



PARTAGEONS
l'espoir
SHARE
the warmth



Semer l'espoir et le rêve

Awakening hopes and dreams

A School Food Program Model

*flexible, sustainable, inclusive,
and community-based*

December 2015



WHO WE ARE

For 25 years Share the Warmth (STW) has been awakening hopes and dreams in Montreal. Inspired by a vision of a vibrant community where all members reach their full potential and achieve their dreams, STW's priorities are the overall development and success of children and youth, food security for all, with special attention to school-aged children, and employment and job readiness training for marginalised adults. Each week 3,500 members of the community participate in food security, youth, and employment training programs. Together we are fighting some of the root causes of poverty. Our priorities include a number of programs:

SO THAT WE CAN ALL GROW AND LEARN

Music Program – School choir; weekly guitar and keyboard group lessons; El Sistema, an intensive music curriculum four days each week that includes choir, orchestral instruments, music theory, tutoring and healthy snacks.

Tutoring and Bursaries – Tutoring and financial support for elementary students in grades 5 and 6, and high school students who are experiencing difficulties, to improve reading and math skills in particular; and post-secondary bursaries and volunteer program. To date, 91% of participating students have successfully graduated from high school (compared to 73.4% for Montreal and 52% for the Southwest borough)¹.

Youth Group – A safe place for children aged 5 to 13 to learn to cook, develop their creativity and leadership skills, and to talk with caring animators.

Back-to-School and “Magasin Partage” – Providing families and students in need with school supplies in over 20 Montreal schools. The “Magasin Partage” allows parents to select supplies for their children at nominal cost.



SO THAT WE CAN ALL WORK

Work Training and Support Programs – Supervised internships in a variety of work areas (kitchen, Café-Boutique, food security), work and volunteer programs for adults, suspended high school students, and young offenders, as well as work training programs for adults.

Social Economy: Café-Boutique – A community-conscious shop where families can clothe themselves economically and receive free clothing when necessary. A Community Café that serves coffee, muffins, cookies and meals that are healthy, affordable and delicious – open all year round with an outdoor terrace in the summer!

SO THAT WE CAN ALL EAT

Food Bank – Emergency food for those living below the poverty line, as well as a delivery service for needy shut-ins. This program currently supports over 1,300 people each month, of whom 29% are under the age of 18.

Good Food Box – Pick-up point for fresh, inexpensive fruit and veggie baskets.

Collective Cooking – Cooking workshops for children and adults using ingredients from the food bank and the Good Food Box where participants share healthy and simple recipes and develop links with their community.

School Food Program – Preparation and delivery of nutritious food for hungry school children in 20 Montreal schools. Share the Warmth's school food program has been providing snacks and meals to Montreal schools free of charge for twenty years. This program is the focus of this paper.



SHARE THE WARMTH'S SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAM

Context

Share the Warmth's school food program was born out of the need to support schools faced with insufficient food budgets or food programs for children from families who are unable to pay the daily cost of regular school food programs. These pockets of poverty exist in all geographic areas, however children in schools without food subsidies are particularly at risk of going hungry.

In Pointe-Saint-Charles, up to 45% of children ages 5 to 17 live in low-income homes, and are thus at risk of being food insecure². Due to rapid gentrification in the Southwest borough, a number of schools are in danger of losing their food subsidies. The detrimental effects of food insecurity on a child's health and wellbeing are countless. Food insecure children are at higher risk for obesity, mental health issues, and have increased difficulty learning in school, compared to their food secure peers³.

The Model

Share the Warmth believes healthy and sufficient food should be available for all children in need, whether they are in elementary or high school. The program is built specifically to fit the diverse dietary requirements in our increasingly multiethnic community. Schools order the food according to the observed needs in their schools communities, and are asked to distribute the food in a dignified manner, so as not to stigmatise students who receive food. The food that is distributed by STW comes at no cost to the school.



The model that we have developed over the years is based on simplicity, effectiveness and nutrition. In partnership with schools, menus are adapted annually to meet evolving needs and preferences. Feedback from annual surveys completed by principals indicate that the program is widely appreciated, with little waste, indicating that students make good use of the food and that it contributes to an overall improved learning environment. The survey helps us monitor and evaluate the program, while measuring its impact to ensure that goals are met.

Nutritious Food Served Cold

Food is delivered to schools and served cold, thus requiring minimal preparation. In comparison with hot meals, we believe that this model is environmentally sustainable and more cost efficient, while also tasty and nutritious (see the menu in Appendix).

Schools & Other Partners

The schools served by Share the Warmth's School Food Program are from five different school boards, each with their own food policy. Nonetheless, the menu meets all requirements.

For example, meals must contain foods from at least three out of four of Canada's Food Guide

food groups, prohibit sugar-based foods, provide highest fibre content, and foods with the highest essential nutrients.

In partnership with McGill University Dietetics, the menu was developed to ensure access to "ideal meals" that are nutritionally complete. Lunch techs are encouraged to find creative ways to encourage students to choose a variety of food items. One way

Sample Meal



that the nutritional value of food items was recently increased was by adding grated vegetables to sandwiches and fruit and veggies to homemade muffins and cookies.

Flexible Orders & Simple Delivery

Schools are able to change their orders up to a week before delivery, allowing for adjustments to production while meeting the changing needs of schools and avoiding waste.

The format for the delivery is typically in bulk. Prepared items include sandwiches, wraps, muffins, cookies, scrambled eggs, hummus, granola and oatmeal. Bulk items include loaves of bread, packs of yogurt, boxes of fruit and applesauce snacks. Quantities are based on previous orders and on observed needs over time.

