

Lots of thoughts: Hunger event a success

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Almost 100 people concerned about healthy food and equitable access to it in Centre Wellington gathered at the Wellington County Museum to participate in the Food for Thought event March 29.

By Leah Gerber

FOR THE ENTERPRISE NEWS EXPRESS

"Community isn't 100 people who all agree with each other, it's 100 people with disparate skills that come together for a common goal" - Joshua Mac, Centre Wellington Social Justice Group.

Almost 100 people concerned about healthy food and equitable access to it in Centre Wellington gathered at the Wellington County Museum to participate in the Food for Thought event March 29. The purpose of the meeting was threefold: To identify resources and initiatives already in place, to determine what is still needed, and to begin action towards

these goals.

The event was facilitated by the Centre Wellington Social Justice Group and Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health. People from every demographic representing many sectors in the community including farmers, computer scientists, restaurant owners, chefs, volunteers, social justice groups, gardeners and business owners attended.

Throughout 2012 and 2013, the Social Justice Group of Centre Wellington identified equitable access to healthy food as one of the most pressing issues in the county, and many voices in the community agree.

Says Doreen Henderson, public health nutritionist, "In order to have a healthy commu-

nity, you have to have access to sufficient, healthy food. And there are many in our community who do not."

According to the Canadian Community Health Survey, 11.6 per cent of households, or 571, 300 households, in Ontario were food insecure, the most of all the provinces. Centre Wellington is not immune. For example, the Food and Friends program based out of Guelph served meals to over 14,815 students via 11 student nutrition programs in the 2012/2013 school year alone.

Says Henderson, "Food insecurity can range from

concerns about running out of food to actually going days without food, or perhaps a parent not having food so that their children can. This has a real impact on the health of the community."

Among many ideas put forward to address these issues, one organization, Farm-to-Fork, presented the next innovation in tackling food insecurity. Operated by volunteer computer science students at the University of Guelph, Farm-to-Fork is a website connecting emergency food services directly with donors by facilitating online 'shopping lists' anyone can access and contribute to. A mobile app is also in progress.

Says Danny Williamson, co-founder of Farm-to-Fork, "We are in the midst of a food revolution. Collectively, we care more about where our food comes from, who grows it and how it's prepared, but those who could benefit the most from this revolution aren't even in the conversation. We have to make food a weapon for change."

People left the event feeling energized to continue with the goals and objectives identified. More community summits and events addressing hunger are already scheduled.

Says Joshua Mac, an organizer of the event, "This whole

question is about the social determinants of health and wellness around poverty. We'll start to make a greater effect if we feed people. The most important thing right now is to get involved. Pick three things in your community that you can do. They can be small things, whether it's donating to the food bank, volunteering at a local organization or simply learning more about how to feed yourself better."

For more information about the movement, and to get involved visit www.cwsocialjustice.ca.

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IMPORTANT NOTICE FROM SOLID WASTE SERVICES

Good Friday holiday closures and service changes.

All County of Wellington waste facilities will be closed on Friday, April 18.

Friday curbside collection will be rescheduled to Saturday, April 19.




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www.wellington.ca/sws

