

## NHCC now the largest food bank in region

**To the Editor,**

I want to recognize Dani Lang for five years of exemplary volunteer service before she became paid executive director of the North Hastings Community Cupboard (NHCC) in 2012. Her dedication prevented our closure in 2007.

We are now the largest food bank in our region, serving as a depot for three other local food banks; Maynooth, Coe Hill and Cardiff. NHCC is thriving with generous community cash and food donations, monthly food drives in partnership with 15 local agencies, distributing 35,000 pounds of food valued at several hundred thousand dollars annually.

Dani created two part-time, one full-time job, did agency capacity building, many grant proposals, public education on poverty and hunger, attended regional food security meetings, developed a highly engaged board of directors and network of many active volunteers. She also donated use of her vehicle twice monthly for years to pick up heavy supplies from Kawartha Food Source in Peterborough.

About 40 per cent of North Hastings residents are on social assistance; pensions, disability, EI, welfare. Ten per cent of food bank users are working poor. Without her work, there would be no help for them.

Dani sought fresh food donations from three local farms so that clients now enjoy occasional fresh veggies, fruit and meat, better diets and health. Because of her, NHCC also donates to the high school snack program and purchases gift cards from Pregnancy Care, Dani worked with Community Futures to start a community garden. Under her direction we gave out \$10,000 yearly (Century 21 Winter Fuels Program) and distributed good food boxes for a time. She made regular media appearances thanks to our donors.

All this was done by her, as a newcomer, in a region of high unemployment and low wages, in a community struggling from several recessions, in climate of decreasing grants and prejudice about the poor. She showed leadership, professionalism, initiative, persistence and innovation.

Since becoming the executive director in 2012, her vision for our sustainability has resulted in the purchase of a small house as a permanent home downtown with an office, food storage space and rental income. Our mortgage is now well on its way to being discharged. Even now, Dani donated a percentage of her income back to us. We also still use her vehicle free of charge and we have wonderful new large vegetable gardens.

Dani volunteered tirelessly without complaint or reward for five years. Her passion for nutrition, social justice and good citizenship were beyond the call of duty. Her grace under pressure and selfless service are truly inspiring. She did a massive job full time all the while caring for a child with a serious long term illness and was herself approaching retirement. If anyone deserves and award, it is she. Kudos and thank you so much Dani.

Sincerely,

**Karen Richardson,**

**L'Amble, NHCC board member**