Customised School Distribution

While each school decides how best to distribute food based on their students and schedules, all schools ensure that food is made available in a dignified manner that does not stigmatise those who use the program. There are a variety of distribution methods:

- Universal – all students have access to the food;
- Centralized – i.e. a fruit basket in common area that all students can access, such as the main office;
- Breakfast Club – teachers, staff and older students serve younger students which promotes leadership; younger children see high school students as role models while developing a sense of community;
- “Grab and go” – individual items or pre-bagged lunches which are available to all, including various sandwiches, yogurts, fruit, cut vegetables, homemade muffins and cookies, cereals, etc.



Community Involvement

Volunteers, parents and student involvement in the school food program not only keeps costs low but helps to engage various stakeholders in the development of a healthy sustainable community. Approximately 25 dedicated volunteers contribute more than 100 hours of kitchen work every week.

Low Financial & Environmental Cost

The total cost of the program in 2014-2015 was \$222,800, including food, salaries, administrative costs, and deliveries, with food costs of \$90,400. The equivalent of 87,735 meals, at an average cost of \$1.03, were served in 21 schools⁴.

This program has the added convenience of having the food delivered to each school in a refrigerated truck. Deliveries are made to schools once a week based on geographical location. The truck covers only 100 km per week for all school food deliveries, and so delivery costs are minimised by well-planned routes that are planned according to area.



TOWARDS A NATIONAL SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAM

The importance of universal access to food support in elementary and high school has been proven to result in happier, healthier and more productive citizens⁵.

How might Share the Warmth's model contribute to the goal of a National School Food Program? In a season of government cutbacks, is a fully-funded hot lunch program for all school children likely, or even desirable? Would such a program be sustainable in terms of the financial and environmental costs? Would it actually strengthen families and communities?

Share the Warmth would propose a simpler model containing the following key elements for a successful National School Food Program:

Cold is the new Hot

Society once believed that food had to be hot to be good and nutritious. Not only is this untrue, but it sets up an unattainable goal when we consider that 1 million children across the country do not have enough to eat. Cold, homemade food is not second best. It is tasty, nutritious, easy to prepare, and affordable! While switching the School Food mindset from Hot to Cold presents philosophical challenges, we believe that the benefits of a larger number of children in elementary and high school being reached sooner is more than worth the challenge.



Build Partnerships with Parents, Schools & Community

Invite parents and other members of the community to be part of local solutions by volunteering their time to prepare healthy meals and snacks under the supervision of professional staff. Parents and other members of the community are an important part of the equation; food planning and preparation is an integral part of family life and the primary responsibility of parents. Let's help families reclaim and enjoy that responsibility, rather than taking it away from them.

Financially & Environmentally Sustainable Solutions

Keeping costs low and reducing waste is possible by providing only what is necessary to improve incomplete meals. Let's work together and build sustainable school food programs that reflect the needs of our local communities and families. Add food growing and cooking education to the mix to create long-term solutions that build healthy bodies, strong families and dynamic communities.

Contact us to continue the conversation....

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Food Group	Food	TOTAL
Vegetables and Fruits	Apples (1 box=approx. 107 apples)	
	Oranges (1 box= approx. 113 oranges)	
	Celery (10 vegetable servings per bag)	
	Carrots (10 vegetable servings per bag)	
	Applesauce (1 pack = 6 individual)	
Grain Products	Bagel (1 = 1 bagel)	
	Whole wheat bread (1 = 25 slice loaf)	
	English muffin (1= pack of 6 English muffins)	
	Plain wraps (1 = pack of 10 wraps)	
	Homemade oatmeal (1 bag = 10 grain servings per bag)	
	Homemade granola (1 bag=15 grain servings)	
	Multigrain Cheerios (1 bag = 525g)	
	Raisin Bran (1 bag = 350g)	
	Fibre 1 (1 bag = 450g)	
	Homemade muffins (1 = 1 muffin)	
	Homemade cookies (1 = 1 cookie)	
Milk and Alternatives	Yogurt (1 pack = 16 individual containers)	
	Milk (1 bag = 4L)	
	Sliced cheese (1 box = 4kg)	
Meat and Alternatives	Scrambled eggs (1 = 20" x 12" pan)	
	Homemade Hummus Dip (1 = 175ml container)	
Mixed	Tuna sandwich (1 = 1 sandwich)	
	Egg salad sandwich (1 = 1 sandwich)	
	Cheese sandwich (1 = 1 sandwich)	
	Hummus wrap (1 = 1 sandwich)	
	Egg Muffin Sandwich (1 = 1 sandwich)	
Other	Margarine (1 = 1.2L container)	
	Strawberry Jam (1 = 310ml jar)	

Notes & Sources

1 Réseau Réussite Montréal, 2011

2 Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de Montréal (2010) En santé pour l'avenir? Un portrait des jeunes Montréalais d'âge scolaire. Accessed online: http://publications.santemontreal.qc.ca/uploads/tx_assmpublications/978-2-89494-910-8.pdf

3 Sodexo Foundation. Impact of School Breakfast on Children's Health and Learning. 2008. Accessed online: http://www.sodexofoundation.org/hunger_us/Images/Impact%20of%20School%20Breakfast%20Study_tcm150-212606.pdf

4 The cost per meal was estimated by creating four ideal meals in accordance with the common school food program guideline of having three food groups represented in each meal.

5 <http://www.breakfastforlearning.ca/>

