

BOB RUMBALL ASSOCIATIONS FOR THE DEAF

When the ReFresh Foods program was being developed as a new initiative under the umbrella of Food for Life, the mission of the partnerships being struck was slightly different. Whereas the focus for Food for Life's work with social service agencies was addressing hunger, for many of the agencies supported by ReFresh Foods, the objective was more practical: secure fresh food at no cost to help budgetary constraints so they could concentrate on delivering key services to clients.

The partnership that ReFresh Foods has with the Bob Rumball Associations for the Deaf (BRAD) is a shining example of this objective realized. Stephen Doherty, director of the Halton Region BRAD association, is very quick to point out that prior to working with ReFresh Foods, they had to buy all their food because they didn't receive donations to address this component of their budget. It sounds like a cliché, but they were simply looking to stretch their food dollar – no different than anyone else working with a limited income.

Stephen had learned about the opportunity to work with ReFresh through his work with a local group home, and from hearing about the service that Food for Life was providing to Community Living. The parallel in clientele has some similarities – BRAD works with adults who are Deaf or hard of hearing, many of whom also have developmental disabilities, mental health challenges or other special needs. The clients they serve, including those who benefit from 'parent relief weekends', is over 50 – through both residential and day programs. As leaders in the Deaf community, BRAD is managed by an incredibly dedicated staff, many of whom are Deaf themselves. They are experts in Deaf culture and are active advocates of the Deaf. One of their successful programs is with a local driving range, where the staff are BRAD clients, helping provide groundskeeping and maintenance.

The goal with any of the ReFresh Foods partnerships, of course, is higher than simply to lower the budget restraint of buying food. Stephen points to the roast beef for Sunday dinner or the summer burger BBQs – helping elevate the quality of life. So if you ask Stephen how their program has been helped by ReFresh, he will tell you – "it has made their lives nicer." Mission accomplished.