



SPRING 2022

NEWSLETTER



PETE'S PEN

I wish each one of our readers could have an opportunity to spend a morning at the Gleaners. I know that there may be many obstacles for that happening, but having said that, I also know that experiencing a busy volunteer session at the Gleaners is by far the best way to fully grasp what we are all about. The mission and goals of Niagara Christian Gleaners (NCG) are often easily understood as we seek to bless others with our surplus food. Tangibly, being a part of the process, in one way

or another, is where our volunteers experience a much larger picture that is NCG. With a range of tasks that need to be covered in a morning, we're almost certain that there's a near perfect fit for each individual volunteer who comes to serve. Consider this note a personal invitation to come check us out and see for yourself what blessings might be in store for you.

It seems like quite a bit of time has passed since our last newsletter in the fall. So much has happened, not only at NCG, but in our world as well. Thankfully, our produce donors have continued to support us

with an abundance of great produce. In addition to our regular network of produce donors, we have been able to bring in some surplus potatoes from PEI. The fact that we could support growers from that hard pressed province without negatively affecting our Ontario growers is only the result of the increased production capacity provided by our 2nd dehydrator. Since the fall we have averaged over 60,000 lbs of incoming fresh produce every week. Our production and replenish rates are now nearing 275,000 servings per week! We have prepared nearly 7 million servings since our last newsletter edition. With the help of our valuable distribution partners we were able to send recent shipments to The Dominican Republic, Eswatini, Guatemala, Haiti, and the Philippines. Additionally, a number of local food banks right here in Ontario have received NCG food to share with their clients who may be experiencing food insecurity. Many times this winter the call for food aid outstripped our inventory, and our pallet racks were completely bare more than once, as we attempted to respond

to the global requests for food. At the time of this writing we are actively looking for ways to send NCG food products to the Ukraine to alleviate some of the devastating conditions the people there are living through. Hopefully very soon some doors will open so that we can extend the love of Christ to hurting people in the Ukraine with the food we prepare.

As I think of what defines the heart of our ministry - the heart of our supporters, volunteers and growers - I'm reminded of this scripture from 1 John 3: ***"But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth."***



Blessings to you all

HOW DO I VOLUNTEER?

Visit www.niagaragleaners.org and click the **Volunteer** tab, and fill out the form at the bottom of the screen

OR call **(905) 359-5028** or email coordinator@niagaragleaners.org



A MORNING SPENT VOLUNTEERING AT THE GLEANERS LOOKS LIKE...



8:00AM
ARRIVAL
PREP

10:00AM
FELLOWSHIP
COFFEE TIME

11:30AM
CLEAN UP
WASH, TIDY

8:30AM
WORKSTATION
CLEAN, CUT

10:30AM
WORKSTATION
LOAD, PACKAGE

12:00PM
HOME FOR
LUNCH

DEDICATED DONORS • GROWER PROFILE

HILLSIDE GARDENS



In this spring edition of the Newsletter we're going to take a step back from profiling a volunteer in our Cheerful Chopper segment and focus on a grower and supplier to NCG. It seems appropriate at this time of the year to highlight growers and their vital link in providing produce to clean, chop, dehydrate and send out to those in need. In fact, without them there would be no NCG! Hillside Gardens is certainly a Dedicated Donor and has been supplying the Gleaners with a steady stream of surplus vegetables almost from the beginning.

According to their website, Hillside Gardens was started in 1934 in Bradford, Ontario by Henry Ver Kaik and now a third generation of Ver Kaik's are still "growing vegetables in the rich muck soil of Holland Marsh, in Ontario's greenbelt." Their crops include onions, carrots, turnips, beets and parsnips, to name a few. Their motto is "We put our best into our crops so you can put wholesome delicious food on your table." This is certainly true even when it's dehydrated down to its dried form; recipients all over the world are being blessed with "wholesome delicious food for their tables"!

Hillside Gardens is very familiar with the work of NCG. For the past 7 or 8 years they have also donated surplus produce to The Ontario Christian Gleaners in Cambridge, as well as local food banks. For Hillside Gardens, donating to both sites is "...an avenue to help those in need. It is a Christian response to those who are hungry."

Dan VanderKooi, an Operations Manager at Hillside, along with his wife Theresa recently toured NCG and were very impressed at what they observed.

