

## The Montreal Good Food Box:

<b>Name of program:</b>	Bonne Boîte Bonne Bouffe / Good Food Box
<b>Location:</b>	Montreal, Quebec
<b>Contact info:</b>	Jamie McDonald, regional coordinator (514) 344-4494 bbbb-gfb@moissonmontreal.org
<b>Boxes per month:</b>	approximately 1,000
<b>Program start date:</b>	September 11th, 2007
<b>Area served:</b>	island of Montreal
<b>Price and type of boxes:</b>	Large \$16 Medium \$10 Small \$7 Mixture of vegetables and fruit, conventionally grown
<b>Margin on each box:</b>	± 22%

### **Price comparison to local retailers:**

A savings of 20-30% on the price of the small box, 25-35% on the price of the medium box and 35-50% on the price of the large box.

### **History:**

The Montreal Good Food Box is a food security program that has been serving the Notre-Dame-de-Grace community since September 2003 and expanded into a regional program in September 2007. The idea arose from a conference held in March 2002 where a number of community groups from the area agreed that a collective food-buying program would be the next logical step to address food security and make healthy food more accessible in the area.

### **Where do you get your produce?**

From a fruit and veggie distributor

### **How do you do your deliveries?**

We divide Montreal into East, Central, South & West zones. We do the Central runs on Tuesday afternoons, the South & West on Wednesdays and the East on Thursdays. For now, we deliver once every 2 weeks. As we get more orders, we will start doing deliveries each week to open up delivery time for new neighbourhoods.

***How do you run your packing day?***

We receive our produce on Mondays and pack on Tuesdays. Our truck driver starts to place the produce around the packing tables early on Tuesday morning. Volunteers start coming in around 9:00 a.m. and continue placing the produce around the tables. Once everything is in place, volunteers take their places (approximately 6-8 people per table and one table for each box size) and determine who is putting what in the box. Each person is instructed to make sure the person before them has put their item in the box before putting their own and to discard any produce that is not of top quality or isn't fresh. We usually finish packing around 12:00 noon. The boxes for Tuesday deliveries are immediately loaded in the truck as they are produced.

***Partnerships***

We have an advisory committee made up of various community organizations working in food security that make various decisions about where the program is going and how.

***How are you funded?***

Centraide finances the employee salary (regional co-ordination); Moisson Montreal lends us a space for storing, packing, and refrigerating the boxes, an office, and a truck for deliveries; and Fond de bienfaisance des employés de Bombardier finances other aspects of the program. We are currently seeking other financial partners to expand the program further.

***What are some success and challenges that you wish to share with other Good Food Box programs that are starting?***

***Successes:***

We've been able to go from 300 boxes to 1,000 boxes per month in a 6 month period using very little publicity other than word of mouth and have found that seeing the boxes with the fresh produce inside is publicity enough to get people interested in buying the box. Partnering with community organizations has been a good way of implementing the program in various neighbourhoods. We've also been able to involve health organizations that subsidize boxes for pregnant women. Many volunteers also do home deliveries for the elderly or people with reduced mobility.

***Challenges:***

Stabilizing our volunteer force and finding a reliable delivery person have been significant challenges to overcome. Dealing with the sporadic and fast development of the program has also been quite a challenge.



# The Saskatoon Good Food Box

**Name of program:** CHEP's Good Food Box  
**Location:** Saskatoon, SK  
**Contact info:** (306) 655-5387 or (306) 655-5619 or  
goodfoodbox@chep.org  
**Boxes per month:** 1,200 on average  
**Program start date:** 1997  
**Area served:** Saskatoon and area  
**Price and type of boxes:** Regular Fruit and Vegetable - \$17.00;  
Small Fruit and Vegetable - \$12.00;  
Mini Fruit and Vegetable - \$8.00;  
Large Fruit - \$20.00;  
Small Fruit - \$12.00;  
Organic Fruit and Vegetable - \$30.00  
**Margin on each box:** approx 25%

## **Price comparison to local retailers**

A savings of about 25%

## **History:**

It started in 1997 with about 40 boxes and has grown since then.

## **Where do you get your produce?**

We purchase from local producers as much as possible and a wholesaler (The Grocery People) when local produce isn't available.

## **How do you do your deliveries?**

The deliveries are done on the afternoon of the packing day. Depending on the number of boxes being packed we have one cube truck and a cargo van, or two cube trucks and the van (for when orders are over 600 boxes). The city is broken up into West, East and North routes, with the North and West routes combined when orders are smaller. Each route has a driver and driver helper and they are each paid an honorarium and gifted a Good Food Box for their work, with the exception of one driver who is a CHEP staff person and paid a salary. If everything goes well the deliveries take about 4 hours. We request that groups have 10 boxes ordered for delivery but we are flexible.

## **How do you run your packing day?**

We rent a gymnasium in a local church for 2 days each packing week. Tuesday is pre-packing day and we have volunteers come to wash boxes (Rubbermaid tubs), pack the potatoes and make sure the gym is set up for packing day. On packing day (Wed-



nesday) the produce arrives from the producers and is unloaded by volunteers. The gym is set up with two different production lines, one for the fruit and vegetable boxes and one for the fruit boxes. One of the coordinators directs the people unloading the produce to the table where it will be sorted. The tables are labeled with each different type of produce and the amount that goes into each box (e.g. the number of regular boxes to be packed times the amount of carrots that goes in each one). The volunteers sort and bag the produce if necessary and then we break for snack. After snack each volunteer takes a place on the production line and the boxes are packed and taken directly out to the delivery trucks. The remaining boxes are lined up along the wall for pickups in the afternoon. If everything goes as planned the boxes are packed and on the trucks by noon and lunch is served for all the volunteers.

