



JUNE 2021

NEWSLETTER



Pete Wierenga

PETE'S PEN

It's quite exciting to report on the completion of our second dryer project.

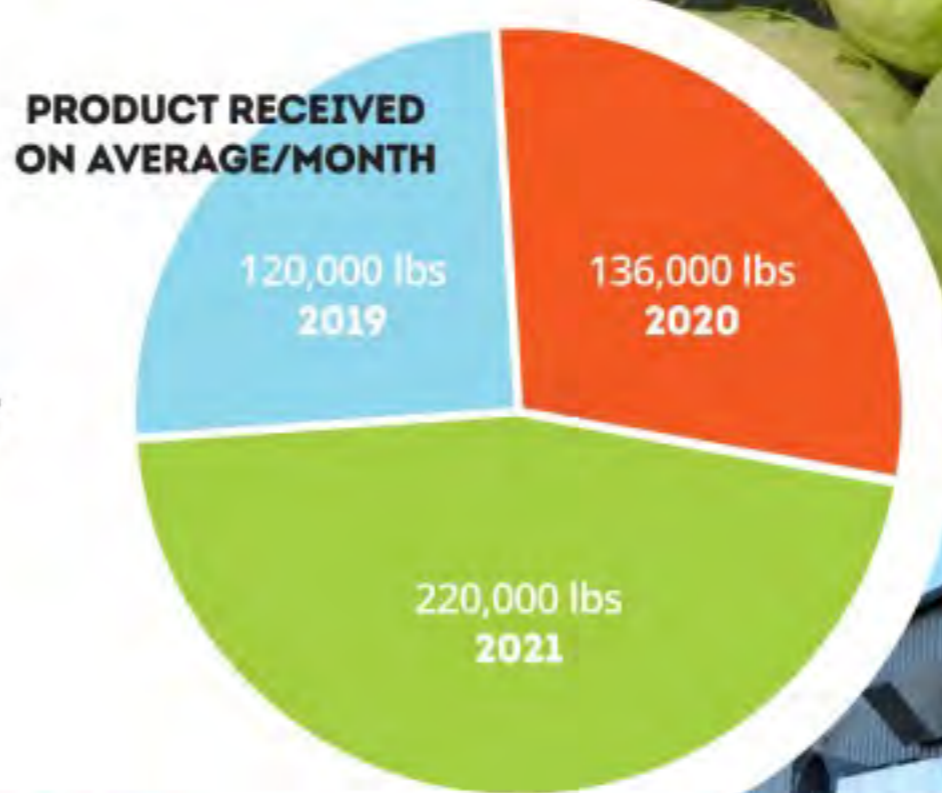
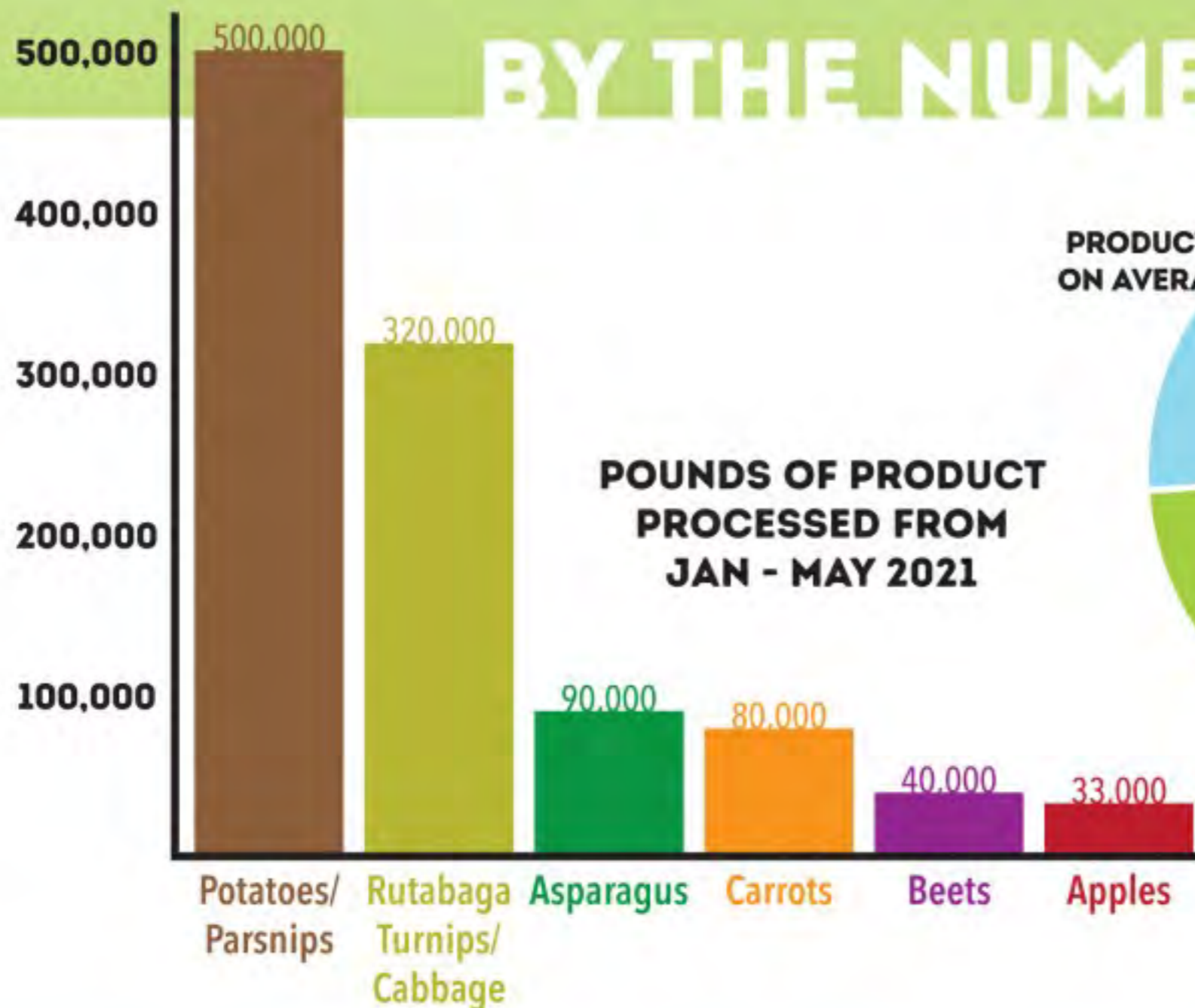
We have been so blessed to once again receive an incredible amount of help with the transportation, installation, and setup of this valuable piece of equipment. It arrived in mid-April and, with the help of some gifted volunteers, the installation went smoother than we could have hoped for. Within 3 days it was assembled and by the weekend it was operational. Since then we have fully utilized the 2nd dryer and it has quickly become a normal part of our production plans and outcomes. With the exterior installation on a concrete equipment pad, we have immediately noticed a few added benefits. First off, the 2nd dryer did not require us to give up any valuable warehouse space. A typical busy Gleaner day utilizes nearly every available space to accomplish the multifaceted and changing tasks needed to accomplish the day's goals. Secondly, we are often planning on the new dryer (Dryer 2) to be the first

