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Dan McNee Photo

PARTY IN THE PARK – The Multicultural Association of Perth-Huron held its annual multicultural festival in Listowel Memorial Park on Sunday, Sept. 24, featuring a number of diverse musical acts at the amphitheatre, while treating guests to an impressive spread of free food samplings from cultures around the world. Pictured: London's Orlando Valencia Jr. and Orlando Valencia Sr. perform a Latin number on stage.

North Huron Community Food Share seeing large increase in usage

MIKE WILSON

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WINGHAM – Normally, a business or organization wants to be busier, move more product through its doors.

For food banks, the feelings on increased foot traffic are mixed.

On one hand, the more product you move, the more people you are helping. On the other hand, the more people you help means, generally speaking, that more people are having a tough time making ends meet.

“We have never been busier,” says Marilyn King, chair of the

North Huron Community Food Share. “This is not good news.”

Over the past year, King says between 5-10 new families use the food share each month. In April, that number rose to 18 new families.

Over the past two weeks, 70 families accessed the services provided by the food share. According to King, 80 per cent of the families accessing the food share are renters.

King says that the Ontario Disability Support Program, Ontario Works and the Canadian Pension Plan are not enough to live on, as rising costs for rent take a huge

bite out of those cheques.

“The food bank is indeed the grocery store for these folks,” says King. “None of these are livable incomes. The current minimum wage is \$15.50 an hour, while the Living Wage in Huron Perth is \$20.70.”

Some other startling stats provided by King:

- year over year, the number of people between 0-18 accessing the food share rose 100 per cent, from 88 to 178;

- in June 2022, seven families with someone working full-time visited the food share. That number rose to 27 in April 2023;

- in that same time span, part-time working families increased from 11 in June 2022 to 22 in April 2023; and

- food costs for the North Huron Community Food Share have increased 93 per cent over the past year.

With the organization's annual Stuff The Bus campaign fast approaching – this year's date is Sept. 30 – King is hoping these statistics will encourage those who can donate to do so.

The North Huron Community Food Share not only accepts food

See STUFF on page 2

The power of women

Kincardine Ladies Fitness Co-op celebrates eighth anniversary

LIZ SMALL

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KINCARDINE – When a small but determined group of women got together to form a ladies' only fitness facility, they had no idea that eight years later it would garner the attention of many groups and businesses across the country.

That's exactly what happened to the Kincardine Ladies Fitness Co-op (KLFC).

The success of this member-owned and operated facility drew the interest of a Vancouver-based radio station, who produced a 30-minute podcast about KLFC to air on their website, *Each For All: The Co-operative Connection*. They were also invited to participate in a Canada-wide study by the Conversion to Co-operatives Projects, which aims to better understand the conversion of businesses to the co-operative model. Several other small businesses have also contacted them to learn how they created this successful co-op model.

Such an accomplishment is impressive, since the fitness club is made up solely of volunteers. In 2015, a group of women got together with Jane Van Sickle, past owner of Curves, who encouraged them to form a co-operative fitness gym. KLFC president Anne Bromfield said Van Sickle helped them form a business model and assisted with the daunting task of complicated government paperwork and procuring insurance.

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