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Introduction

At the request of Richmond Food Security Society, data was gathered from known community meal providers during the Spring of 2010. The providers had already planned to meet, independent of RFSS, to share information and connect with each other, and were willing to have RFSS input at that time.

A survey was constructed to gather basic information. Additionally, the group met on three occasions, each time at a different meal provider's location. Both survey data and anecdotal evidence were used in the construction of this report. Funds were provided by RFSS to support the hosting agencies.

Karen Dar Woon, author of this report, is a free-lance personal chef.

Schedule and location of free meals throughout Richmond

Four organizations currently offer free meals to the public on an ongoing basis:

St. Albans Anglican Church, Tuesdays, 5:30 pm, except summer

Salvation Army, Thursdays, 12:30 pm

Richmond Bethel Church, Fridays, 1pm

Gilmore Park United Church, Thursdays, 5:30 pm, except December

In addition, Salvation Army offers an evening meal for Christmas dinner.

Outside of Christian-faith based organizations, there are no other known public meal programs. Richmond Family Place offers meals to participants in evening programs. Several other faith-based organizations offer free or low-cost meals to their adherents.

Contact information, Appendix A, follows at the end of this report.

Budgets

Meal programs are dependent upon private and corporate donations, community fundraising efforts, and community grants, for funding. Some of the programs are funded through their respective churches.

Each meal provider is autonomous in its funding sources and purchasing.

Average budget allocation is \$2.50-\$3 per person for food and sundries.

Purchasing patterns

Survey data indicates that supplies are most often purchased from large chain grocery stores and discount stores (i.e., Costco, Warehouse Club, Superstore). Some programs are well supported by private donations of food items. Most purchasing decisions are based on budget constraints.

The majority of providers surveyed said they use frozen meat products "often".

Survey data revealed that most community meal providers are unfamiliar with alternatives to retail purchasing for supplies. Each program makes use of supplies from the Richmond Food Bank. As well, the providers with larger capacity also take advantage of bakery donation programs (i.e., Cobs or Safeway end-of-sales-day pickups)

The survey also revealed that community meal providers generally do not purchase from sources outside of Richmond, even if the product cost is lower. This may be due to lack of information about delivery/pick up, and concerns about the cost of fuel.

In two of the programs, Richmond Bethel and Gilmore Park, the paid staff are predominantly responsible for purchasing. At Salvation Army, volunteers purchase supplies. At St. Albans, supplies are purchased by both paid staff and volunteers. Volunteers and staff pick up donations for all the programs.

A summary of the survey data, Appendix B, follows at the end of this report.

Sharing Farm

Some providers are not making optimal use of produce from the Sharing Farm.

Reasons for this include:

- Not aware that the Sharing Farm is able provide produce throughout the year;
- Vegetables are unfamiliar to volunteers and to guests;
- Not aware of how to store the produce;
- Unable to pick up from the Farm on the pick-day;
- Too much work to process fresh produce off the land;
- Not enough notice given to the meal provider of what/when produce is available.

Local, seasonal, organic foods

As most meal programs are purchasing food supplies from grocery stores and discount grocers, it seems there is no protocol for purchasing locally grown or seasonal food. Meal providers expressed concern about additional purchasing cost, or processing time, involved in using locally grown, in-season food. Some providers expressed concern that many guests' tastes do not encompass seasonally available vegetables, but tend towards basic and familiar items such as potatoes, onions, carrots, peas, broccoli. Purchase price was cited as the sole reason to not use organic produce, dairy products or meat.

Cultural diversity and food sensitivities

There appears to be very little conscious plan to provide foods which meet a variety of cultural and nutritional needs. Survey data indicates that the menus are generally of the "middle American" style of cooking; meat-based proteins, vegetables, starches, and salads. There is a large dependence on wheat and grain based calories (sandwiches, pasta, bread). Only one provider has a protocol for providing vegetarian, wheat-free, or dairy-free choices on a regular basis. Cultural diversity is not reflected in documented meal menus. Of note, some menus included the combination of meat and dairy products, which would specifically (but unintentionally) exclude members of some non-Christian faith communities.

The Community

The various Community Meal providers were unfamiliar with each others' programs, and so decided to make regular visits.

A number of observations were cited, based on attending each other's meal programs:

- A high degree of caring exists amongst community meal guests
- A large proportion of guests attend several meals during the week
- Guests travel from outside of Richmond to attend community meals
- The majority of guests at all meals have certain similarities: working for low wages or not working; single elderly women living alone; homeless or under-housed; single adults; new resident to Richmond; affected by chronic conditions and disabilities; living on fixed income and/or low income
- A number of families are present
- Many guests also make use of other support in the community: Food Bank, clothing bank, drop-in centres.

Anticipated changes

The congregation of Richmond Alliance Church is interested in starting a food-based outreach, but there are no firm details at the time of this report. The building is equipped with a commercial kitchen.

