

# Living Green

## *The Good Food Box* *By Heather Kendall*

These days many people want to buy fruit and vegetables locally. They cite two reasons—to support the local economy and to eat fresh produce. The Good Food Box in Simcoe County helps families fulfill those goals.

The Good Food Box, organized in 1994 under the auspices of FoodShare in Toronto, is a non-profit organization run by local volunteers. Lori Nikkel from FoodShare and Sharon Wozniak, a health promoter, from the Barrie Community Health Centre, spearheaded the movement in Innisfil one year ago. Presently The Good Food Box may be found in Simcoe County at Collingwood, Midland, Alliston, Bradford, Innisfil, and Barrie.

Since this is a non-profit organization, most of the advertising is done by word-of-mouth. Several retail outlets in Innisfil post signs in their windows. First-time customers may purchase a bag at these stores—cash only. There are two sizes of bags; a large one costs \$15.00 while a small one is \$10.00. All orders must be received by the fifth of every month. Customers pick up their orders the third Thursday of the month at the Lions Hall. Many pay cash for the next month's order while they are there.

Knowing how many orders he must fill, a wholesaler from Stayner travels to the Toronto Food Terminal to buy fresh fruit and vegetables. He buys from Simcoe County farmers first. If necessary, he branches out to the rest of Ontario. Depending on the time of year and what is available, he may purchase produce from out of the country.

Oranges are a good example of this. Potatoes, onions, and carrots are staples available year-round from Bradford farmers. Customers cannot choose what to buy. The wholesaler decides based on availability and cost.

Early in the morning on the third Thursday of the month, volunteers meet at the Lions Hall to pack the food in Body Shop bags, which conform to health regulations. Each bag also contains a newsletter or a recipe from a dietician. Later in the day, customers arrive to pick up their bags and pay cash for the next month's order. If someone forgets to pick up his or her order, a volunteer will give the bag to a Lions Hall member to distribute to a needy family. The volunteers from the Good Food Box never deliver.

The Good Food Box encourages ordinary families to eat healthy at less cost than buying produce at the grocery store. Because of this, the wholesaler knows he must buy high quality goods at the best price possible. Although not primarily a charity, some people deliberately buy bags of food for the Lions to give to needy families. If you are interested in starting a similar program in your area, contact FoodShare in Toronto to ask for advice. More details at [www.foodshare.net](http://www.foodshare.net) or 416-363-6441 .