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NATIONAL VOLUNTEERS WEEK

Every day, people across the country contribute their time and resources to improve the well-being of their communities. The week of April 7 to 13 is dedicated to acknowledging and celebrating the impact of Canada's 12.7 million volunteers.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE TAUGHT CHERI O'NEILL WHAT A DIFFERENCE IT MAKES TO KNOW WHERE YOUR NEXT MEAL IS COMING FROM.

It also inspired her to volunteer at the Toronto office of Daily Bread Food Bank, one of Canada's largest hunger-relief organizations, where she has given her time in the warehouse and more recently as a receptionist. "I have used the food bank in the past," she says. "I was depressed and needed help. Then, when I was better, I wanted to give back."

The participation of people like O'Neill allows Daily Bread to fulfill its mandate to "work together to end hunger in our communities and change the way people think about poverty," says Jeffrey Wong, the organization's associate director of people. "We wouldn't be able to do what we do without volunteers. We have about 60 staff and work with roughly 10,000 volunteers annually."

The volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds. They are students, co-workers engaged in team-building initiatives for meeting corporate social responsibility goals, retirees and, increasingly, newcomers to Canada. In some roles, and especially in front-line positions, they cover the bulk of all required tasks and help process millions of pounds of food every year.

An area many volunteers are familiar with is the sorting floor, where donated food arrives from food drives, donation boxes at fire halls or grocery stores, and farm partners from across Ontario. "On any given day, we have two staff and anywhere from 30 to 80 volunteers who help us process about 15,000 pounds of food," says Wong. "With each family allocated about 20 pounds of food per visit [to the food bank], this is enough to support about 750 families."

Volunteers sort the food by category – grouping together pastas,



At Daily Bread Food Bank, one of Canada's largest hunger-relief organizations, volunteers help process millions of pounds of food every year. SUPPLIED

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Jeffrey Wong
associate director of people,
Daily Bread Food Bank

grains, jams or tins – to enable Daily Bread to appropriately respond to requests from individual food banks across the city, explains Wong. "They also work with the fresh produce arriving from farm partners. We received big bins of carrots today, and volunteers bagged them so we can deliver bags containing about three pounds of carrots each."

By working at food banks, volunteers connect with people who experience hunger and poverty, a part of the population that often remains hidden, and these encounters can be "eye-opening and humbling," says Wong.

Daily Bread CEO Neil Hetherington believes that the work required to make sure that everyone has good food is "a wonderful outward expression of Canadian values." He says, "This is inspiring Daily Bread volunteers who, day in and day out, express their belief that everyone has worth and, more importantly, a right to food."

This goal of alleviating hunger

also resonates strongly with Daily Bread's corporate partner Campbell Company of Canada, says Laura Lee Blake, the company's vice president, Human Resources.

"We have joined in with sorting food at Daily Bread as well as local agencies across the country, hosted food drives to restock empty shelves and provided culinary training to new Canadians," she says. "Many of our retail partners have also actively supported some of our initiatives like 'Help Hunger Disappear,' enabling increased participation and contributions to grassroots organizations across Canada."

Working with partners like Daily Bread is important to Campbell Company of Canada employees, says Blake. "We believe real food should be more accessible to all communities, where it can help improve the overall quality of people's lives."

The passion and commitment of the volunteers who make impactful contributions to their communities

across Canada are "amazing," says Blake. "Volunteering crosses all boundaries and enables people to rally around a cause in which they truly believe."

Volunteering also serves to foster a sense of belonging, believes Wong, who has been associated with Daily Bread since 2015, first as a volunteer and now as a staff member. "There is a strong community aspect at Daily Bread. Volunteers connect with each other and bond over shared experiences and the desire to give back," he says. "If you are feeling a little lost, volunteering is one of the best things you can do to contribute and connect."

O'Neill echoes this sentiment. "Daily Bread is like a big family to me," she says. "I have been working here for over two years, and it gives me a sense of sanity and pride."

Find out about volunteer opportunities at Daily Bread at dailybread.ca.

Thank you volunteers for your passion and dedication to ending hunger in our city.



— LAST YEAR —
11,529
VOLUNTEERS
— DONATED —
77,256
HOURS OF SERVICE



Daily Bread Food Bank thrives because of YOUR commitment to making our city a better place for all.



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dailybread.ca/volunteer