



Early advent calendars will help local families put food on their table this season

By Brock Weir

From a Halloween haunt on Carlyle Crescent to charity wrestling bouts fought at the Royal Canadian Legion, the community has been getting creative in ways to support the Aurora Food Pantry this fall.

But, as the holiday season approaches, the Food Pantry has some creative suggestions of their own to help keep shelves stocked.

The Food Pantry this month suggests individuals and families take on what they describe as a 'reverse advent calendar' to support families in need.

The idea, according to Food Pantry Board member Elizabeth Matthews, is to create a handy box and for every day over the course of 12 days, put one thing from the Food Pantry's most needed donation items into the box.

After the 12 days are up and the box is full, the results will be gratefully received by the food bank.

A complete list of most-needed items is updated regularly on the Food Pantry's website at [aurorafoodpantry.ca](http://aurorafoodpantry.ca).

'This whole season is really where things pick up for us in terms of donations from the public and engagement of different groups and doing fund or food raisers in preparation for the fall and winter,' says Board Chair Allison Stuart. 'This year, people have really responded well in terms of wanting to help and it makes a huge difference. Demand for our service has increased a lot every month and finding it really helpful to have more teams that are functioning because they're able to have their own fundraisers. It is making a difference to the people that we're serving, that we're looking to help.'

'One of the things that probably gets me right 'up there' on the pleasure scale are the donations from schools and classes that really get into the idea of helping others. We see that it is not just going home and getting mum to get a pack of cereal, it is broader than that. The kids seem to get into it, which is important. I think it is important for that person's personal development but it is also important, of course, for the community.'

Just one school that is getting into the spirit, Matthews adds, is Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School's Music Department which, she says, brought in 'several skids' of food donations.

?When we think about making donations to a food bank, specifically the Aurora Food Pantry, we think about what we grew up with and what we're used to,? Stuart continues. ?That may not always be the items that are most in need here at the pantry so we try to keep our lists both in The Auroran and also on our website, up to date with what we need right now, so that the items they're selecting for our use are important to our clients.

?We're priming ourselves for getting ready for the holidays, but in many, many ways the holidays are no different than any other day, any other week, any other month, for our clients because they need food year-round. We try to stay focused on making sure that we've got the food for every month in the year. What we do see and know is that people are anxious to help at this time of year and it makes an incredible difference because frankly after Christmas things slow down from a donation point of view until closer to Easter or the spring.?

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