

Health Unit Media Release

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Food program calendars help those in need find food

The Smiths Falls FOCUS Coalition is partnering with the Leeds, Grenville, and Lanark District Health Unit to help raise awareness of food programs in Smiths Falls and Perth.

FOCUS and the Health Unit are working together to keep the listing of food programs up to date and make the information accessible by members of the community. The listing of food programs will be updated quarterly and posted in various locations around Smiths Falls and Perth, including in laundromats, libraries, youth centres, churches, town halls, and grocery stores, as well as health care facilities.

“People with alcohol and drug problems are at greater risk of not having enough food to eat,” says Dianne Oickle, Registered Dietitian with the Leeds, Grenville, and Lanark District Health Unit. “Therefore, struggling with substance abuse means being more vulnerable to poor nutrient intake and increased risk of illness. Those who visit a food program have an opportunity to be better nourished and strengthen their body.”

Although people struggling with substance use may visit a food bank, there are often long stretches of time between visits to an emergency food service where they have nothing to eat. There are a number of food programs in the community that can help with day-to-day hunger, and provide a place where people can come together. **The food programs are open to everyone, and are not specific to people struggling with substance abuse.** It is important to remember, also, that people from all walks of life and socio-economic groups can be at risk of drug and alcohol related problems.

There may also be an opportunity to make people more aware of services in the community that can help both with hunger and substance abuse. “Community based food programs provide a supportive environment to reach at-risk individuals with health messages,” says Lucia Taggart, Coordinator of the Smiths Falls FOCUS Coalition. “When it comes to overcoming substance abuse, people rely on each other to influence their decision to be healthy. Strong peer support plays a big role.”

For more information on specific programs available, contact the Smiths Falls FOCUS Coalition at 613-283-2740, or visit their website at www.healthunit.org/focus.

-30-

A photo and caption are available by contacting Susan Healey, Communications Co-ordinator, Susan.Healey@healthunit.org or call 613-345-5685 or 1-800-660-5853.

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