

# CARING AND SHARING

## MISSION STATEMENT

Jesus said, "Freely you have received; freely give!"

Matthew 10: 8b

In response to God's blessings, Caring and Sharing was founded as a means of expressing His love for all people, by providing food for anyone in crisis.

## WHAT IS CARING AND SHARING?

Caring and Sharing is a growing network of people from diverse ethnic, religious and social backgrounds, who volunteer their time, talents and food to help anyone, regardless of race, religion, colour, sex, social or marital status, who is facing a crisis. The network provides a personalized food and necessities order and delivers it to the family's home or a specified address within 48 to 72 hours. The anonymity of both the family and the donors is carefully guarded.

The network is organized by a decision-making committee of eight coordinators who meet once a month. The network is also supported in prayer by a prayer chain. The coordinator of this prayer chain is a member of the committee.

## HOW DID IT BEGIN?

In 1981, a small group of fourteen neighbourhood friends helped two refugee families from Poland at Christmas time. They overwhelmed the families with food, clothing and gifts. The experience was so exciting for everyone that they decided to try to help other families throughout the year. They approached The Children's Aid Society with the idea. It was suggested that carrying one family for a year would create a dependency problem, and that it would be more effective to help different families who faced immediate crises two or three times a year.

Since that time, Caring and Sharing has developed into a dynamic network of approximately 700 volunteers who respond to people in crisis all over the Region of Peel. Most volunteers are recruited by word of mouth. We have never advertised although, when asked, we make presentations to churches, businesses and clubs.

Referrals are selected and verified by over a dozen referral sources. Before any new referral source can use our network, we must meet with them to inform them of our policies and procedures.

## HOW DOES IT OPERATE?

We have divided the Region of Peel into 14 geographical areas, each of which is supervised by a Zone Captain. Under the Zone Captains are three to six teams of approximately 12 people headed by a Team Captain. A specified drop-off house is within the area and a number of deliverers take turns delivering the orders.

The Referral Coordinator receives referrals on her answering machine from 9:00 a.m. Monday to 4:30 p.m. Wednesday. She is the only person who can activate the network. The information required to complete the call appears on the Referral Form, which we supply to each agency or other referral source. All information is strictly confidential and only the Zone captain and the Deliverer know the family's address. We depend on the referral source to verify the family's needs, and to check with the family if they want our help, before the referral is made.

The Referral Coordinator then refers each call to a Zone Captain. The Zone Captain phones the family, arranges for a delivery time and goes over the food list to make sure that nothing is sent that the family cannot eat (because of allergies or religious reasons, etc.) or does not need. Next s/he calls the drop-off house and then arranges for a deliverer. Finally s/he divides the food list giving each team the same number of items as team members and calls the Team Captains with their list. She also gives the Captain some general information about the family (i.e. number of people in the family, ages of children). The Team Captain then calls the team members. Each week the member will be asked to bring a different item. He or she is committed to bring that food or necessary item to the drop-off house before pick-up time. We try to respond within 48-72 hours of the time that the Zone Captain receives the call. At the designated time, the deliverer picks up the whole order and delivers it to the family.

Requests are frequently made for baby formula. If money is donated to Caring and Sharing, the Zone Captains can draw on these funds to buy formula (approx. \$25.00 per family). Otherwise, two members can go together to buy a large can of formula or several smaller cans, as it is expensive.

At present Caring and Sharing operates from September to June with the exception of the Christmas and March breaks. From September 2005 to June 2006 approximately 450 families were helped.

### **WHO ARE OUR REFERRAL SOURCES?**

- Catholic Family Services of Peel;
- Catholic Cross-Cultural Services; an agency that helps immigrants from any country settle in Canada.
- Children's Aid Society.
- Open Door; a non-denominational Christian Drop-In Centre that responds to the physical as well as spiritual needs of anyone who comes through their door for help.
- Peel Regional Public Health Unit.
- Peel Social Services.
- Interim Place; a home for battered wives.
- Mississauga Life Centre; a counselling Centre for unwed Mothers.
- The Trillium Medical Centre; Social Services Department and Community Health Clinic: Patients discharged after a long or serious illness sometimes have little or no food in the house and no way of getting it themselves.
- Erinoak;
- Peel Board of Education;
- Caring and Sharing members; occasionally refer other members or neighbours who are in crisis situations. In this case the referring member must act as the agency and follow the same referral procedures.
- Hospice of Peel; an organisation providing support for terminally-ill patients and their families.

### **WHY IS CARING AND SHARING NECESSARY?**

Caring and Sharing offers the same kind of support rural communities would have automatically given in years past when our ancestors first immigrated here. Now, with the tremendous spread of urban growth, the idea of "loving your neighbour" has all but disappeared. Often, we hardly know our neighbours or recognize when they are in trouble. Caring and Sharing sensitizes a community to respond to each other's suffering and provides a vehicle for those who care to respond.

### **IS IT ALL WORTH IT?**

The delivery of the food is the bottom line! This is how a busy Mississauga lawyer felt after making a delivery. (He was also part of that very first delivery 11 years earlier to the two Polish families.)

"My delivery was made to a family with six children. I could see from the tears in the father's eyes that he was overwhelmed by the quantity of food and clothing. My car's trunk and back seat were both completely filled. He was also amazed that unknown people in the community would care enough to give one item each to help his family.

"I took one of my sons along so that he could see a practical application of a very basic Christian principle; namely, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Both he and I came away blessed from this delivery."

Overstressed caseworkers also appreciate having somewhere to turn when they have done everything they can to help so many people in desperate situations and there are no resources left. A typical comment from a Social Services Agency caseworker was, "I want to thank you for the response to the order I put in this week. The family was overwhelmed and wanted me to phone Caring and Sharing to express their deep appreciation."

Caring and Sharing is an amazing community network of caring volunteers. Each person's one small item, when combined with everyone else's has helped many hundreds of people through crisis situations over the past twenty years.