

ST. HILDA'S CHURCH OUTREACH PROGRAM

One of the goals of the Food for Life Outreach Programs is to remove the barrier to fresh food for those in need throughout Halton Region. We accomplish this by bringing food right into a local neighbourhood with the assistance of community volunteers. The program run at St. Hilda's Church, under the guidance of Pastor Paul Charbonneau, is a shining example of how taking an extra step in the process can help make the impact even more meaningful.

Prior to the establishment of the Outreach Program at St. Hilda's 10 years ago, community members were getting extra food from a food bank. Even when Food for Life started delivering fresh food on Thursdays, it was still a journey for clients to get to the church. Some of the single mothers, young families and seniors weren't able to access the food; there had to be a way to help those that needed the food the most. That's when Pastor Charbonneau realized they could complete the delivery process, by taking the food right to the clients.

It was through this process that the impact was really felt. Visiting with people in their homes changed everything. "People don't see the poverty around Oakville," says Pastor Charbonneau, "but when you see people's reality, when you meet their kids ... you understand how you can make a meaningful impact on their lives." Meeting with clients at their homes deepened relationships and allowed the St. Hilda's volunteers to truly understand the lives of their clients.

These visits opened up a new avenue for other ways in which the St. Hilda's outreach team could provide assistance. They learned of a resident who was in the hospital, so they were able to visit him. They worked with a woman in an abusive relationship who needed immediate relocation. They have been able to collect other donations, like tables and chairs, to help furnish apartments.

The goal at St. Hilda's is very simple – help those in need, no matter where they are located, no matter what their circumstances. The delivery of food has been a means to build a new community where companionship and support are emphasized.