

King Township Food Bank faces unprecedented demand, urges community support

The King Township Food Bank (KTFB) is facing an alarming rise in demand for its services, and the organization is calling on the community for urgent support to continue meeting the growing needs of local families. Since its founding in 2004, the food bank has been a vital resource for residents struggling to put food on the table. Despite King Township's reputation as a wealthy area, food insecurity has long been a reality for many, particularly lower-income families, rural workers, and seniors on fixed incomes. This year, the need has skyrocketed, with the food bank reporting a 66% increase in individuals served since the beginning of 2023. Now supporting over 500 people each month, the KTFB operates three distribution centres in King City, Nobleton, and Kettleby, all run entirely by volunteers. Many of those turning to the food bank are first-time users — working families who, despite full-time employment, can no longer make ends meet as the cost of living continues to rise. "Food insecurity isn't just about providing meals — it's about offering hope and dignity to those who need it most," says Geoff Simpson, the new president of the King Township Food Bank. Simpson took over from the organization's founder, Carol Ann Trabert, earlier this year after her two decades of dedicated service. The King Township Food Bank provides pre-packaged boxes of non-perishable goods to around 40% of the families they serve, while the other 60% receive grocery cards, allowing them to choose food that meets their dietary, cultural, or medical needs. Fresh produce and eggs are also provided to everyone. While this approach offers flexibility and dignity to clients, it has significantly increased the food bank's operational costs. Adding to these challenges is the inadequacy of the space the KTFB operates from. Currently located in the basement of Christ Church Hall in Kettleby, the food bank has outgrown its facilities. Simpson explains that the food bank urgently needs a larger location with fridges, freezers, and a loading dock to handle more food donations and ease the strain on volunteers, many of whom are seniors. Without these improvements, the organization risks falling short of its mission to provide food for everyone in need. This surge in demand for food bank services is part of a larger trend across York Region and Canada as a whole. Local food banks in York Region now serve more than 32,000 individuals, a number that has risen sharply in the wake of the pandemic and inflation. Many food banks across the country are grappling with similar challenges, with some, like Loving Spoonful in Kingston, forced to close their doors due to rising costs and declining donations. Simpson says the KTFB is determined to avoid that fate but warns that without increased support, they may struggle to keep up. "Without continued and expanded support from the community, we could face the devastating reality of being unable to provide for those who rely on us," says Simpson. The food bank recently received an outpouring of donations through its annual Thanksgiving Food Drive, with contributions from local schools, churches, and residents helping ensure that families will have food on their tables this holiday season. While the generosity of the community is always appreciated, Simpson stresses that the need continues to grow, and more help is urgently required. To address these challenges, the King Township Food Bank is hosting its annual Sip & Savour fundraiser on Thursday, Oct 24, at Seneca Polytechnic's King Campus. This year's event, with a Hawaiian Luau theme, promises to be a lively evening featuring tropical beverages, island-inspired dishes, live Hawaiian music, and hula performances. The event will also include a silent auction (live and online) to help raise the critical funds needed to sustain the food bank's operations. The Sip & Savour fundraiser has long been considered "the cocktail party of the year" in King Township, and this year, it is more important than ever. Simpson emphasizes that the event is a lifeline for the food bank. "Every dollar raised at Sip & Savour directly supports our ability to continue serving the growing number of families who rely on us," he says. For those unable to attend the event, the food bank encourages donations or volunteering. "Every contribution, no matter the size, makes a direct impact on our ability to serve the community," Simpson adds. To purchase tickets for Sip & Savour, donate, or learn more about how to help, visit ktfb.ca. With the King Township Food Bank at a critical juncture, Simpson and his team are hopeful that the community's ongoing generosity will continue to ensure that no one in King Township goes hungry.