

ST. ALBAN CHURCH (ACTON) OUTREACH PROGRAM

Each of the Food for Life Outreach Programs has a different story to tell. Some tell the story of a program that already existed which was enhanced by the involvement of Food for Life. Other outreach programs were initiated through the efforts of the Food for Life staff and volunteers. And for some, like the Outreach Program at St. Alban the Martyr Church in Acton, creating an outreach program through working with Food for Life just seemed like the right fit – a true partnership.

It has been almost 2 years since the St. Alban's (Acton) Outreach Program started in September 2010. Thanks to an introduction from another friend of Food for Life, Reverend Aaron Orear of St. Alban's Church in Glen Williams, Food for Life and St. Alban's started talking. The church was very interested in doing outreach, and working with Food for Life made sense. The St. Alban's Outreach Program currently serves about 40 clients a week, made up of a mix of families and individuals. Any extra food they have is distributed at a seniors' residence and the local co-op. All of this is made possible by the volunteer program coordinators Keith Smith and Kati Nutall and the many volunteers who come not only from the church, but from the local community, too.

The common thread among outreach at Food for Life is the sense of community that develops as the leaders and volunteers strive to bring dignity and a shared purpose at the program, and that is exactly what St. Alban's has achieved. Within the church, clients get together for coffee and cookies as the food is being sorted and prepared for distribution. But the service they provide extends beyond food - Reverend Brian Galligan makes himself available to talk to clients about personal or spiritual concerns; they have also sourced winter clothing and even laptop computers.

The Outreach Program at St. Alban's is part of a larger community initiative – community dinner night has turned into dinner and a movie, as another church (within walking distance) hosts a free family movie on the same night. Some of the local social service agencies have started preparing the dinners, and a business in town provides free popcorn. In addition, Acton has started a large community garden and the church has been very active in getting it up and running. Excess food from the garden will be distributed through Food for Life's food program.

Reverend Galligan understands that programs like this are all about building relationships, strengthening a community, and providing care and love to those who need it. Building upon this great success in St. Alban's, there are more plans in sight, for example, developing a community kitchen to help teach people how to cook nutritious meals. Food for Life is proud to be a partner in the incredible work being done at St. Alban's.