one we start up in the morning. By running the dryer outside of our plant we minimize any extra equipment noise and heat that might otherwise affect our work environment while our volunteers are present. Thirdly, we have experienced a better flow-through of product as we move racks around more efficiently. Prior to having the 2nd dryer, we were often staging prepared racks of food and putting entire dryer loads in queue for the next available dryer time slot. This would also take up valuable floor and cooler space. With Dryer 2 in the mix of things, we are making single moves with the prepared product and placing the food immediately in the dryers. In this way we are able to commence the drying cycles sooner rather than later.

Our volunteers make up the backbone of our organization - both behind the scenes and at the plant. So much of our work with the produce - from unloading trucks, washing the food, chopping and trimming, dicing and drying, packaging and labelling, loading sea containers etc, is done with the hands of willing volunteers. We purposefully have not automated processes more than necessary as an intentional way of involving as many people as possible in this amazing mission. If you haven't had the opportunity to spend a session with us, I encourage you to come and check us out.

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BY THE NUMBERS



The tasks are varied and I'm certain that there is something that you would enjoy doing. I can definitely promise that you will be blessed by serving at the Gleaners - you simply have to come and get it!

From a need perspective, the added capacity created by the additional commercial dehydrator could not have come at a more opportune time. The call for food aid globally continues to escalate. Our mission and distribution partners will often share stories of how harmful any form of "lock-down" is for the less fortunate and impoverished people who need our help. Unlike us in the West, many live their lives day-to-day and are dependent on their jobs to provide for their daily bread. For some, the lockdowns are

preventing them from doing even the most basic of things in order to survive and provide for their families. Without a doubt the pandemic, for many, has made a difficult life even more difficult. Although we acknowledge that the challenges of food security and injustice are complex, and the solutions may seem unattainable, we are compelled to do what we can in the name of Christ. We're commanded to love our neighbour and we'd like to do that to the best of our ability at Niagara Christian Gleaners. We are to be conduits of mercy simply because we have first been the recipients of undeserved mercy. The Gleaner model provides a tangible and practical way to share our abundance of food with those who are in need all across the globe. We soldier on and give God all the glory. May He be praised! PW

CHEERFUL CHOPPERS • VOLUNTEER PROFILES

INTERVIEW WITH SANDY HILTON & WENDY HOLLINSHEAD

As promised in our last edition of the Niagara Christian Gleaners newsletter, we are pleased to include our "interview" with Wendy Hollinshead here. Wendy and her friend Sandy Hilton volunteer at the Gleaners every Friday morning and they can be found in the cutting room "tackling whatever vegetable or fruit comes down the line". Her least favourite veggie is rutabagas (covered in wax) and her most favourite are green peppers.

How did you first learn of NCG? When/how did you decide to become a regular volunteer there?

Wendy: NCG first came to my attention about a year ago through a friend, who had volunteered at the NCG fundraising dinners. I then read an article in the local community paper over the summer about how the NCG was pressing on with its operations despite Covid. I mentioned The Gleaners to my friend Sandy and suggested if she was interested, we could give it a try. Sandy and I have known each other since high school days and attended Brock University together. Since retiring in 2017, I had been volunteering with the West Lincoln Memorial Auxiliary at the hospital but volunteer services were suspended there in mid-March of 2020 due to Covid concerns. As the months passed with no end in sight, and in anticipation of a long winter without volunteering, and time on our hands, Sandra and I decided to sign-up for our first shift at NCG at the beginning of October 2020. Besides the occasional blister on my hands and some sore back muscles in the initial first few weeks, the work is easy, fast-paced and the morning flies by.

Now that we are into the 2nd year of Covid with its restrictions/rules, what is the atmosphere like at the Gleaners? Has it brought volunteers

closer together or caused a break in the unity of the cause?

Wendy: I joined several months after the start of Covid restrictions, so I don't know what it was like before,

but I suspect that the Covid experience has changed the atmosphere somewhat and brought the smaller number of volunteers closer together. I talk with many of the same folks each week as I'm working, which may have not been the case if the daily numbers were doubled as is the norm. The continued growth of production in recent months and need for a second dryer and packaging line, plus the new pallet racking system, has all occurred despite the interruptions caused by the pandemic, which indicates to me that unity of the cause has been maintained.

What do you like best about volunteering at The Gleaners? How do you feel knowing you are helping others around the globe with food aid to those who would otherwise have very little?