Richmond Bethel Church is considering a change from a lunch-hour program to an evening meal.

Challenges faced by community meal providers

Budget and staffing were cited by the meal providers as the greatest operational challenges. The budget for food has not increased significantly to recognize an increase in the number of guests attending free meals. In addition, the logistics involved in preparing the greater amount of food is daunting for some meal providers.

Community meals who serve a larger number of guests face a challenge of continuing to provide a safe, secure and welcoming environment. While altercations are rare, there is a concern amongst providers as to how to manage large groups.

For Gilmore Park, there is an ongoing challenge in retaining enough trained volunteers.

Recommendations to Richmond Food Security in supporting community meals

Based on the data collect from the survey, some concrete ways in which Richmond Food Security Society can support community meal programs in the City include:

- Provide contact information for local farmers who are able to offer produce in suitable quantities, and at prices comparable to supermarket pricing
- Provide funding to support periodic meetings of the various providers, up to 4 times per year, for the purpose of networking, resource sharing, solution-building, etc.
- Provide or facilitate training opportunities for providers and volunteers, i.e., first aid, food safety, product knowledge or cooking demonstrations
- Facilitate connections for (listed in this report) providers of community meals with other food-sharing program providers within Richmond
- Provide logistical support, in conjunction with Richmond Sharing Farm and Richmond Food Bank, so that providers can access produce from the Sharing Farm
- Provide access to a pool of volunteers who are interested, motivated, and possess the necessary skills, to work in the community meals programs.
- Provide information to clients who can make use of community meal programs
- Assist to set up and maintain an on-line knowledge library, including low-cost food resources, menus, recipes, etc.

APPENDIX A

**Contact Information for Richmond Community Meals Providers
June 2010**

Name	email	phone	affiliation
Laurie Baignee	lbaignee@shaw.ca	604-272-4910	Gilmore Park United
Shelby Everitt	everittshelby@hotmail.com	604-274-1271	Gilmore Park United
Rob Ogden	ogdenrob@hotmail.com	604-272-4449	Gilmore Park United
Sandy Jolly	s_jolly@telus.net	604-272-4449	Gilmore Park United
Karen Dar Woon	chef2u@telus.net	604-329-7240	Gilmore Park United
Ruth Wiens	office@richmondbethel.ca	604-274-2811	Richmond Bethel
Chad Ekren	chad@capitalconceptsgroup.com	604-220-7343	Richmond Bethel
Scott Tolhurst	stolhurst@richmondbethel.ca	604-274-2811	Richmond Bethel
John Fisher	jetravels@shaw.ca	604-277-9560	Salvation Army
Mj. Brad Smith	brad_smith@can.salvationarmy.org	604-274-2424	Salvation Army
Mj. Mary Smith	mary_smith@can.salvationarmy.org	604-274-2424	Salvation Army
Fran Bates	elf@phas.ubc.ca	604-271-5039	St. Albans Anglican
Deneanne Quamme	quamme@shaw.ca	604-271-9096	St. Albans Anglican
David Kimpton	davidkimpton@shaw.ca	604-270-2597	St. Albans Anglican
Pauline & Bob	Jonesbobandpauline@telus.net	604-273-8425	St. Albans Anglican
Rose Rourke		604-271-4168	St. Albans Anglican
Peter D'Souza	jpdsouza@shaw.ca	604-207-9565	St. Paul's Catholic
Janet Sutherland	neil.sutherland@ubc.ca		St. Albans Anglican
Janis Lambert	janice@richmondfamilyplace.ca		Richmond Family Place
Kamal Ghamal	kamal@richmondbaptist.com	778-235-3285	Richmond Baptist Church
Arzeena Hamir	arzeenahamir@shaw.ca	604-727-9728	Richmond Food Security Society

