



FoodShare Toronto and its work in Urban Agriculture Background

About FoodShare Toronto

FoodShare (www.foodshare.net) is a Toronto non-profit community organization whose vision is Good Healthy Food for All.

Founded in 1985 to address hunger in our communities, FoodShare takes a unique multi-faceted and long-term approach to hunger and food issues. We work to empower individuals, families and communities through food-based initiatives, while at the same time advocating for the broader public policies needed to ensure that everyone has adequate access to sustainably produced, good healthy food. Working "from field to table," we focus on the entire system that puts food on our tables: from the growing, processing and distribution of food to its purchasing, cooking and consumption.

FoodShare Toronto is Canada's largest community food security organization, recognized as an important innovator of effective programs that have been reproduced all across Canada. We facilitate empowerment and community development from the ground up, cultivating awareness, building citizenship and enhancing individual and community participation, all the while striving to improve access to good healthy food.

Since its earliest years, FoodShare has recognized that partnerships and advocacy make us stronger and amplify the effects of our work. We pioneer by illustrating what is possible, creating empowering tools and replicable, scalable solution models (our programs) to combat universal food problems, then we mentor communities in adapting and growing these solutions. We apply our program models to the direct needs of low-income communities in Toronto, implementing these solutions universally to remove stigma. FoodShare's community development partnership model means that our work is leveraged exponentially, garnering effects that reach far beyond Toronto and even Canada.

Our programs, which reach over 145,000 children and adults per month in Toronto, include Student Nutrition, Field to Table Schools, the Good Food Café, Focus on Food youth internships, the Good Food Box, Good Food Markets, Fresh Produce for Schools and Community Groups, Baby and Toddler Nutrition, Community Kitchens, Field to Table Catering, the FoodLink Hotline, Power Soups, Community Gardening, Composting, Beekeeping and Urban Agriculture.

About FoodShare's work in Urban Agriculture

FoodShare is Toronto's City-wide urban agriculture innovator.

FoodShare operates a successful and efficient 24-cell mid-size **Composting** operation at our education centre (90 Croatia Street) which in 2009 produced 36,400 pounds of the city's best compost by processing food waste from our kitchen and produce programs.

FoodShare's works in **Community Gardening** and **Urban Agriculture** everywhere from city parks to abandoned lots to schoolyards and institutional spaces, where gardeners grow food for their families, beautify their neighbourhoods and get in touch with nature's cycles. FoodShare's Community Food Animators work with neighbourhood leaders supporting communities in meeting their own food needs and creating healthy futures through development work that reduces isolation, and builds communities.

FoodShare partners with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) to run **The Sunshine Garden**, Toronto's first market garden at the CAMH Queen Street site. In 2010 FoodShare worked with 30 CAMH clients who gardened 3 times per week to harvest 310 pounds of food and composted 1,000 pounds of plant and food material.

FoodShare partners with Bendale Technical Institute to run the **Bendale Market Garden**, Toronto's first school market garden.

FoodShare works in partnership with the **Toronto Beekeepers Cooperative** to support beehives that produce honey in the City. All use appropriate technology methods and recycled materials to produce certified organic food and seedlings for sale. This program also allows us to teach others about sustainable food growing methods.

FoodShare led the **Toronto Community Housing** Strategic Opportunities Consultation process in 2010 involving over 200 individuals – both residents and staff – and provided to TCHC a final report, plus a road map, tool kit and training package for the creation of successful community gardens in every in Toronto Community Housing building.

In 2010, we built a beautiful new **off-the-grid greenhouse** at 90 Croatia Street, expanded our productive on-site vegetable gardens and added edible landscaping to prove that growing food is beautiful.

The Bendale Market Garden: Canada's First School-based Market Garden

In 2010 FoodShare combined our expertise in urban agriculture with our connections and our work in schools to help facilitate the Bendale Market Garden, Canada's first school-based market garden at Bendale Business and Technical Institute in Scarborough. At Bendale, students are involved in every step of the process of bringing food from field to table: they plant, grow, and harvest the food on what was once the front and back lawns of the school, they cook the fruits and vegetables in culinary arts classes, they serve this food to their peers in the cafeteria, and they sell any remaining produce at a Market for the local community. Bendale inspired Sarah Elton to say "I have seen the future of food" after her recent visit, which she profiled on CBC radio's Here and Now: http://www.foodshare.net/media_archive147.htm. The Toronto Star has also profiled the project in a series of articles you can access here: http://www.foodshare.net/media_archive144.htm. FoodShare believes strongly that what Bendale has done is a model that can and should be replicated across the city and across Canada: that schools and institutions can turn vast expanses of lawn into urban fields of food, at the same time educating new generations to make healthy choices.

Some Statistics from Bendale Market Garden in 2010:

1,877 lbs of produce was grown, involving 510 students and also 177 community members, and it took 3,107 hours of work to grow all that food. Teachers taught 40 curriculum lessons attached to the garden, and students in programs throughout the school such as carpentry, plumbing, culinary arts and horticultural all worked hands-on in building and growing this garden.

How Bendale Fits in: FoodShare's Multi-faceted Work in Schools

FoodShare Toronto created the model for student nutrition programs in the city of Toronto, which works hand-in-hand with our Field to Table Schools program, the educational complement that returns food education to our schools through curriculum connections from

Junior Kindergarten through Grade 12 to cultivate Food Literacy. Our Fresh Produce Program for Schools provides direct access to healthy produce. We have also had great success with a healthy cafeteria model, which we call “The Good Food Café”, and which Jennifer Bain in the Toronto Star has called “the future of school lunches.” And in 2010 we brought together our expertise in urban agriculture and our work in schools to help facilitate Canada’s first school market garden at Bendale Business and Technical Institute in Toronto.

At FoodShare, we’re cooking up a Recipe for Change: reminding children what food is and where it comes from, teaching that healthy food also tastes good, and helping them to choose it for themselves. After many years of mapping curriculum connections to food and creating innovative workshops, tools and resources for teachers and students in our Field to Table Schools program, FoodShare Toronto is taking this work to a new level, leading the charge to embed food education in the Ontario curriculum and make Food Literacy a requirement of graduation for our students.

For more information, fact checking, additional interviews, or for photos from our extensive galleries, please contact:

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