

THE LIBERTY GLEANER

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NEWS

Filling stomachs and minds

Feeding programs give more than food

BY MELANIA DANIEL

It's a long way from Scarborough to the Scadding Court Community Centre (SCCC) (707 Dundas St. W.), but wheelchair-bound Gev Patel makes the journey by TTC Wheel-Trans once a week to be part of Share a Meal Day.

Patel is a regular at the SCCC's kitchen run each Thursday from noon to 4 p.m., primarily for people living with various stages of mental and physical disability.

"This is part of my strategy to keep myself gainfully occupied," Patel said.

The centre serves neighbourhoods bounded by Lake Ontario and Bloor Street West, Yonge Street, and Dovercourt Road, but does not turn away any client based on address.

According to Patel, the feeding program is his social lifeline.

Among the friends he has made at SCCC is local resident Khalifa Hakim, who has been coming to the community kitchen for about seven years.

Patel sometimes visits Hakim and the two cook together, practicing techniques learnt at the SCCC, such as reducing sugar, salt, and oil in cooking.

"The community kitchen program is not just about food, it is about socialization, to get low income individuals, adults with disabilities, and shut-ins to do things ordinary people get to do," said Kevin Lee, executive director of the SCCC.

"Participants are taught the nutritional components of foods, healthy, safe, and affordable eating with little or no money, shopping techniques, food handling, kitchen safety such as knife skills, cooking techniques, and how to get along with other people."

The SCCC's community kitchen is run in partnership with the Fort York Food Bank (797 Dundas St. W.).

The SCCC's community worker

and urban agriculture coordinator Krista Fry, who oversees the community kitchen, accompanies clients to the food bank to help them select the freshest and most nutritious foods.



Krista Fry, urban agriculture coordinator at Scadding Court Community Centre's (707 Dundas St. W.) community kitchen, serves hot and healthy food at the centre's spring and Easter meal on Apr. 12.

Fry also takes participants to Kensington Market to demonstrate affordable purchasing strategies, like a portion of black pepper for 50 cents versus a minimum-size bag at a supermarket for about \$3.20, which is too much for one person.

"The community kitchen program is not just about food"
—Kevin Lee,
executive director,
SCCC

A snack bar compliments the SCCC's community kitchen and is open to the public Monday to Saturday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

A \$1 per item menu aiming to provide something substantial to people with limited income offers a choice from hot dogs, Jamaican beef patties, a bowl of soup, vegetarian fried rice, or spaghetti with sauce.

There also is a daily \$5.50 menu with offerings like grilled salmon, rice and salad, or lasagna and salad. Homemade hamburgers sell for less than \$3.

The snack bar prepares food for other SCCC programs such as nighttime adult literacy classes and newcomer settlement programs.

The centre also caters to various

social events across the GTA for low income people. The SCCC uses these and its own programs to promote the community kitchen.

The SCCC relies heavily on volunteers and does lots of fundraising to sustain its activities.

St. Christopher's House-Parkdale Focus (SCH-PF) (248 Ossington Ave.) is another community centre offering a feeding program aiming to do much more than provide free or affordable food.

The SCH-PF partners with the Toronto Community Housing Corporation and Shalom Food Project to run the Youth Leadership Program. It targets youth from nine to 16 years old and produces the Parkdale Dinner Theatre Program (PDTP).

SCH-PF introduced the interactive and educational series last year with spring, summer, and fall sessions for durations of eight to 10 weeks.

The summer session for this year's cycle begins on July 3. The program runs daily during the summer and on Tuesdays from 4 to 6:30 p.m. during other periods.

In addition to the meals participants plan, shop for, and cook, the Youth Leadership program includes volunteer work on a group or individuals basis, improvised theatre lessons, health education on drugs and alcohol prevention, nutrition, and sports.

It unites community members of all ages through inter-generational interactions with seniors at 20 West Lodge Ave. where the program is based.

Professional chefs also visit to speak to participants about careers in cooking.

At the end of the program the youth unite to perform a show for the community.

For information about the PDTP, please contact Julia Nobrega at 416-536-1234, ext. 26.

For more information about the SCCC and its programs, please call 416-392-0335.