

Celebrating 35 years

First memories of Winnipeg Harvest



WINNIPEG
HARVEST

Winnipeg Harvest is celebrating its 35th anniversary, so we got in touch with David Northcott, the organization's longest-serving executive director (1984-2017) to get some 'campfire tales' and significant events from his 30 years at the helm.

David has vivid memories of many helping hands and motivations from those times.

Harvesting advice

After listing the names of significant founders and contributors, David's first story was not about food or money:

"I went to Alan Howison, the executive director of the Winnipeg Foundation. I wasn't there for money, but to say, 'Alan, your foundation is very intuitive; has good data and information. What is your advice to a new

non-profit opening for the first time?'

"Alan's advice was: 'Don't ever become dependent on government money.'"

Howison's rationale was that government money comes with directives as to where it goes and how it gets there. Early on, money is hard to resist, but it would have disrupted the 'macro-managed, inspired-by-shared-values, everybody pitches in' style of operation envisioned to feed a community of hungry Manitobans.

Winnipeg Harvest took Alan's advice to heart.

"We needed start-up funding, so one-third was raised from community donors and two-thirds came with a declining balance from the governments of Manitoba and Canada," David recalls. "The declining balance arrangement forced us to be operating independent of government money after three years. And we did it."

Since that day, even in a pandemic, Harvest is the largest, most efficient food collection and distribution entity in the province. It is also the largest distribution network in Canada — supplying 300 food banks and agencies across Manitoba — without a cent of direct operational funding from government.



Supplied photo

David Northcott, at centre, was the longest-serving executive director of Winnipeg Harvest.



Harvest is the only food distribution network of its size in Canada that has never received a cent of direct operational funding from government.

Owning it

It may sound a little 'hippy-ish,' but Harvest truly was a product of its time.

"The key conversation isn't 'Let's do things for people.' It's 'Let's do things with people,' David explains.

"At the beginning, we had little money, and the volunteers were our key, key players. Not just volunteers to volunteer, but people who were clients of the early food bank. It wasn't them just 'picking up my hamper.' It's, 'I'm picking up my hamper and I'm going to help make the next one. It's not just about hunger of a body. It's hunger of soul, you know? We've fostered that in all our relationships since day one.'"

It's well known that when a person is dealing with their own vulnerability, the opportunity to help others can be a powerful factor in the process, breaking negative thought patterns and replacing them with more confident ones. The depth of benefits that flow from 'working with' came through again and again.

Harvest volunteers gained work experi-

ence pitching in, and they gained additional, transferrable skills by participating in Certified Food Handler training programs. Many who completed the courses have gone onto careers in the food and hospitality industry, including owning and running their own restaurants.

Full-circle community

For 35 years, Harvest clients have become volunteers who became a community helping to provide food and caring to others in their community. The last part of the Harvest equation — those who give — is built on the same foundation. The ultimate reward is not the giving. It's the feeling of community you get from helping others.

Most people never see a Harvest-supported family at the table when a food hamper is opened. If they did, they would bring a Tin for the Bin every time. Most people have never been rewarded by seeing how a kid with little access to food at home looks when they open a school meal or snack. That payoff is anonymous, and that is the strength of the Harvest community. We do it for others, and with others. And that's just the way that David Northcott, founder Lee Newton and others who launched Harvest into our community 35 years ago, envisioned it.

Give \$35

Help celebrate 35 years of feeding the most vulnerable in our community. Your gift of just \$35 per month will feed a struggling family this year. For more information, see WinnipegHarvest.org/donate or call 204-982-3581 now.

For more information on Winnipeg Harvest and its programs, visit winnipeg Harvest.org

Chip in to Prevent Hunger

Wednesday, August 12, 2020 * St. Boniface Golf Club

Registration 11:00 AM * Shotgun Start: 12:00 PM

Join us and enjoy a day of golf, food, fun and prizes – while greatly benefiting vulnerable Manitobans who rely on Harvest for food. Your support will help us feed hard-working families, children and adults, who are struggling through our provincial COVID-19 re-opening and economic recovery period.



Individual Registration: \$195 / per Golfer

*A partial Tax Receipt will be issued

Corporate Sponsorship
Opportunities Available

Social distancing in effect. On course dining only.

For more info and to register, please visit:

WinnipegHarvest.org/Events