

Mobile meals program feeding vulnerable five nights a week

SurreyCares Foundation helps Cloverdale Community Kitchen to expand its outreach services

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Black Press Media

A mobile meals program created in Cloverdale to feed the community's vulnerable during the pandemic has expanded, thanks to the support of a local foundation.

"It wouldn't have been able to happen without SurreyCares Foundation saying, 'here's some money to help seniors and people in need in Surrey,'" said Matthew Campbell, director of Cloverdale Community Kitchen. "We are totally, totally thankful to them and to all the donors giving to SurreyCares."

Campbell says before COVID-19, Cloverdale Community Kitchen was serving community meals three nights a week, feeding up to 100 people a night. The non-profit had also recently converted its pantry into a food bank around Christmas and had just officially opened it on March 1, days before the pandemic hit.

"Things started to go crazy," he said. "It was a crazy few weeks when

it hit."

When COVID-19 came around, Campbell said his thoughts immediately went to the people they had been serving, especially the seniors. He estimates that anywhere from 30 to 50 per cent of the people being fed at community dinners were low-income, vulnerable seniors, who were now "scared to come out."

Cloverdale Community Kitchen was thinking about setting up a mobile meals program when the phone rang.

"The SurreyCares Foundation called us up and said they wanted to invest some money that they had raised to help," he said. "So in about two weeks, we launched the program and got it rolling."

The mobile meals program started out three nights a week but just expanded to five nights. While the program is geared towards seniors, it is open to anyone who is self-isolating, in quarantine, is immune-compromised or simply scared to leave



Matthew Campbell, director, and Courtney van den Boogaard, manager of communications, for the Cloverdale Community Kitchen. (Photo submitted)



Longtime Cloverdale resident Blair Fraser delivers mobile meals for the Cloverdale Community Kitchen. (Photo submitted)

the house.

And while the demands of the program have increased – feeding more people and accommodating special diets – so has the community support. During the first few weeks of the pandemic, Campbell said at least half of the volunteers, most of them seniors, stepped down in an effort to stay safe.

"Since then, for every volunteer lost, we have gained two new ones," he said. "The community has stepped up fantastically. We're so thankful."

To volunteer for the mobile meals program, or to sign up to receive meals, call 778-617-3000 or visit mycck.ca.

In March, the SurreyCares Community Foundation created a special

emergency fund to support social service agencies in Surrey who are "in the trenches," as they help people impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.

For more information on SurreyCares and to donate to the Surrey Community Relief Fund, visit surreycare.org.