bags & disinfecting wipes	\$15.00			
Cooler bags for Tim Horton's Pickups	\$11.72			
Food Weigh Scale	\$40.73			
Freezer blanket	\$150.00			For transportation
Printing & Office Supplies		\$100.00		Community Connections
Tablecloth	\$6.71			
Compost bins	\$25.72			
Totes for Collection	\$145.16			
Total	\$4,300.00	\$6,359.50	\$4,300.00	

Appendix 2: Disclaimer posted at pickup locations

DISCLAIMER

These food items have been recovered from local grocery stores.
They have been deemed 'unfit for sale'.

Each item that has been recovered has been inspected and appears 'safe' for distribution by our staff and volunteers.

You will notice that dairy products may be close to or past the 'best before date'. At Community Connections we follow Food Banks Canada's Guidelines for Distribution, which are available upon request. These guidelines allow food banks and food recovery programs to distribute items beyond their best before dates as long as the items have been inspected for defects and are unopened. These guidelines allow us to provide you with highly nutritious foods like yogurt, meat, cheese, produce and milk by allowing distribution of these items beyond the dates set by the manufacturer. In many cases, these dates have nothing to do with when an item will spoil or become unsafe to consume and have more to do with the manufacturer wanting to sell more product.

Please check the items yourself and take items that will help you and your family/agency.

Please do not hesitate to ask staff about any concerns or questions you may have.

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Appendix 3: Program Procedures

Food Recovery Program Procedures

Revised July 6, 2016 by Melissa Hemphill, Food Security Coordinator

Intake:

- Record all fridge and freezer temperatures each day on the appropriate spreadsheet. If temperatures are outside of the desired range, notify program managers.
- Ensure all boxes of food are kept off the floor at all times. Use the tablecloth to protect the table from scratching by crates and heavy boxes.
- Weigh and record all incoming foods into the following categories: Dairy & Juice, Bread, Protein (meat, eggs, etc.), Produce, Non-Perishables. Use a different data table for each source. Submit data to Food Security Coordinator when complete.
- Cross off all UPC symbols with a permanent marker, checking the Best Before dates to ensure foods are not too far past their dates.
- Refrigerate all potentially hazardous foods (see list), including all dairy, garlic breads, highly perishable fruits and vegetables, sprouts, any cut foods, tofu.
- Freeze all meat and cakes in chest freezer (not for distribution through pick-up programs).
- Repackage eggs into half cartons. Dispose of broken eggs in the garbage. Wash eggs that are contaminated with broken egg before repackaging.
- When there is one rotten piece of fruit or veg in a package, remove the rotten food and dispose of it appropriately. If the container is soiled from this rotten food, repackage the remaining food.

Food Disposal

- We donate all that we can to local pig farmers by placing it in the buckets outside the backdoor, where the farmers can pick it up. All foods placed in the animal food or compost bins must have all packaging removed.
- Place all foods that are no longer safe for humans to consume in the “Animal Food” bin, with the exception of moldy foods, citrus, mushrooms and onions. Let the Food Security Coordinator know when you have placed food in this bucket so that they can inform the farmer.
- Place all moldy foods in the “compost” bin, kept in the staff kitchen upstairs in main office. The Food Security Coordinator will dump this into the community garden compost bin.

Repacking Food:

- Wash hands properly before handling foods.

- Place items that are open to contamination or that can be divided into family-size portions into the plastic food-grade bags provided.
- Use only cleaned and sanitized knives and cutting boards if required.
- Repackaged items require a label stating: Source (ie. Save-On), Date repackaged, Allergens contained. This does not need to be done for fruits and vegetables unless they are altered (ie. cut).

Distribution:

- Ensure that food is displayed in an easy-to-access manner and that shopping bags are available.
- Display pertinent information such as: disclaimer, food storage guidelines, comment capture sheets, invitation to take items from the fridge, etc.
- Open the doors when the area is ready for clients.
- Ensure all agencies taking food record the weight and types of food they are taking. Individual clients do not need to record what they take.

Clean-up:

- Breakdown excess boxes.
- Place all boxes and crates by the backdoor for return next day.
- Box up all dry-storage items and place boxes in the cold storage room - label clearly with the date. These items are to be put out for distribution the following day, then cleared out to Monashee Court if still not taken.
- Move all items with today's best before date or earlier into the fridge-freezer.
- Wipe down tables with sanitizing solution.

Appendix 4: Information Letter to Healthcare Practitioners



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS (REVELSTOKE) SOCIETY
www.community-connections.ca

Dear Healthcare Provider;

As the Food Security Coordinator with Community Connections, I would like to introduce you to a new program we offer that may benefit some of your clients.

We have recently completed a feasibility study into a Food Recovery Program. This program aims to decrease food waste and redirect surplus food to those in need. Our feasibility study was a great success and Community Connections is proud to announce that with the generous support of the Revelstoke Community Foundations and the Revelstoke Credit Union we will be able to continue on with this program.

The Food Recovery Program collects food that is “fit for consumption, but not fit for sale” from local retailers and brings it to our main office for redistribution. We inspect each item and make it available for clients and families through our staff, programs and partner agencies. On Wednesdays from 12-1pm families are welcome to pickup foods from our main office. Alternative arrangements can be made if clients are unable to access the food during this time due to transportation or timing issues.

In just two and a half months we have been able to divert 16,718 pounds of food from the landfill and feed families, youth, seniors and those struggling to make ends meet. Any inedible foods are donated to a local pig farmer or composted, allowing us to responsibly deal with what would otherwise be waste.

Food insecurity has many forms and many causes. Sometimes it is the people that we least suspect that have trouble meeting their nutritional needs. Kind inquiries with your clientele may reveal that they know what they should eat, but just can't afford those foods on a reliable basis.

Please feel free to refer your clients to Community Connections to access food for themselves and their family. If they have experienced barriers to accessing the Food Bank, then perhaps the Food Recovery Program can provide them with the support that they need.

We hope to reach as many citizens as possible with this program. We hope that you can recommend this program to your clients and patients dealing with food insecurity.

Sincerely,
Melissa Hemphill, Food Security Coordinator