

Empowering Your Community Program Submission
Mount Pearl Community Supper Program
May 2023

Explain how your credit union is directly involved in this initiative (financial, volunteer commitment, in kind, etc.) (300 words or less).

Not only are our credit unions involved, our employees are incredibly engaged. We have been committed to supporting the Mount Pearl Community Supper Program since March 2022.

EasternEdge and Reddy Kilowatt Credit Unions have sponsored multiple suppers and employees have volunteered their time. As community credit unions, this initiative ticks very important boxes:

- Aligns perfectly with credit union principles of cooperation, people helping people, and concern for community.
- It's hyper-local and happens in our backyard.
- Its only goal is to provide vulnerable community members with a very basic need: food.
- It requires external community funding and support for long-term sustainability.

"I grew up in Mount Pearl and know how community minded the city is. I have recently volunteered at the Mount Pearl Community Suppers as an employee of Reddy Kilowatt Credit Union and have an even greater sense of how alive the community spirit remains! I witnessed a multitude of individuals and also community groups coming together under the leadership of Scott Hillyer to cook these meals, prepare them for transport, and hand out, or deliver in some cases, to very needy citizens! I was in awe of the group's organization as well as the camaraderie of the volunteers and how it brings them all together. I personally feel the benefits from this supper are not only felt by the recipients of the meal, but anyone who participates!"

~Pam Adams, Reddy Kilowatt Credit Union

"After volunteering at the community supper, I was very much educated about the need for these meals. It was a real eye-opener. I had heard about the need, but when you talk to Scott and the other volunteers, you hear first-hand accounts of the people being helped. If there was ever a charity that deserved an award, it is this one."

~Joanne Thomas, EasternEdge Credit Union

Which community partners are involved?

Seven Mount Pearl churches of all denominations have united under the guidance and vision of Mr. Scott Hillyer to provide bi-weekly community suppers for Mount Pearl residents in need. The program is governed by a Board of Directors that consists of one representative from each Church and Mr. Hillyer.

Physically, the suppers take place in our credit unions' backyard at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Mount Pearl. Each of the partner Churches gives \$500 annually to this program from which the Board allocates funds to the Church of the Good Shepherd to help offset operating costs such as electrical, cleaning, hairnets, gloves.

The Board's request of the Churches is that they arrange for bi-weekly volunteers to prepare and deliver the suppers. The organizers have learned that this approach creates consistency and lessens the strain of finding volunteers. Typically, 3-4 volunteers are needed for each meal.

At an investment of \$500 - \$600, every meal is sponsored by community businesses, including EasternEdge and Reddy Kilowatt Credit Unions. With rising food costs, however, and the knowledge that sponsors have finite funds to support such initiatives, the organizers are forced to strike a balance. If they increase the sponsorship cost, sponsors will likely need to reduce the number of meals they can support. The board's wish is to maintain the meal cost at its current level but they realize that, in doing so, it directly impacts the quality and type of meal they are able to provide.

Always seeking viable solutions to problems, the organizers have formed partnerships with companies such as TRA and Sobey's in Mount Pearl. TRA has put the Mount Pearl Community Suppers on a list to receive dated vegetables on a rotational basis. Recently, TRA provided enough vegetables to supply four community suppers. Because it is a rotation, however, they cannot be guaranteed these vegetables for every meal. Sobey's in Mount Pearl provides food/ingredients for the suppers at cost.

Tell us how the project will impact and/or benefit the community (who and how many)?

Other than a couple small food banks, the Community Supper Program is the only option in Mount Pearl for vulnerable residents to access food. Additionally, this Program is the only group providing a hot meal.

The Community Supper Program began five years ago as a sit-down, hot meal. At the time, on average they served 200 meals and needed 20-25 volunteers every time to fulfill the required duties.

Due to the pandemic, they were forced to switch to a take-out service which, actually, resulted in unplanned but welcomed advantages. Not only did it reduce the number of volunteers needed to execute each meal, it proved to diminish the stigma that beneficiaries experienced. The organizers came to learn that people who were most in need of the meals were less likely to want to be seen in a group setting. As a take-out service, registration is not required (unlike Food Banks who track people by MCP).

It also benefits the community that this Program has a zero-waste policy. The suppers take place bi-weekly on Wednesdays which is the same day that the food bank runs in Mount Pearl. When/if there's anything left over once the community meals have been distributed, they are brought to the Food Bank for circulation.

The Community Supper Program has sadly shone a light on a significant need within our credit unions' catchment area. One year ago, Scott and his team were serving 150-160 meals bi-weekly. Today, just one year later, that number has essentially doubled to 300-325.

"The greatest impact that this Program serves to provide is a hot dinner to the most vulnerable residents in our community." ~ Scott Hillyer.

Total value of the project?

As an entrepreneur and restaurateur whose passion for cooking and compassion for people began in his childhood home, Scott Hillyer says "To me, food has always been basic, fairly easy to find. But I've come to learn that for far too many people, food, though a basic need, is elusive".

