



Giving Kids Good Food To Eat



Sydney, a Toronto Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club participant, hopes to one day go to Oxford to study law.

After-school and during school breaks, there's a place in Toronto that gives underprivileged children stability, structure, purpose and a sense of community. And every day, this same place makes sure that every child always has good food to eat.

“The key for us is that everyone knows that when you come here, you can always get something to eat,” says Dominique Robinson, the Children Services Coordinator at Toronto Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club at their Regent Park location. “Sometimes we have kids who come here and when they go home, there is no dinner because there is not enough to go around. So they try to eat as much as they can here to get filled up.”

Toronto Kiwanis Boys & Girls Clubs operates four program sites across the city and offers diverse programming to meet the needs of the communities they serve. Every day, over 500 children and youth from ages six to 16 come through their doors.

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Kiwanis brings out every child's best potential by offering a safe, enriching and fun place to learn, play and grow. Thirteen-year-old Sydney is one of those kids – over the last four years she has thrived in the Regent Park Kiwanis community.

"Honestly, if I wasn't in this program, I'd probably be doing nothing. It gives kids the opportunity to get off the streets and do something productive," she says on a warm summer afternoon as she takes a break from the summer camp program. "This program means a lot, not only to me, but to everybody else here. It just gives kids opportunities."

Sydney knows a lot about the opportunities that Kiwanis offers. She joined the program's self-expression group to improve her public speaking skills. She wants to one day study law at Oxford, she says, "and public speaking is a big part of that."

Second Harvest provides much of the food for the more than 2,650 nutritious meals Kiwanis serves to the kids every week.

In the summer months, Second Harvest makes daily food deliveries at Kiwanis. And even though kids are expected to bring a lunch with them to camp, many don't always have enough. "We keep our kids as active as possible, so within an hour of finishing eating, they're hungry again. The deliveries give the kids something good to eat without resorting to junk food," says Dominique.

"A lot of kids don't have lunches. When they have good food that they can eat, it's a big thing for them and it makes their life a lot easier," adds Sydney.

During the school year, Kiwanis receives two types of deliveries from Second Harvest – a regular delivery of perishable and dry foods, which get used for snacks and in the cooking program; and a weekly delivery of prepared food trays from the Harvest Kitchens program, which is used to run Kiwanis' after-school snack program.

It's because of Second Harvest that Kiwanis always has enough food, Dominique says. "If it was just us having to provide all of the food by ourselves, food would be very scarce."