

Nutritious Food Basket

Yvonne Hutton, CLW, Atikokan

Every year the Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) surveys partnering grocery stores across the region to determine the real cost of buying healthy food for families. Twenty-two grocery stores were surveyed in May, 2011 with the results released in December, 2011. Sixty-seven basic foods were priced using a national food costing tool. The survey revealed that to purchase healthy foods for a family of four living in the Kenora-Rainy River Districts in 2011 there was a monthly cost of \$918.48.

The survey has demonstrated yearly the difficulty people with limited incomes face in purchasing foods that constitute a healthy diet. The cost of living – including the cost of basic healthy foods like fruits and vegetables – continues to rise at a steady pace while the income rates of social assistance

programs such as Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program have had minimal increases since 1998.

The right to foods that promote an active, healthy life should be the right of every Canadian citizen. The Northwestern Health Unit uses the information gathered through the Nutritious Food Basket survey to advocate for improved social supports and to make healthy foods affordable to all.

More information can be found on the Northwestern Health Unit's webpage at www.nwhu.on.ca. The Northwestern Health Unit has a Healthy Food Box Program running in each of our communities.

In Atikokan, contact Eva Shields at the NWHU at 597-6871, orders have to be placed the first

Thursday of the month and pick-up is the third Thursday. Individual boxes are \$15 and a regular box is \$25.

In Fort Frances, it is hosted at the Sunset Country Métis Hall (426 Victoria Avenue). Pre-pay your order on the first Wednesday of every month and pick up on the third Wednesday of the month between 11 and 4:30pm. Cost is \$20.

In Kenora, drop off your order and payment before the second Thursday of the month at the Kenora Public Library, Minto Child and Family Resource Centre or Waaseegiizhig Nanaandawe'iyegamig. Pick up on the fourth Thursday of the month at Jubilee Church. Large boxes are \$25, small are \$15; there is a \$10 deposit of the large boxes. Call 468-3147 for more information.

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Day of Pink

Tammy Noble, CLW, Fort Frances

Have you ever seen a friend hurt because of discrimination? Have you been hurt yourself? Discrimination comes in many forms, including racism, sexism, ageism, and homophobia, just to name a few.

April 11th marks the International Day of Pink. It is a day where communities across the country and around the world unite in celebration of diversity and raise awareness to stop all forms of bullying.

The International Day of Pink was started in Nova Scotia when 2 high school students saw a gay student, who happened to be wearing a pink shirt, being bullied. The 2 students intervened, but wanted to do more. A few days later they got everyone at school to arrive wearing pink, standing in solidarity. The result was bullying stopped at that school.

The message is clear: anyone can bully, anyone can be victimized by bullying, but together we can stop it.

Day of Pink is more than just a symbol of a shared belief in celebrating diversity – it's a commitment to being open minded, accepting differences and learning to respect each other.

On Wednesday, April 11, 2012, Northwest Community Legal Clinic board and staff will wear pink to remember that positive actions make a difference. And that the change starts with each one of us. We invite you to participate too.

Volunteer Income Tax Program

Liz Polischuk, Support Staff, Kenora

Can't complete your own income tax and benefit return?
Can't afford to have it done?

The CVITP (Community Volunteer Income Tax Program) may be able to help you! If you are of low income and you have a simple, non-complex tax situation, gather all your tax slips and last year's Notice of Assessment and bring it to the drop off spot in your community.

The CVITP will not do returns for: deceased persons; those who have filed for bankruptcy; self-employed; those who report

capital gains or losses; or those with employment expenses or business or rental income and expenses.

The locations below are the drop off and pick up locations ONLY, returns are completed by trained volunteers, not staff members.

Atikokan - Atikokan Adult Learning Centre - 25 Rawn Road Centre, Monday to Thursday from 9am – 12noon and 1-3pm; phone 597-1242.

Fort Frances – Volunteer Bureau – 140 Fourth St W (CN Building) – Monday to Thursday from 9am – 1pm; phone 274-9555.

Kenora – Women's Place Kenora – 530 Third St. N. Monday to Thursday from 12:00noon to 4:00p.m. phone 468-9095.

Kenora – Low income **SENIORS** – New Horizon's Senior Centre in the Kenora Recreation Centre – Monday to Friday from 9am – 4pm, phone 468-5947.

Our Pamphlet Stands

All three offices of the Northwest Community Legal Clinic carry a large supply of pamphlets relating to many areas of law. We invite you to call or stop into your local office to view the selection.

Income Tax Reminder....

For benefits like the Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB), the Ontario Child Benefit (OCB), and the GST/HST Credit, **YOU MUST FILE YOUR INCOME TAX RETURN EACH & EVERY YEAR.** File your 2011 Income Tax Return no later than April 30, 2012 to make sure you continue to receive your benefits.

Federal Tax Benefits and Credits

Fay Clark, CLW, Kenora

Each year Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) reviews and makes changes to benefits paid by the federal government. 2012 brings an overall increase of 2.8% on federally paid tax benefits and credits.

A new benefit called the Family Caregiver Amount is promised to be implemented in time for 2012 income tax returns. It

will provide those caring for disabled dependants an additional non-refundable tax credit of \$2,000 for each of the following:

- spouse or common-law partner amount for an eligible dependent
- amount for children under age 18 at the end of the year
- amount for infirm dependants age 18 or older; and
- caregiver amount.