Wendy: I love the atmosphere and the sense of purpose. There's always a positive energy in the building. At coffee time in the fellowship room we receive updates from Pete on activities, such as upgrades to the facility, produce shipments arriving and finished product leaving the building headed to communities in need across the globe. As a volunteer, I am very impressed with how professional and well organized the operation is and good leadership and communication are keys to its success. From the on-line sign-up of new volunteers, and weekly updates, the facility tour



(L) Sandy Hilton and (R) Wendy Hollinshead

(cont'ued on back page)

I am a Potato, planted in the spring of 2020.

After a sunny summer, although it is always dark where I live, the fall came. A great machine plucked me and all my neighbours out of the ground, shook off the dirt, and then put us into a huge sheltered pile. I spent my winter there, rather cold, hibernating.

In April of 2021, I was scooped out of my winter pile, and placed into a cardboard tote with 200,000 of my neighbourlings. A truck, after a couple of hours of travel, dropped us off at a loading dock, and a forklift took us away into a cold room.

A few days later, I was dumped out of my box, into a pool of water. After soaking for a bit, a paddle lifted me up a conveyer and dropped me onto a spinning brush. Before I knew it, I was spudly clean, rinsed and dropped into a black milk crate. We looked at each other in amazement! We had never seen each other clean before!

My box travelled down a conveyor of blue rollers and was placed on a table. A hand picked me up and then trimmed me so that I looked like the perfect potato. I then rejoined my neighbours in a yellow crate. Another set of blue rollers took us to the dicing machine.

Oh to be a perfect cube!! Almost my turn to be an exactly perfect size of 3/8" by 3/8" by 3/8". Into the dicer we go, and before you can say boo, I have become a perfect cube. I now am one of millions of cubes being put onto baking sheets, and slid onto a trolley. The trolley ride is bumpy but short, and we arrive inside the dryer room. Soon it gets windy, it gets warmer, and I gradually enter into a state of toastiness. Eventually the wind dies away and I cool off. I hardly recognize myself because I have been transformed into a tasty light weight morsel.

The next morning, I am slid off of my tray and placed into a sealed bag to keep me tasty and fresh. I join 20 other bags in a cardboard box that says on the side, "**We love because He first loved us. 1 John 4:19**" and under that it says "**Niagara Christian Gleaners.**"

A TIME FOR EVERY PURPOSE *under Heaven*



I suddenly realize, so that is what this was all about! Even though I am only one potato, I came into being for a specific purpose. The other side of my box reads, "**Food Aid.**" That sounds to me like I am going to be used to help someone out, a real person, in need of nourishment. I am nourishing! I am a tasty morsel! I am a potato!

I may be only a potato, but I have been fearfully and wonderfully made to serve a purpose, I know my journey is not over yet. I think I may be put on a truck again. I may even end up on a ship to sail the ocean blue, destined for some far off land. Or, I may end up as some Canadian's supper meal. After all, I am a Canadian potato!

ACS

**To everything there is a season,
A time for every
purpose under heaven:
A time to plant, And a time to
pluck what is planted;
Ecclesiastes 3: 1,3**

FREE
FAMILY
FUN



Strawberry **SOCIAL**

SATURDAY, JUNE 19

Niagara Christian Gleaners is once again hosting a

Walk-Through and Strawberry Social.

YOU'RE INVITED TO COME VISIT OUR FACILITIES and learn more about the mission of NCG - which is to curb food waste and bless others across the globe with our surplus produce - all in Christ's name. We'll be happy to be your host and we will be serving up

COMPLIMENTARY STRAWBERRIES AND ICE CREAM FOR OUR GUESTS.

SATURDAY, 19 JUNE 2021 / 2-4 PM.