A \$10,000 grant through the Empowering Your Community Award would allow the Board of the Mount Pearl Community Supper Program to enhance each meal with soup and/or fruit, improve delivery services to people who would otherwise be unable to access the program, and help cover the costs of operational supplies such as take-out containers. Based on 300 meals served bi-weekly and assuming a cost increase of \$1.00 per meal, \$10,000 would support 33 weeks of meals. This would translate into a significantly enhanced Community Supper Program for over a year.

Furthermore, should we be fortunate enough to be granted an award of \$25,000, the additional \$15,000 at current demand levels could fully fund over 5,400 meals which would be enough for a further 18 weeks of bi-weekly meals* or 2/3 of a year.

*Based on \$2.75 per meal, 300 meals served bi-weekly.

How will the funds be used?

While the switch from a sit-down meal to a take-out service, provided valuable improvements, it also increased the Program's costs due to the need for take out containers and packaging. Currently, the meals are budgeted at \$1.50 - \$1.75 per person and this includes approximately .50 for packaging.

Typically, the meals provided include a meat protein, rice/potato, a vegetable, and a cookie/dessert square. While each meal is intended to provide for one individual, it has come to the attention of the organizers that some of the recipients ration it out to cover two meals either for themselves or a family member. Scott and the Community Supper Board aspire to add a bowl of soup and/or a piece of fruit to the dinners, further enabling individuals to receive the maximum nutritional and qualitative benefit from the Program.

While most people pick up their meals from the Church of the Good Shepherd, there's at least one third of the meals that require delivery to seniors and shut-ins. These meals are organized and delivered by zone within the community of Mount Pearl. The Program and its beneficiaries would benefit greatly from the purchase of large carrying totes.

Therefore, the funds from a \$10,000 Empowering Your Community Award would be utilized to offset the costs of takeout containers, improve the quality and size of the meals, and enhance the mode of meal delivery to people who are unable to access the Program by their own means.

Should the Program be awarded \$25,000, the additional \$15,000 would fully fund 300 biweekly meals for, at least, two thirds of a year.

How are you measuring the impact of the project?

The impact of the Mount Pearl Community Supper Program is measured by the number of meals served. In one year alone, the demand for food through this Program has essentially doubled. Knowing the increases in inflationary costs for the average household, it shouldn't be surprising that this need has grown. It is, however, incredibly sad and most disturbing and cannot be ignored.

What is the visibility of the project in the community?

Scott and his team promote the Community Suppers in the following ways:

- Mount Pearl Community Supper Facebook page (455 members)
- Neighbours in Need Facebook Page (over 30K followers)

- Coffee Matters* Facebook Page (over 20K followers)
- Reader Board at the Mount Pearl Reid Community Centre
- Via Church congregations and channels e.g., bulletins
- VOCM Radio public service announcements

*Coffee Matters is owned and operated by Scott Hillyer.

What brand opportunities are available to promote Equitable Bank's involvement?

Brand opportunities used to promote local sponsors would also be afforded to Equitable Bank, including but not limited to social media acknowledgements and a photo opportunity/cheque presentation.

Is there anything else you want us to know about the project? Include website links or promotional pages to provide additional information.

Indeed, there is more! The Mount Pearl Community Supper Program began five years ago and is the brainchild of Scott Hillyer. Scott, a well-known small business owner, community advocate and proud resident of Mount Pearl, Newfoundland, recognized a need within his community and, feeling he could make a difference, immediately went to work to help eradicate it.

The video below was created a little over a year ago when Scott was awarded the Mount Pearl Paradise Chamber of Commerce Director's Award for his countless contributions to his community. Not only was it the means by which EasternEdge and Reddy Kilowatt Credit Unions became aware of the Community Supper Program, ultimately leading to our involvement; it also documents quite well the talented, compassionate, and ethically focused individual who spearheads the Community Supper Program.

That said, Scott will be the first to say that the Community Supper Program is driven by a team-oriented group of dedicated volunteers. In our credit union experience with this team, they are, indeed, extremely organized and talented in their own right - they also think the world of Scott and will do anything to support his vision and the people of Mount Pearl.

VIDEO LINK: <https://vimeo.com/708733551>

PASSWORD: upskydown

To add to this already incredible and selfless initiative, it bears mentioning that in September 2022, Scott Hillyer was diagnosed with a very serious, life-threatening cancer. In the time since his diagnosis, he has undergone countless rounds of treatment and medical tests all while caring for his family, running his business, and yes – keeping

these suppers going. Whether it was promoting the suppers, answering emails, seeking sponsors and community partners from his hospital bed or showing up to cook and serve the Community Suppers – Scott Hillyer has been a formidable force in and for our community.

With the help of Equitable Bank and the Empowering Your Community Award, EasternEdge and Reddy Kilowatt Credit Unions will have the opportunity to further our commitment to the vulnerable population of Mount Pearl. Additionally, we believe this award would also give Scott Hillyer the peace of mind that the food security Program he developed out of a deep-rooted concern for community will be in good financial stead while he takes the necessary time to heal and recuperate.

Thank you very much for offering this opportunity and we thank you for your consideration.