Dear Community Agency,

Food security is a public health issue gaining recognition at local and global levels. In Canada, many individuals are experiencing a lack of food security, which significantly impacts health outcomes. In Chatham-Kent, almost 8% of the population faces food insecurity. The Chatham-Kent Food Policy Council has determined that food access is a priority area and have been working to develop a gleaning project for Chatham-Kent.

Gleaning is one initiative that aims to increase food security by increasing food availability, food access, and food use. Gleaning is commonly understood as the act of collecting leftover crops from farmers’ fields after they have been commercially harvested, or collecting produce individual homeowners who have excess in the gardens or on fruit trees.

As a first step, in June 2014, a forum was held to bring together individuals who were interested in hearing what had been done in other communities. In February 2015, a literature review was conducted to determine best practices for a gleaning initiative here in Chatham-Kent. Following this report, we conducted a pilot project over the summer and fall and were successful at bringing leftover produce to local service agencies in the community. We are now ready to expand the program to include more local agencies and more local farmers, and would like to invite you to participate in the Chatham-Kent Gleaning Project.

Here is some information to help you become familiar with the project:

**Vision:**

Equipping people to rescue surplus produce from fields and gardens.

**Mission:**

Connecting food producers who have surplus produce with neighbours and community food programs through relationship building, experiential learning and volunteer engagement.

**Program Priorities:**

* *Building Partnerships*
	+ Our goal is to develop partnerships that connect local farmers and community food programs
* *Facilitating Food Redistribution*
	+ We harvest excess produce and share with local community food programs
	+ Local agencies receive gleaned produce free of charge for use in food banks, soup kitchens, and food skill programs.
* *Helping Our Volunteers*
	+ We aim to identify, recruit and provide comprehensive training and supports to individuals wishing to participate in experiential learning opportunities
	+ Those who help harvest the produce will also receive a portion of the food to take home and share with their families
* *Developing Resources* – creation of tools and resources to support the gleaning program.
* *Evaluating*- ongoing program evaluation and improvement for continued success.

**Expectations for participating agencies:**

* Participating agencies will provide us with their contact information, the type of storage facilities available, and their hours of operation.
* If produce is received outside of normal hours, agencies who wish to receive the produce will work with us to determine how we can access the centre for delivery.
* Participating agencies will provide us with volunteers to assist with the gleaning process, if they are able to do so. *Volunteers will be required to complete detailed safety training through the health unit, and are covered by the municipality.* Dates for the training are Thursday May 19th from 6-8 pm or Saturday June 4th from 10-noon and will be hosted at the Salvation Army Family Services Centre, 19 Raleigh Street, Chatham.

Thank you for your interest in the Chatham-Kent Gleaning Project.

 **To become involved, please apply using the attached intake form.**

**For additional information, please contact:**

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