

## **ReFresh Foods and the Aldershot Hub, Our Kids Network**

*Written by Sheila Slattery-Ford*

The Aldershot Hub started eight years ago not as a food assistance program, but rather to provide service to the needs of the community. When Blair Richardson, Food for Life Chair, came in to speak to the team at the Hub six years ago, we welcomed the chance to partner with Food for Life and now providing food is a way to help attract people to come in to meet and has helped the Hub evolve and adapt to their clients.

The Aldershot Hub is located in Holy Rosary School on Plains Road in the heart of Aldershot. The Hub is a place where people meet to plan for and improve the community. It is also a place where families get access to information and support about parenting concerns. It is also a large space for programming available at no cost to community organizations, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The hub is attractive, conveniently located at a bus stop and there is plenty of well lit parking.

Some of the groups that meet in the Hub include: Partnering Aldershot, Holy Rosary Healthy School Team, The Hub Team, Supporting Young Parents Network, Youth Aldershot, and Sports 4 You. Every day after school the Hub hosts the YMCA Kids Club where children enjoy a healthy snack, get their homework done, learn life skills and then go to the gym to work off some energy, all at no cost to the families.

But one of the most appreciated services the hub offers is the grocery help. We serve 60 to 75 families, some on a weekly basis, to get free food to supplement their budget. While they are here they are invited to engage in conversation re their kids, their lives, their stressors. They know the hub is a place to get connected to other community resources in Halton and where they are welcome and respected. The offer of free food is necessary due to their financial circumstances but it also a means of developing a trusting relationship in a caring and safe environment. Examples of the results of relationships that started with food are direction to a group for those suffering from post natal depression, a single dad becoming active as a volunteer, newcomers to Canada getting help with immigration issues, 60 families getting help from the Halton Regional Police's Toys for Tots program, improved housing and direction in dealing with debt. But it has grown with the food.

ReFresh Foods has meant so much to the Aldershot Hub, especially the fact that we can provide nutritious food (meats, yogurts, fruits and vegetables) to the many children we serve. On behalf of many Burlingtonians struggling to keep food on the table and in the lunch boxes I say a huge THANK YOU!