2012 Employment Insurance Benefits' maximum insurable earnings (MIE) will increase from \$44,200 to \$45,900. The maximum an individual can receive from EI will also increase to \$485 per week.

To receive any federal benefits or credits, you must file your yearly income tax return.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

Carol Grosset, Office Manager, Kenora
Employers must adapt AODA policies and train staff by January 1, 2012

The customer service standards of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* comes into effect for private sector employers on January 1, 2012. The standard applies to every organization that has one or more employees and provides goods or

services either directly or indirectly to the public or other organizations. The goal is to make Ontario fully accessible to all people with disabilities by 2025 by targeting four core principles of the legislation: integration, independence, equal opportunity and dignity.

Employers must ensure that existing policies, practises and procedures comply with those principles and

provide training to staff. Further information may be obtained through the Ministry of Community and Social Services website at: <http://www.mcscs.gov.on.ca/en/mcscs/publications/accessibility/aoda2005.aspx>

Bill C-3: Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act

Sallie Hunt, Staff Lawyer, Kenora

Bill C-3, the **Supporting Vulnerable Seniors and Strengthening Canada's Economy Act**, has received Royal Assent as S.C. 2011, c. 15. This Act implements certain measures proposed in the 2011 federal budget. Of particular interest from the legislative summary:

- Part 1 amends the **Income Tax Act** and related legislation to allow RDSP (Registered Disability Support Plan) beneficiaries with shortened life expectancies to withdraw more of their plan savings subject to specified limits and certain conditions, and to ensure that individuals have the legal authority in all circumstances to appeal a

determination concerning their eligibility for the disability tax credit.

- Part 3 amends the **Old Age Security Act** to allow an amount to be added to the amount of benefits payable to certain low-income beneficiaries (enhanced GIS).

Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP)

Nan Normand, CLW, Kenora

The Low Income Energy Assistance Program offers emergency financial assistance for eligible low-income customers. Applicants must be low-income and facing disconnection of service due to arrears. Each energy provider offers its own version of the program. For customers of Hydro One within our area, the program is

administered through Simcoe United Way. The Northwest Community Legal Clinic is an Intake Agency for this project. Ontario Works administers the program for Kenora Hydro.

The annual grant is for a maximum of \$500. Eligibility is based on income, assets and a service sustainability plan. The annual program funding is usually

depleted by mid-year so applicants are cautioned not to rely on funding availability.

For further information call 1-855-ITS-LEAP (1-855-487-5327).



Does your group require accessible meeting space in Fort Frances or Kenora during regular office hours? Please contact our office to discuss.



**Supporting individuals and our community
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Office Closures

Friday, April 6th - Good Friday
Monday, April 9th - Easter Monday
Monday, May 21st - Victoria Day

Sub-offices

Red Lake - April 4, May 2, June 6
Ear Falls - April 5, May 3, June 7

ANFC's Food Bank

This issue, we feature the Atikokan Native Friendship Centre's (ANFC) Ashandawin Food Bank. Thanks to Jacqueline Boileau, ANFC Wasa-Nabin Youth Worker for contributing the following article..

The Atikokan Native Friendship Centre (ANFC) opened the Ashandawin Food Bank in the late 1980s in response to a need from the community for emergency food access. Thirty years later, the ANFC food bank now purchases over \$9,000 worth of perishable food items every year, and it serves an average of 55 adults and 24 children every month.

ANFC employees operate the food bank as an added service, taking weekly turns picking up community donations, stocking shelves in the food room and filling and shopping for food bank requests.

Food bank clients can access a 3-day emergency supply of food per household, once per month. Based on availability of donated items, clients receive non-perishable food such as fruit juice, peanut butter, cereal,

oatmeal or pancake mix and syrup for breakfast, boxed macaroni & cheese, and canned soups, beans, pasta or meat for lunch, as well as canned vegetables and fruit, pasta, pasta sauce, rice etc. for supper.

In addition to these staple foods – and, again, based on availability – clients also receive items such as coffee, cake mixes, pudding, granola bars, personal toiletries, cleaning products, diapers etc. Each food bank handed out also includes these non-perishable items (quantities based on family size): 2-4 loaves of bread, fresh fruit, a 5 lb. bag of potatoes, two packages of meat (usually hamburger and chicken), 2-4 litres of milk, margarine and eggs. ANFC employees shop for these items then give the client the card for pick-up at the grocery store.

Clients are responsible for calling in their food bank requests before 2 pm Mon-Fri, holidays excepted, and for picking up and transporting their filled orders. Specific food requests can be considered but are not guaranteed, since we are limited by what food items are on hand.

In cases of extreme emergency, clients can receive a small quantity of non-perishable food items to tide them over until they are eligible for a full food bank. Funding and supplies for the food bank come strictly through personal donations of food items and food collection boxes through the town, access to non-perishable food from the Regional Food Distribution Association in Thunder Bay, and through tax-deductible private and corporate donations, which can be made at the ANFC or Atikokan Foodland. Community volunteers operate an annual Christmas food drive and the food bank operates for many months on the large influx of food at that time. Unfortunately, those stores are largely depleted by summertime, and food banks requests are limited accordingly.

For questions or further information, please contact the Atikokan Native Friendship Centre at (807) 597-1213.



Consider the environment...

Please recycle this newsletter!