

Loyalist College Justice Studies Students Rise for Food Bank Challenge

By Sarah Stone

Did you know that over 500,000 people used a food bank in Ontario from April 2017 to March 2018? Now imagine only having access to secure food during the Christmas holidays, when there is an increase in hunger awareness. To support the community and families in need, the Loyalist College Justice Studies Program rose to the challenge to prevent empty shelves at the Gleaners Food Bank in Belleville.

“There is a huge drive and need at Christmas,” emphasized Allison Bird, a first year Paralegal student at Loyalist College. “But by January and February food bank shelves can get empty pretty quickly and people forget that this an ongoing issue.”

Participating in a friendly competition to donate the most items for the food bank, the five Justice Studies programs - Community and Justice Services, Customs and Border Services, Paralegal, Police Foundations and Protection, and Security and Investigations - collected a whopping 3,243 items in a short span of two weeks. That’s enough food to feed a family for over a month!

The Justice Studies Food Bank Challenge began last year to encourage students to be active contributors to the community. Justice Studies professor, Tom Deakin, further explained: “We wanted to create an initiative that inspired giving within the local community, and the response from our students is that they have embraced this initiative whole-heartedly.”

“It’s such a good cause,” added Bird, “we are not a huge city, and there are so many people who need the food bank. It’s an easy thing to get people to support because it’s needed and used in the community.”

Running into obstacles like cancelled classes from wicked snow storms, students managed to beat their 2018 target by 47 per cent by collecting donations from friends and families and purchasing groceries themselves for the food bank. After holding the final count on Wednesday, February 13th, the Paralegal program took home proud bragging rights, collecting over 1,800 items for Gleaners Food Bank.

Staying motivated during the collection period was easy for a second year Justice Studies Paralegal student Lorrie McCullough.

“It’s great that Loyalist participates in collecting food because there are many people out there who need it and there isn’t enough,” she noted, “When I found out how many items we donated last year, I said we will beat that target and increase the number of items for Gleaners Food Bank!”

With food bursting at the seams in the Loyalist College Pioneer building, students combined their donated items for the food bank and joined in group photos.

“People really embraced it and participated,” said Bird with a smile. “In the beginning of the challenge, we let everyone know what the needs were for the food bank.”

Donated items ranged from canned goods, pasta, potatoes from Smoke's Poutinerie, and even hygiene products.

After a long afternoon of counting items, volunteers from Gleaners Food Bank arrived to pick up and transport the donated items to their facilities. “It’s a lot of work,” says McCullough, “but in the end, it is rewarding.”

Food security in Quinte West (side bar)

- Almost 50 per cent of the households that received services are single and nearly 31 per cent of clients in 2017 were new clients of Gleaners Food Bank.
- 45 per cent of food bank clients in Quinte West (224,736) have less than \$100 left each month after basic expenses have been paid.
- Gleaners Food Bank is also a source for students who are in need of food. They can visit the food bank on Wednesdays until 8:30 p.m. Student ID is required.

Source: Gleaners Food Bank