6251 Spring Creek Rd, Smithville, Ontario L0R 2A0.

*Current Covid-19 safety protocols will be observed.
Donations towards operation costs are appreciated.*

BOARD REPORT

While the board has not met since the end of March, we can still communicate quite effectively with each other and make decisions via email. One of these decisions was to add another part-time assistant manager to the management team. With the continuing increases in production, and with the anticipation of more volunteers once the pandemic is behind us, the need for more management had become apparent. Once our second dryer became operational in April, we also added a Saturday morning shift to our volunteer schedule. This makes 6 morning shifts per week which is shared by the 3 assistant managers.

We welcome Rick Beyer as he joins Rick Batenburg and Warren Hoeksema on the management team assisting our general manager, Pete Wierenga. Rick has been a regular volunteer, and will fit in well with our mission and vision on the plant floor.

The board would like to express appreciation for the generous support given to our second dryer expansion project. This investment is already reaping

benefits, as we have been drying 4 loads per day quite often during the past few weeks. With the addition of fresh, already prepped asparagus, as well as the start of fresh peppers and eggplant from some of our growers, as well as the steady supply of stored produce still available, our volunteers have been hopping to prep the food and put it on trays to feed the dryer. While we do not expect to run both dryers at full capacity all through the year, we do appreciate that we can now handle a lot more during the spring surge.

If you would like to volunteer for a morning at the Gleaners, but work during the week, the Saturday morning shift may be the opportunity you are looking for. All volunteers must sign in ahead during our covid restrictions, but this is easily done. Just call Pete, our manager, or go online to register as a volunteer on our website.

In regards to finances, your generous and continuous support continues to meet the needs of our budget as we proceed from month to month. We look forward to seeing many of you at our Strawberry Social and Open House (details elsewhere) as we thank the Lord for providing from His storehouse of blessings.

Arthur Struyk, Board Chairman

CHEERFUL CHOPPERS (continued)

for new volunteers, to leadership and support staff on the production floor and in the fellowship room, this all makes for a great volunteer experience. As many people do, I've contributed financially through various organizations for many years to hunger relief efforts in developing parts of the world and in Canada. However, volunteering hands-on at NCG from week to week keeps it at the forefront for me. Processing the food that would otherwise have gone to waste, seeing it boxed for shipment, and then hearing from those communities about the impact the food has had for hunger relief once it arrives in the area...this gives me confidence that our efforts truly make a difference! Unfortunately, the impact of Covid on developing countries has increased the need for food aid, and yet the Gleaners is continuing to grow to help meet that need.

What do you notice/learn the most when talking to other volunteers at NCG?

Wendy: Of course, I'm still a relatively new volunteer, so I'm always learning something new about NCG from other volunteers. Mostly we ask, and are asked about our own experience and history with NCG, and I'm often amazed at how far and wide a distance our volunteers drive to participate at NCG (for example Oakville, Dunnville, and Niagara-on-the-Lake).

Tell us a little about yourself- if you like include family life, work, hobbies, etc.

Wendy: I am a long-time resident of Grimsby where I live with my husband, Bill Thompson. I grew up in Niagara and am retired from McMaster University having spent most of my career there in research administration. Covid has paused my other volunteer activities and our travel plans, but thanks to Zoom, I'm able to keep in touch with friends and family online and even continue with piano lessons. Soon golf season will return to Ontario and I look forward to enjoying a weekly round of golf with friends.

PRE-AUTHORIZED DEBIT FORM FOR NIAGARA CHRISTIAN GLEANERS

Name _____ Address _____ City _____

Prov _____ Postal Code _____ Phone (_____) _____ Email _____

Donation Information: Monthly Donation Pledge: \$ _____ Donation taken each 15th day starting _____
Month

Authorization: I/we hereby authorize you to debit my/our account each month in the amount shown above and for such amount to be payable to Niagara Christian Gleaners. Your treatment of each payment shall be the same as if I/we had personally issued a cheque authorizing you to pay as indicated and to debit my/our account accordingly. This authorization may be cancelled at any time upon written notice by me/us.

Date _____ Authorized Signatory _____ **Please include a void cheque along with your form.