

# HALTON FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Ask anyone who works for or volunteers with an organization committed to helping feed those in need and they will tell you the same thing: people simply don't realize the level of poverty and hunger in Halton Region, and even if they do, they don't appreciate how many children are affected.

Ask Gayle Cruickshank, Executive Director of Halton Food for Thought, if there is a hunger issue with children and she'll let the statistics speak for themselves: Halton Food for Thought runs 146 food programs at 104 different schools; there are 16,000 students in need; and they serve 2 million meals every school year. Depending on the neighbourhood, somewhere between 5-25% of children go to school hungry.

With that enormous challenge at hand, Gayle is extremely grateful to the many partnerships she has developed, including a very important one with ReFresh Foods and Food for Life. Over the past 5 years, especially with the addition of the Food for Life warehouse in Burlington, Halton Food for Thought has been able to purchase items in bulk from food vendors, to showcase certain food products, and will now be able to bring more food to more schools with the use of the new Food for Life truck two days a week. One of the biggest obstacles in expanding the Food for Thought program has simply been logistics – trying to get deliveries to all schools.

While the new truck will help, there are still challenges – for it is one thing to get food to the children who need it, but part of Food for Thought's objective is to educate about and encourage healthy eating. As the number of school programs increase (target is to grow to 162 this school year), Gayle and her team rely more and more on community partners to meet the need: local farmers to provide more fruits and vegetables, working with the media to increase awareness, ongoing support from generous community donors, and the amazing volunteers who help make it all come together.

The statistics may reveal the need, but Gayle will tell you it is the process that will amaze you. If you have the chance, Gayle says, visit one of the Food for Thought programs and witness first-hand how the organization is helping the lives of thousands of students every day of the school year. Food for Thought and ReFresh Foods, partners in the battle against hunger, both look forward to the addition of our new truck to help even more children in need.