

## **General Manager's Report - Annual Member's Meeting – April 10, 2021**

Despite two recent break-ins, a lightning strike last summer and a second long-term closing due to COVID-19 in less than a year, the SWO Gleaners continues to provide dehydrated vegetable soup mix and apple snacks for distribution both locally, nationally and internationally.

COVID – 19 has been a large factor in our operations over the past 13 months or so. During this time, the SWO Gleaners has been closed for 24 of those weeks due to the virus. That is about 40% of the last year that our doors have been closed without any production. When we were able to be open, the operation has run at about 60% due to increased safety protocols including shorter shifts, and restricting the number of people per shift to ensure social distancing. The pandemic has also affected the quality of produce that has come in over the past year. As the food bank systems in both Canada and USA have increased demand for fresh product, the availability has varied. Still during this time, there is good produce available and we are grateful for our generous donors.

The past couple years have seen a change in staff as Administrator Michelle McCormick and Production Manager Todd Stahl moved on to other jobs. We wish them well in their endeavors and thank them for their years of service. Two years ago Dilan Ricci-Adams joined our staff as Production Assistant. Dilan was known to us through a young adult work program and was hired when this position came available. Clarence Terpstra joined our staff in September 2020 as our new Production Manager. Clarence brings years of grower experience in the agricultural sector. Currently the administration duties fall under my role as General Manager.

Shipments of our dehydrated vegetable mix and apple snacks have been sent internationally through distribution partners such as Canadian Food for Children, Loads of Love, Ports of Hope and World Vision amongst others. We have worked with the Unemployed Help Centre, St. Michael's Food Bank, Kingsville Food Bank, and Salvation Army to distribute our product locally. These partnerships allow us to concentrate on production while we leave the distribution in the hands of caring organizations.

The number of servings distributed in 2019 was 2.9 million and in 2020 was 2.8 million. These totals are down from our highest yearly amount of 3.7 million. Increasing production is our goal as demand for our product continues to rise. The last few years have presented many challenges to our operation, but we continue to thrive. COVID-19 remains a major challenge as we strive to do our work and keep everyone safe. We look forward to a time when we can get back to full production.

Here at SWO Gleaners we recognize volunteers as the driving force behind our organization. Before the pandemic, we were at record daily attendances. Regular requests from church and other community organizations offered groups to volunteer. It was a very exciting place. COVID has slowed us down, but I am confident that with our base of dedicated volunteers, the operation will remain strong. Over 600 individuals volunteered at least once over the past couple years, with some coming weekly and even daily.

SWO Gleaners also thanks the donors who keep the bills paid and the facility going. We are grateful for the donations made despite the pandemic, but miss being able to thank donors in person and celebrate them at our regular fundraising events. We have committed Corporate Sponsors who form a strong base of support for us. Many community groups, churches and individual donors show their support by giving when they can. I have had the pleasure of working with many of these supporters and it is amazing the kind of community support we have behind us. All of you are valued and appreciated so much!

As General Manager, I am here to provide information and to discuss the operations of the SWO Gleaners. If you ever have any questions, concerns or comments I am always available to discuss.

Thank you to all our staff, board, donors and volunteers for another successful two years at the SWO Gleaners. Together we continue our mission of feeding hungry people.

Joel Epp  
General Manager

From Loads of Love Ukraine's outreach to castaways ...



Dear Canadian Friends,  
*The institution for men with disabilities (called Brown Coal) has been blessed by your soup from Canada. This institution houses over 300 men who were deemed unfit to live in our city. We have rescued several men from this place and given them a new life in society. But the men who are left behind at this dismal place deserve our love and so we visit them each week.*  
*Several times now we have arrived to provide each man with a full serving of soup! The men were very happy and so thankful for such yummy soup! We also thank you and would do anything to continue to have this opportunity to provide more soup to these worthy men.*  
*This is a miracle for us!!!*



UMEI Christian School Student Volunteers