

COMMUNITY EVENT

Food bank need keeps growing

RICHARD BEALES
Expositor Staff

City council is again getting ready to throw its support behind a municipal food drive spearheaded by the Community Resource Service food bank.

Councillors heard this week at a committee meeting from food bank representative Cindy Oliver on behalf of the annual Thanks4Giving food drive, scheduled to run from Sept. 25 to Oct. 2.

The committee supported a request to permit six public works employees to pick up bags full of donations and drop them off to the Clarence Street food bank. The resolution is expected to be approved by council Aug. 23.

The need for donations keeps growing, said Oliver, noting that about 1,200 families a month are typically helped these days.



Cindy Oliver

"Last month, it was 1,356," she said. "It was the highest I've ever seen."

Oliver added that, in 2008, about 10,000 pounds of food were collected for Thanks4-Giving, and more than 14,000 in 2009. This year's target is 15,000 pounds, or two weeks' worth of donations.

About 760,000 pounds of food were distributed to the community last year.

The drive involves dropping bagged-up non-perishable items off at the curb on the day after the home's regular garbage day. So as not to be confused with actual trash, the bags will be clearly marked with an X.

Oliver said a wide range of foods is needed - canned vegetables, meat and fruit, pasta, peanut butter and baby formula coming immediately to mind. She added that fresh foods are also welcomed, but must be brought directly to the food bank, 1100 Clarence St. S., for refrigeration. Milk and bread are needed, as are fresh fruit and vegetables, especially the produce you grow yourself.

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NOW YOU'RE COOKING



CHRISTOPHER SMITH The Expositor

Drew Smith of Bad Wolf Barbecue gets some ribs into the cooker Friday as he gets ready for Brantford's Own Ribfest being put on by the Kinsmen Club of Brantford at Cockshutt Park this weekend. The festival continues today from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

SUMMER WRITERS' WORKSHOP 2010



CHRISTOPHER SMITH The Expositor

Toronto-based publisher Jack David says writers should keep submitting their work despite being rejected.

Online retailing seen as book industry's future

RICHARD BEALES
Expositor Staff

Stores such as Chapters, Indigo and Coles are on the way out as the dominant force in Canadian retail book sales, a Toronto-based publisher told about two dozen participants during a recent four-day writers' workshop at Grand River Hall.

"The guess is that by 2013 or 2014, half the books sold will not be through bookstores," ECW Press publisher Jack David told the writers, a mix of already-published authors and others who are looking for their first break in the business.

Online vendors, such as Amazon.ca, currently capture about 28% of the market, continued David, adding that the lack of overhead required allows them to keep their prices lower.

He said bookstores in the United States are especially feeling the economic pinch, with No. 2 player Borders in trouble and No. 1 Barnes and Noble for sale, with no buyer emerging just yet.

Writers are paid the same regardless of how their books are sold, David told the group. And publishers actually prefer dealing with the online vendors for practical reasons.

"What is the advantage of selling to Amazon?" he asked. "A lot fewer returns."

The emerging form of electronic books sales, which currently has 3-4% of the market and is on "a rapid trajectory," is

favoured for the same reason.

"Do we get any returns from electronic books?" he asked rhetorically. "Zero." Traditional bookstore sales, on the other hand, lead to a 20-30% return rate.

The key for David is to get his company's books read, no matter the format.

"Any way we can get an author's work into anybody's hands where we get remunerated, it's great."

David's advice to writers is to keep submitting, even though a publishing house such as his typically accepts only one manuscript a week from the hundreds it receives.

One tip he offers to would-be ECW writers is this: Brush up on your factual writing. Even though most submitted manuscripts are works of fiction, publishing houses find a much greater market for non-fiction.

Nonetheless, he added, "I need good writing - and I don't care in what manner they (authors) write."

"Publishers need authors. We can't function without authors."

David's address was the final segment of a four-day blitz of writing, pitching projects, schmoozing and sharing advice for the authors, who came from as far away as British Columbia and Nova Scotia. Sessions were set up with book editors, agents and local authors, such as Brantford General Hospital physician Ross Pennie, whose second book Tainted made the best-seller lists

as a medical thriller.

Pennie was one of several presenters at the Summer Writers' Workshop 2010 who decided to stick around for most of the event, as both a workshop participant and a giver of advice to

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ECW Press publisher Jack David

writers in 10-minute "blue-pencil" sessions.

"That was a new experience for me," said Pennie, a veteran of many writers' workshops. "I've never been asked to do that before. It was fun, it was a privilege and I found I had more to contribute than expected. The limitation is that you're there for only a very short period of time."

Another presenter-participant was Kari-Lynn Winters, a St. Catharines-based children's picture-book author who also teaches education classes at Brock University.

"I learn so much just from listening to other people when I give the presentations," she said. "They have really thoughtful questions that make you dig a little deeper about the way you approach writing."

The workshop is the brainchild

of award-winning Brantford children's and young adult author Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch. She used to co-ordinate the event annually, but now runs it every other year - partly for economic reasons and partly because it's a lot of work.

Skrypuch gets a great deal of satisfaction from helping other writers, and is a past winner of the Calliope Award for teaching and mentorship at the Humber College School of Writing.

"Why else would I do this?" she asked. "I just love being able to introduce publishers to new writers; that's the hardest thing (for those writers). They say the best way to get published is to be published, but how do you get there?"

"These (publishers, agents and editors) are my personal contacts, and that's why I groom people for the whole week. That's why we concentrate on (first-approach tactics such as) the pitch and the query letter. It's a good self-editing procedure, being able to write your 'hook' with the first two sentences."

The introductory experience is mutually beneficial, said literary agent Sam Hiyate of the Rights Factory in Toronto.

"I get a chance to meet writers who I might be representing; that's the most important thing," he said. "Sometimes the personal contact is more important than the query letter. You get a chance to measure your compatibility."