APPENDIX B
Summary of Survey Data

Provider Program Name	Day/Time	# of guests	Budget \$ per meal	Paid staff hrs/week	Volunteers # of/meal	Suppliers	Influences to meal planning	Influences to supplier choice
Richmond Bethel Church Free Community Meal #5 Rd & Williams Rd.	Fri 12:30 PM	30-50	\$80-100	3	6	save-on foods costco foodbank	ease of preparation time for preparation	easy to get to
	Typical/recent menus meat, potatoes, rice, salad, bun, dessert							
The Salvation Army Community Lunch Gilbert Rd & Blundell Rd.	Thur 12:30 PM	60-80	\$150	0	5	grocery stores foodbank sharing program with other SAs	large donations of meat	least expensive
	Typical/recent menus Stew, mashed potatoes, coleslaw, bun, dessert Chili Dog, salad, dessert Macaroni/Beef casserole, mixed vegetables, salad, bun, dessert Ham, rice, vegetables, salad, bun, dessert							
St. Albans Anglican Community Meal St. Albans Rd & Granville Ave.	Tues 5:30	150	\$250	5	20-30	costco foodbank grocery stores private donations	available materials, including donations variety number of helpers available	easy for volunteers to get to price
	Typical/recent menus Sweet & Sour Meatballs, steamed rice & peas, veg chop cuey, veg egg rolls, hot chocolate, peanut butter cookies Salmon or tuna patties, lemon mustard sauce, baked cabbage, coiled carrots & peas, buns, mulled fruit juice, fudge brownies Meatloaf w/ tomato sauce, mashed potatoes, mixed veg (peppers, onion, tomato), buns, hot lemon tea, peach cobbler w/ whipped cream Turkey pot pie, parsley potatoes, cabbage & noodle salad, buns, hot chocolate, rice pudding Spaghetti w/ vegetable sauce, meatballs, caesar salad, garlic toast, mulled fruit juice							
Gilmore Park United Church Community Meal #1 Rd. & Blundell Rd.	Thur 5:30 PM	120-135	\$325	8	9	food service suppl costco sharing farm foodbank	number of volunteers variety available materials, including items on sale	delivery price
	Typical/recent menus Roast chicken, mashed potatoes, mexicali corn, tossed salad, apple-pear crumble, grapes Roast pork, scalloped potatoes, braised greens (chard, kale, bok choy), tossed salad, fruit salad Savoury bread pudding, turkey sausage, mixed veg, tossed salad, apple cake, lentil & rice soup Salsa chicken, brown rice, veg medley, coleslaw, fruited jello Beef meatloaf, gravy, mashed potatoes, peas & carrots, tossed salad, chocolate brownies							

APPENDIX C
Resources for Community Meals Providers

Purchasing Food and Other Services

QUEST FOOD EXCHANGE

Based in Vancouver, BC, Quest Outreach serves to “rescue”, or redirect, foods which, while completely edible, are headed to the waste stream due to “non-conformance” to market standards. This includes perishable goods with a “best before date” which is coming near, canned foods in broken or incomplete shipping boxes, produce, fish from unclaimed inventory in storage facilities. The Food Exchange is operated by the Quest Outreach Society, a registered not-for-profit organization.

A variety of staple and dry goods are available in the low-cost grocery stores, and through the warehouse. At times, frozen meats, poultry and fish are available, as well as produce.

Agencies are required to register in order to purchase from Quest. Delivery is available. Agencies are also able to refer clients to shop in the low cost grocery.

<http://www.questoutreach.org/>

604-602-0186

SUNOPTA

Part of the SunOpta grocery group, providing organic and conventional produce and grocery items. On Saturdays, SunOpta sometimes opens the warehouse dock to the public. Organic produce from the previous week is available for purchase at a discount.

12757 Vulcan Way, Richmond

604-276-2411

FOOD SERVICE SUPPLIERS

Some distributors will deal directly with agencies, and will deliver with a minimum order. It may be possible to partner with other meal programs to share a delivery, and therefore lower some costs. Or, depending upon your storage capacity, consider ordering items which can be used in subsequent meals.

JK Poultry

Located in east Vancouver. Will deliver to Richmond, if orders are over \$100; next day delivery available.

Provides conventional and non-medicated chicken, turkey and other poultry products. Fresh, frozen, whole, cut up and cut-to-order are available.

Must set up account before ordering. Accept cash, cheque, Mastercard or VISA.

Deliveries can be COD.

Open Monday-Friday only.

Sales rep Jerry Dawson

771 East Cordova Street, Vancouver, BC V6A 1M@

604-253-8292

Yen Bros Distributing

Located in east Vancouver. Will deliver to Richmond, minimum \$250. Pick up available for smaller orders. Set up an account in advance (can be done by phone and fax).

Provides conventional produce, including specialty mushrooms, imported and local fruits, and oriental vegetables; fresh and frozen meat products; food-service sized packages and cans of grocery product. Pre-cut salads, vegetables and fruits are prepared the day before shipping.

Open 7 days a week, except holidays.

1988 Vernon Drive (near Clark Dr. & 1st Ave), Vancouver, BC V6A 3Y6

604-255-6522

Pro-Organics Distributing

Located in Burnaby. Will deliver to Richmond, minimum \$200 order. Pick up available for smaller orders. Set up an account in advance, by phone and fax.

Provides organic produce, dairy and grocery products.

Open Monday-Thursday 8-3:30; Friday 8-1:30

Sales rep: Jacquie Breadmore

4535 Still Creek Avenue, Burnaby, BC V5C 5W1

604-253-6549

Central Foods Co. Ltd.

Located in Richmond, near No. 5 Road & Steveston Hwy.

\$50 minimum order for delivery. Deliveries available Mon.-Sat. Orders can also be picked up Mon.-Sat. Set up an account in advance, by phone.