***How are you funded?***

The United Way of Saskatoon

***What are some successes and challenges that you wish to share with other Good Food Box programs that are starting?***

***Successes:***

For volunteers we have arrangements with a work experience class at a local high school and with an adult education program. The high school class comes to wash the Rubbermaid boxes and helps on packing day. The adult education students come on packing day and help with packing and often work as driver helpers or clean up the hall. These arrangements provide the students with work skills and experience and provide a reliable source of volunteers for the Good Food Box.

***Challenges:***

We have struggled with getting the produce from the warehouse to our packing site. The delivery truck was often late or the produce wasn't ready at the warehouse when the truck arrived. This threw off our whole packing day and was stressful for the coordinators and volunteers. We recently received a grant to purchase our own refrigerated cube truck and now we can pick up the produce the day before packing day and keep it refrigerated overnight.

## **The Innisfil Good Food Box:**

**Name of program:** The Innisfil Good Food Box  
**Location:** Innisfil Ontario  
**Contact info:** Lori Nikkel (416) 363-6441 ex 230  
**Boxes per month:** approximately 100  
**Area served:** Innisfil area



## ***History***

It began innocently enough. As a long-time employee of FoodShare and Manager of the Student Nutrition programs, which enables students across Toronto to access healthy food at school, I have always loved the Good Food Box and known how important a program it is for so many reasons. Schools I work with love ordering produce through the Fresh Produce program and it really helps children eat more fresh vegetables and produce.

One day while reading the local Innisfil paper, I came across an advertisement requesting participation in the development of a Good Food Box program in Innisfil. The first meeting was held at the local library and had a great turnout, even the Deputy Mayor and a journalist from the local paper turned up. More importantly we had a great cross-section of our community and everyone was eager to get started.

Initially we went around the group and identified what brought everybody out to this meeting. The reasons varied from helping low income individuals, supporting local farmers, getting more involved in community development initiatives, and improving community health by promoting a diet with abundant fruits and vegetables.

Our membership included a member from the Barrie Community Health Centre, a resident school expert, a Barrie Good Food Box volunteer, a recipe guru, a Doctor, a Youth coordinator, a volunteer recruiter, and two individuals who really wanted to start a farmers' market but thought a Good Food Box program would be a good place to start.

## ***Finding Produce sources***

I guess the most important question was who was going to supply us with the best quality fruits and vegetables that we wanted to put in the box. We knew some of the suppliers that other Good Food Boxes were using and we knew some local farmers. Thus, we struck a committee to investigate the best possible source for the bulk of the produce. The committee also researched smaller providers that would be able to supplement the box with local produce. After thorough investigation, we found a great provider for all our fruits and vegetables who really believed in local food and agreed to source from smaller growers as much as possible in each season.

## ***Creating education materials for the box***

In addition to the great produce, we wanted to include some education into the box. As we had a couple of doctors on the committee, we developed a "Doctor's Corner" section of the newsletter to educate us about the nutritional importance of the food in the box. We also had several wonderful home chefs who provided the newsletters with family recipes, and another member who would use the newsletter to link current media stories to the box.



### ***Finding a location to pack the boxes***

Another very important component of our endeavor was finding a location to pack the Good Food Box. We knew a few things.

1. The location had to be free.
2. The location had to be central to the population.
3. It had to be big enough to pack up to 100 boxes.
4. The location had to be insured.

After much discussion about schools, town space and churches we agreed that the local Lions Hall would be the most suitable place. Now that we had chosen this location, we needed to make sure they would choose us. So we asked to be invited to the next Lions Dinner to explain what the Good Food Box was and how important partnering with them was for us. As you can imagine there were a few questions because many residents use the hall for many things. But after we answered all the questions, we were delighted to hear the Lions roar (indicating their acceptance of us using the space).

### ***Setting up an ordering system***

How would people place their orders? With only volunteers, most of whom worked all day, it was difficult to identify one place for the orders to be dropped off. And then it came to us. We couldn't take the orders, but the local businesses could. They were at their workplaces all day. We called up the local Business Association and spoke with the President requesting some time to speak at the next meeting. We were a little nervous. Why would a business want to take on more work? The local business immediately realized how important this would be for the community and were opening their doors to include us. Not only were they more than happy to be an order and collection site they were soon asking us how to donate.

### ***Finding and managing volunteers***

One of the members of the committee volunteered to be the volunteer coordinator. She knew how and where to get people (this included a local volunteer web-site that we were able to post on and advertise to high school students).

### ***Boxes or bags?***

We decided to use cloth bags instead of boxes to fill as we found the bags a little less cumbersome for the people to carry, and we didn't have the facilities to wash boxes. Thus, everyone receives 4 bags. The bags have their names on them and everyone is required to drop off 2 empty bags each time they leave with 2 full bags. Additional bags cost extra.

### ***What I learned?***

I learned that there is nothing a committed group of citizens can't accomplish.

