

It broke my heart to hear of the number of local families and children that are so hungry they need to depend on food banks and meal programs. How can that be possible in a region traditionally known as Canada's Fruit Belt and now known as the Greenbelt? How can an area so rich in agriculture be so poor at feeding its own population? Remembering the desperation in Joanne's voice as she relayed the enormous struggles her team faced daily at Hamilton Food Share, it became clear that something was wrong and they needed help.

I shared my thoughts with Norm, the farm manager and was utterly surprised at his response. "Let's get the entire farm staff to pick a pail of cherries and donate!" Great, I thought, I can do that. As I nosily hurried off down the hallway, Lew called me into his office. Man, was I in big trouble. My enthusiasm has disrupted the boss and now I'm being called into his office. I should have kept my thoughts to myself and done nothing.

*Lew asked "What is all the excitement about?" Hesitantly, not wanting to get anyone in any trouble, I relayed the series of events that led me to sharing my concerns with Norm and his response. Heck, Lew replied, we can do better than that. Let's give everyone the opportunity to pick and the farm will donate the cherries!" Pardon? Was my mind registering what I had just heard correctly? Any of our paying guests that want to, will be able pick and the farm will donate cherries? The farm will donate up to 3,000 pails of cherries? "Yep, that's what we'll do. Why not? We have the cherries, they have the cause". **"Cherries for a Cause"** was born*

Joanne couldn't believe it! You're going to do what? Do you have any idea how important this is? How grateful people will be? "Your guests will be providing a pail of hope!" I know, isn't it great! Wouldn't it be even better if other farms could do something similar? Then we would truly have a rich region, both in agriculture and in humanity!

Sherry "Cherries for a Cause"

Did you know that Hamilton's hunger count in 2007:

- 15,748 people per month turned to a food bank
- 6,314 (40%) are children under the age of 18
- 8,179 households relied on food banks to meet their basic food needs
- For more information please visit the Hamilton Food Share website at www.hamiltonfoodshare.org