Dan explained to Pete, General Manager of NCG, that approximately 1 % of their product would be considered "surplus" after grading and supplying their customers, as well as supplying to their own on-site processing plant. You could say they first "glean" from their products in the way of taking bruised or misshapen vegetables and preparing them for bagged salads, etc. Then, what's left is donated to the Gleaners; from a volume perspective, this is still a significant amount. Remember those crates and crates of carrots coming down the conveyor belt at the Gleaners? There's a good chance they came from Hillside Gardens!

Pete says keeping in regular contact with the suppliers and growers is key in receiving the produce in steady supply. He says that there are 15 to 20 very regular suppliers that donate; this is included in the 50 plus contacts to draw from.

Some are obviously more seasonable and this is where Pete has to sometimes make a decision to receive large loads of produce on a moment's notice. Pete emphasizes that "it's rare to turn down an offer." He says that he often knows what the Gleaners will be receiving 1 to 2 weeks ahead of time but when dealing with surplus vegetables from many, many growers, things can change quickly. He keeps the growers informed on what's happening at the Gleaners with emails and updates and by sending them this newsletter. They are a valuable part of the ministry of NCG. "We are, essentially, taking their gift and fulfilling a need on the other side of the globe," said Pete.

Thanks so much to Hillside Gardens for continuing to be a Dedicated Donor to the important work at NCG!

BOARD REPORT

This summer season has been one of great productivity at the Gleaners. The teamwork between the volunteers, suppliers and management is so evident, and the 60% increase in food for the needy over last year is the result. The installation of a second drier in the spring has made this increase from our abundance possible.

There has been a lot of activity and planning happening at NCG since our fall newsletter. In October the board received and approved the recommendations of the Long Term Planning committee. Plans are proceeding to add 4,500 square feet to the East of our building. Drawings and engineering have been completed and a building permit applied for. The addition will add 2 more coolers for fresh produce storage, a mezzanine for dried food storage, a larger holding room for food coming out of the dryer, as well as more work space for our volunteers to do their tasks efficiently and safely. A capital fund raising campaign will be held this summer. Full details will be provided in our summer newsletter. The expansion is expected to start in June of 2023, D.V.. As production continues to grow, and as we anticipate more volunteers coming back in due time, the addition will be timely in helping us to share from our abundance with those in need.

Our produce transportation circumstances also changed last fall with our hauler, John VanDoorn retiring his business, Boston Creek Transport, and with Zwaagstra Trucking taking on the delivery of produce to our volunteers. With this came the decision to purchase our own 53' refrigerated trailer. Thanks to those who provided the funds and opportunities to make this happen! This trailer will soon be vinyl wrapped and become a moving billboard, as well as a witness of what the Gleaners is about, both in word and in pictures.

Thank you to all of our supporters for your generosity in providing the NCG with the needed funds, produce, transportation, and volunteer hours over the past year; we have been well provided for.

At the board level, we would like to thank Otto Bulk for his 6 years of service on the board, being one of the ground level organizers of the NCG. We also appreciate the 3 years that Ashlyn Minor could serve

as board treasurer, from our startup to the present. May the Lord bless you as you pursue other kingdom endeavours. We welcome, as new board members, Sandra McBay and Jim Smit. We are looking forward to working together under the Lord's leadership.

We are now almost a quarter of the way through 2022, and just when we thought life would be getting back to "normal" in regards to covid, events of unrest in our country and in other parts of the world serve to keep part of our minds and hearts occupied. With the war in Ukraine, the question of whether we can render any aid there arises frequently. This week, we were approached by Barnabas Aid (barnabasaid.org), to supply a 40 ft. container (1,200,000 servings) of dried food for the Ukraine.

Plans are underway for them to ship to the United Kingdom, then on to Poland, and then be distributed in the Ukraine through local churches. Barnabas Aid has already been providing the Ukraine with food bought in neighbouring countries, but food is getting scarce.

While we may see some empty sections in our stores through this endeavour to send food to the Ukraine, we are thankful to have the great abundance that we have been blessed with and able to share with the needy. At NCG, our main goal is to share our overabundance of food with those in need, but equally important is the need to share the spiritual food that leads to life everlasting. We do this by example, by activity, but especially by prayer. It is when our human efforts appear frail that God works in people and circumstances. He asks us to pray for all people, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life.

"First of all, then, I urge that supplication, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." | Timothy 2:1-4

On behalf of the board,
Arthur Struyk,
Chairman

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 _____

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.