

OUR COMMUNITY CARES

A community is built by people, and food helps bring those people together. But did you know that somewhere between 30-40% of food bank clients are children, and the number of hungry children is growing? This is why Our Community Cares (OCC) plays such a crucial role. OCC is a program focused on serving children from the ages of 5 to 17 that come from low-income families, and whose families might also be at risk due to disability, mental health issues or stress. ReFresh Foods has been partnering with OCC to help them build their program to meet the many needs of the children and families they serve.

It is common that the biggest obstacle for a program like this is simply the access to food. That is how the ReFresh deliveries have made such an impact, says Kelly Giuliani, a Supervisor with OCC. “Food is huge for the community,” says Giuliani, “and with that food we can give the children the same opportunities as other children in the neighbourhood. We couldn’t do that if they are hungry.” In addition to food, they have been able to source donated clothing from a variety of sources. In their two housing complexes, they have one unit dedicated to their partnership with ROCK (Reach Out Centre for Kids) to provide even more support.

The outcomes are the most meaningful measure of all: the children in the program develop their social skills, they build their self-esteem, and they learn to be more independent. As the program has matured, parents are now attending with their children, further enhancing the sense of community. OCC has also developed a cooking program to help teach parents about budgeting, food planning and preparation. All of this is to allow these families to focus on what is truly important – being together – the food is but a means to an end.