Provides fresh produce and dry goods.

12160 Horseshoe Way, Richmond, BC V6A 4V5

Fax 604-271-8380 • 604-271-9797

RETAIL

Many retail outlets will give a discount on bulk purchase IF ASKED.

Save On Foods bakery can offer 10%. Ask the manager. Sometimes the meat department will give a discount when asked as well. Phone ahead.

Beefway Meats, at Kingsway and Slocan in Vancouver, has very reasonable prices. They will deliver, for a fee. Phone 604-438-1190

WAREHOUSE CLUBS

Some items will be less expensive to purchase at warehouse club outlets, such as Costco and Great Canadian Wholesale Club. Pricing can vary significantly from item to item, so best to check before making a large purchase.

Costco. Most locations will answer phone inquiries regarding pricing and availability of fresh products such as meat or bakery. It is possible to negotiate a discount on some meat products if full case-lots are purchased. Open at 10 am most days, 9:30 on Saturday.

ACCEPTS CASH, DEBIT AND AMERICAN EXPRESS. MEMBERSHIP REQUIRED

Costco Wholesale Richmond

9151 Bridgeport Road
604-270-3647

Costco Wholesale Downtown

Underground parking, \$2
605 Expo Boulevard, Vancouver
604-622-5050

Costco Wholesale Willingdon

4500 Still Creek Dr., Burnaby
604-296-5100

Real Canadian Wholesale Club is located in Burnaby, near Royal Oak Ave. & Kingsway. A subsidiary of Loblaw, they stock a good selection of food-service-sized grocery items, including large tins of vegetables and fruits, and bulk dry goods (cake mixes, flour, sugar, etc). The house brands include the yellow "No Name" label, as well as Sunspun and President's Choice. GCWC offers mailing-list service, through which promotions and coupons are sent via postal mail. Open at 7am weekdays, 8 am weekends

NO CREDIT CARDS. MEMBERSHIP NOT REQUIRED.

Real Canadian Wholesale Club

5355 Kingsway, Burnaby, BC
604-431-0765

Free Food Sources *updated July 2010*

Richmond Fruit Tree Sharing Project Society

The RFTSP originated as a group of volunteers picking excess fruit from neighbours' yards, and sharing via the Richmond Food Bank.

Now, the Society operates the Sharing Farm at Terra Nova Rural Park, where over 17,000 lbs of vegetables and fruit were grown in 2009. The Society also operates a newly planted fruit orchard at the south end of Gilbert Road. The harvest is distributed to various community meal programs in Richmond, children's programs and the Richmond Food Bank.

Operations of the Farms are funded by corporate, community, and private donations. University students are hired each summer through a federal government student works grant. A large part of the work is done by individual volunteers as well as corporate and organizational groups. Farm operations form the practicum portion of the program of Kwantlen University Farm School.

<http://www.richmondfruittree.com/>

Arzeena Hamir, 604-727-9728 (no voice mail), is a board member, and coordinates distribution.

Richmond Food Bank

Through two depots in the City of Richmond, The Richmond Food Bank distributes staple goods to families and individuals in need. Recipients provide proof of residency in order to receive free groceries. A program exists to provide dairy products to families and pregnant women. The Food Bank provides other programs which include books, dental care items, nutrition workshops and planting workshops.

Agencies providing free meals are able to receive supplies from the Food Bank. Delivery is sometimes available. The Food Bank occasionally stores produce being distributed from the Sharing Farm, so that community meals which operate on non-harvest days can also take advantage of the free produce.

<http://www.richmondFoodbank.org>

604-271-5609

Richmond Food Security Society

Various fruits, herbs and vegetables are being preserved at a series of workshops facilitated by RFSS. These jams, pickles, pestos and other "home preserves", prepared in the teaching kitchen of Garratt Wellness Centre and stored at Terra Nova Sharing Farm, are available to community meals providers via the Food Bank.

During the fruit harvest season, RFSS picks excess fruit from local residences, to be distributed through the Food Bank. Community meal providers have access to this harvest.

<http://richmondfoodsecurity.org/>

Arzeena Hamir, 604-727-9728; arzeenahamir@shaw.ca

Local Food Resources

Many farmers in Richmond are able to provide good pricing and wonderful, locally grown product. These farmers are known to be able to assemble orders in quantities appropriate for community meals.

JS Nature Farms
11500 McKenzie Road (at Steveston Hwy)
604-273-6922

WA Farms
17771 Westminster Hwy
604-278-5667

Cherry Lane Farm
2411 No. 4 Road (enter from Beckwith Road, behind Costco)
778-833-3379

Sanduz Estate Wines
12791 Blundell Rd.
604-214-0444

more current information is available from the Richmond Food Guide publication, from <http://richmondfoodsecurity.org/Documents>