

# 'AMAZING': STREET PARTY COLLECTIVE DONATES \$14K TO BRADFORD FOOD BANK

by Michael Owen

**Running a food bank does have operational and administrative costs that we need to look at quite seriously, so we're very grateful for the funds that were donated,' says Helping Hand Food Bank executive director.**

While a summer street party may be long over, the reasons to celebrate continue. Representatives from the Street Party Collective and sponsors of the Retro Block Party gathered at the Helping Hand Food Bank in Bradford West Gwillimbury to present board members and executive director Carolyn Khan with a \$14,000 donation on Jan. 12.

"It's absolutely amazing to be the recipients of this \$14,000," Khan said. "We are so grateful."

Those funds were raised through 2,224 ticket sales plus donations as part of the summer music event that brought a kids zone, games, magician, food vendors, beer garden, and variety of musical performers to Bradford's new public square in August.

"It's because of the community that we live in that we have the opportunity to do stuff like this," collective director Josh Vriend said. "We're looking forward to doing even more next year again."

That was echoed by collective chairman and Ward 4 Coun. Joseph Giordano.

"At the end of the day, the event itself is all about bringing community together," he said. "It's a testament that we keep getting large numbers of fundraising because people see value in the event that we put on."

Tickets were sold on a pay-what-you-can model starting for as little as 99 cents for children aged five and younger and \$5.50 for everyone else, but guests were encouraged to contribute more to help the food bank. That raised about \$10,000, according to Giordano, who explained long-time sponsor of the event Great Gulf Homes helped them hit the \$14,000 mark.

In previous years, the collective have typically made donations of bulk purchased food items in late summer or early autumn – worth about \$10,000 in 2024 and more than \$15,000 in 2023. However, the final funds for this year's donation weren't ready until just before Christmas, a time of the year when the food bank is already fortunate enough to have many items donated by the community.

While donations to the food bank were slow in October and November this year and reserves in the warehouse were getting low, that changed in December when donations picked up and even exceeded last year. In December, the food bank received about 27,300 pounds of non-perishables, compared to roughly 18,700 in December 2024. As a result, this year's donation from the collective came in the form of funding, which the food bank can still use to purchase food – including perishables like fruits, vegetables, meats and dairy – but can also be stretched further and provide extra flexibility by covering other expenses such as rent, equipment and repairs.

"It allows us to purchase what we need (when) we need it," Khan said.

Despite being closed three extra days for the holidays, the food bank still saw 449 visits this December representing 1,342 individuals. That's an increase from the 430 visits representing 1,241 individuals in December 2024.

"Running a food bank does have operational and administrative costs that we need to look at quite seriously, so we're very grateful for the funds that were donated," Khan said.

As an example, she explained \$14,000 is also roughly the amount it costs the food bank to offer the Christmas baskets to clients each year.

"Every holiday season we try to do something special for our clients," Khan said.

Both Khan and food bank board chair Gavin Maclean also saw first hand just how much effort goes into running the collective's annual event as they both helped run admission at the gate.

"It was really wonderful to see live and in-person how many local residents wanted to come to this party, how many people were excited to come through the gate," Khan said. "Then turning around and looking at the stage and just the beautiful setup of the event – it was just fun."

That's set to be all the more exciting this year as the collective announced they are working on a partnership with the town to include a broadcast of the FIFA World Cup bronze medal and championship matches. The town had previously expressed interest in hosting some sort of viewing event for the World Cup, and Giordano expects it would make more sense both financially and logistically to have the broadcast added to their event rather than hosted separately.

If all goes well, matches are expected to be broadcast earlier in the days followed by live music in the evenings.

"We're just excited," Giordano said.

More details are expected to be presented as part of the Jan. 20 council meeting. Meanwhile, the food bank is always in need of canned tomatoes and pasta sauce, as well as infant formula and diapers sized 5 and 6. For more information about the food bank and how it has been supporting the community since 1991, visit [bradfordfoodbank.ca](http://bradfordfoodbank.ca).



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