

Winnipeg Harvest

Introduction

My name is Cory Nys and I have volunteered for 11 years at Winnipeg Harvest. I have volunteered in different departments. I have seen a lot of staff come and go, and I have also seen a lot of volunteers leave. I was there to see the old building torn down and the new building go up. I chose to write a research report about Harvest to learn more of what Winnipeg Harvest is about, their background, how they are organized, and how they function.

Harvest History & Background

Winnipeg Harvest first opened their doors in 1985 and 200,000 pounds of food was collected the first year. Winnipeg Harvest was founded by Lee Newton. Today, Winnipeg Harvest has 35 staff working both full time and part time today; Winnipeg Harvest has 36 different Departments. The organization says that "Volunteers are the backbone of Winnipeg Harvest." To me, this means that the volunteers are really the ones that help Harvest function in every way.

(Winnipeg Harvest Newsletter, July 2013).

Winnipeg Harvest Clients

I believe Winnipeg Harvest is important because I see a lot of families coming to Winnipeg Harvest to ask for food to feed their kids who are hungry. 49% of Harvest clients are children, making Manitoba the number one province for child food bank use. Hunger count 2012 revealed Manitoba had the highest rate of increase in food bank use in Canada at 14.2% compared to Hunger count 2011 where there was a slight decrease of -4.1%. The Winnipeg Harvest call centre takes 400 plus calls per day and they make appointments for individuals to receive food. Jody Hecht, president of the board says Harvest's goal is to reduce food bank use in Manitoba by one half by the year 2020. (Winnipeg Harvest Annual Report 2013).

Winnipeg Harvest Operations

Winnipeg Harvest is a food distribution and training centre. A lot of people come to Winnipeg Harvest to get food assistance and they ask to be volunteers so than can get some help to get food assistance. Almost every part of Harvest's food distribution is run by volunteers. Winnipeg Harvest volunteers run the call centre.

I have seen firsthand how Winnipeg Harvest distributes their food. They get their food donations from food wholesalers, food producers and also from corporations, businesses and school food drives. Drivers go with the Harvest trucks and pick up the food, and the food comes back to Winnipeg Harvest. Then the volunteers go through the food and then the food goes out in Winnipeg Harvest trucks to a variety of places such as community food banks, soup kitchens, group homes and emergency food programs. It is clear to see that Winnipeg Harvest is well organized and keeps things running smoothly.

Harvest Programs and Events

Winnipeg Harvest has many events such as Hunger for Hope, Share Your Thanks, Charity Golf Tournament, Empty Bowls Celebrity and Auction, Soup-er Lunch, Operation Donation, Huron Carole and Tackle Hunger.

One of the events that Winnipeg Harvest does is called Tin for the Bin at all Winnipeg Blue Bombers home games. It runs from June 2013 until November 2013. I volunteer at all of the Bombers games, and other Harvest volunteers work at it too. Winnipeg Harvest has an events associate named Hailey who works this event. If she is unavailable, then Colleen, the

Development Manger will work it. We collect food donation and cash donation. I have been volunteering at the bombers games for 11 years. Tackle Hunger is also part of a special Bombers game that happens in July or August on a Friday night. That night we are very busy collecting food and money and giving away tickets for a draw. The Thursday afternoon before the game one of the bombers Quarterback comes to Winnipeg Harvest and the Grey Cup is also at Winnipeg Harvest that afternoon. This is a great event for everyone involved.

Conclusion

After researching Winnipeg Harvest I've learned how they get involved in the community through all of the different programs and services that they operate and also through the different programs and events they do throughout the whole province. Overall, I feel that Winnipeg Harvest is very good at what they do and how they look after every one and that they are a wonderful place to volunteer at.

Cory Nys