

Goldstream food bank seeks veggies for hampers



Goldstream Food Bank volunteers Jim Butler and Shannon Youell are asking the public to donate fresh produce to help add more nutrition to the food hampers.

Matt Whelan photo

By [Charla Huber - Goldstream News Gazette](#)

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Donating to the food bank doesn't have to be non-perishable anymore.

The Goldstream Food Bank is striving to create healthier food hampers for its clients and is now accepting non-perishable food during the first Tuesday of each month.

The food bank is seeking fruits, vegetables and other perishables to add to hampers for distribution early in the month.

For the past few years the food bank was using a \$25,000 bequeathment to purchase fresh local produce and eggs. The money ran out in the fall of 2009 and now the food bank provides as much fresh produce as it can afford.

Other potential donations to help pack a healthy hamper include fruit and yogurt cups for children's lunches, said Shannon Youell, food bank treasurer, adding "tinned meats can be made into lunch spreads for children's lunches too."

About 10 years ago the Goldstream Food Bank began taking a closer look at the nutritional quality of its hampers.

"We increased the protein," said Jim Butler, food bank volunteer. "We had eggs, hotdogs and hamburgers and we added stewing beef for families and chicken legs for singles or doubles."

When the recession hit in 2008 and '09 the food bank needed be more frugal with its spending. "The demand had increased significantly and the donations had become less," Butler said.

To help conserve money, the charity stopped purchasing canned pasta, flavoured gelatin, pudding or juice boxes. These items were nixed from the list due to their high sugar content and poor nutritional quality.

Now with the economy in a better place, food bank purchasers are continuing to keep these items off the shopping list.

"There is a lot of stuff here that looks like it is mostly sugar, but that is stuff that we don't buy,"

Butler said, although noting that the food bank isn't fussy and is grateful for all donations it receives.

It can be challenging to send out nutrient-rich hampers on a budget, but another tough issue at the food bank is offering food the clients will eat, Butler said.

Many of the clients he's spoken to aren't interested in cooking and some items such as dried beans are often overlooked.

The food bank has a box of specialty items, where each client can pick two items on each visit.

Foods in the box include dried beans, sauerkraut, seaweed, pickles and coconut milk. The box is designed to get unique food to people who will use and want it.

"We need food that is acceptable to our client base," Butler said. "Not everyone wants coconut milk, because many aren't into Indian cooking."

For more information on donating vegetables and perishables to the Goldstream Food Bank or to arrange a time to drop off perishable goods call 250-474-4443.

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