

e4c envoy

Summer 2020

Message from Barb Spencer, CEO

While the past few months have been uncharted times for all of us as Albertans, on behalf of e4c, I would like to wish you good health, and to celebrate our ability to come together as a community to support one another. While our new normal will undoubtedly require adjustments to our programs and services, we have no doubt that, after 50 years, we are ready to take on the challenges.

The pandemic has highlighted one thing that our organization has known about our community: the people we walk alongside are resilient, and continue to draw strength from one another. We have seen resiliency shine brightly over the past few months; from the womxn at WEAC navigating the nuances of physical distancing in a shelter environment, to the residents of our Permanent Supportive Housing units adjusting to the challenges of self-isolation in a congregate environment, to the children and families supported through school based programming accessing options for food security.

Their resiliency and strength is inspirational. Thank you for being part of our journey – including through these unprecedented times.



Seeing people not poverty.

Community Garden



Food Security has long been an important pillar of e4c's services, made more prominent in the recent events of COVID-19. The pandemic has brought awareness to the vulnerability of Canada's food distribution systems, and more and more communities are transitioning back to hobbies of times past – bread baking, sewing, and gardening.

In early May, e4c opened our Community Garden, welcoming back long-time returning community gardeners, and saying hello to new faces. The garden looks a bit different this year, as we have reduced capacity to adhere to the City of Edmonton's physical distancing and sanitization requirements.

However, the Alex Taylor School Community Garden remains a ready resource for people in the high density Boyle McCauley neighborhood to find an urban oasis, try their hand at gardening, while simultaneously increasing food security. Reconnecting to the earth is not only an exercise in mental wellness, but also a place for exercise, recreation, and serenity. We look forward to observing this year's crop yield, and saying hello – from a safe distance, of course!

The of School

Once schools were ordered closed in response to COVID-19, e4c knew that the School Nutrition Program would be unable to continue on as usual.

In consultation with our partners in the Edmonton Catholic School Division, and Edmonton Public School Division, a food security response initiative was developed, to best support both students and families experiencing the highest levels of food insecurity. The result was the creation of e4c's Supplementary Package Program, a robust food package designed to enhance a family's existing food budget with nutritious, healthy ingredients.

Principals and teachers at each school identified the students and families who would benefit from the packages, and e4c enlisted Director of Culinary, Brian McBride from the Hallway Café to source sustainable supply chains, ensuring the packages could be put together efficiently without concern of interruption from suppliers. Brian also considered the following criteria when sourcing package ingredients: shelf life, multipurpose use, nutritional value, and cultural considerations when supporting families of multicultural backgrounds.

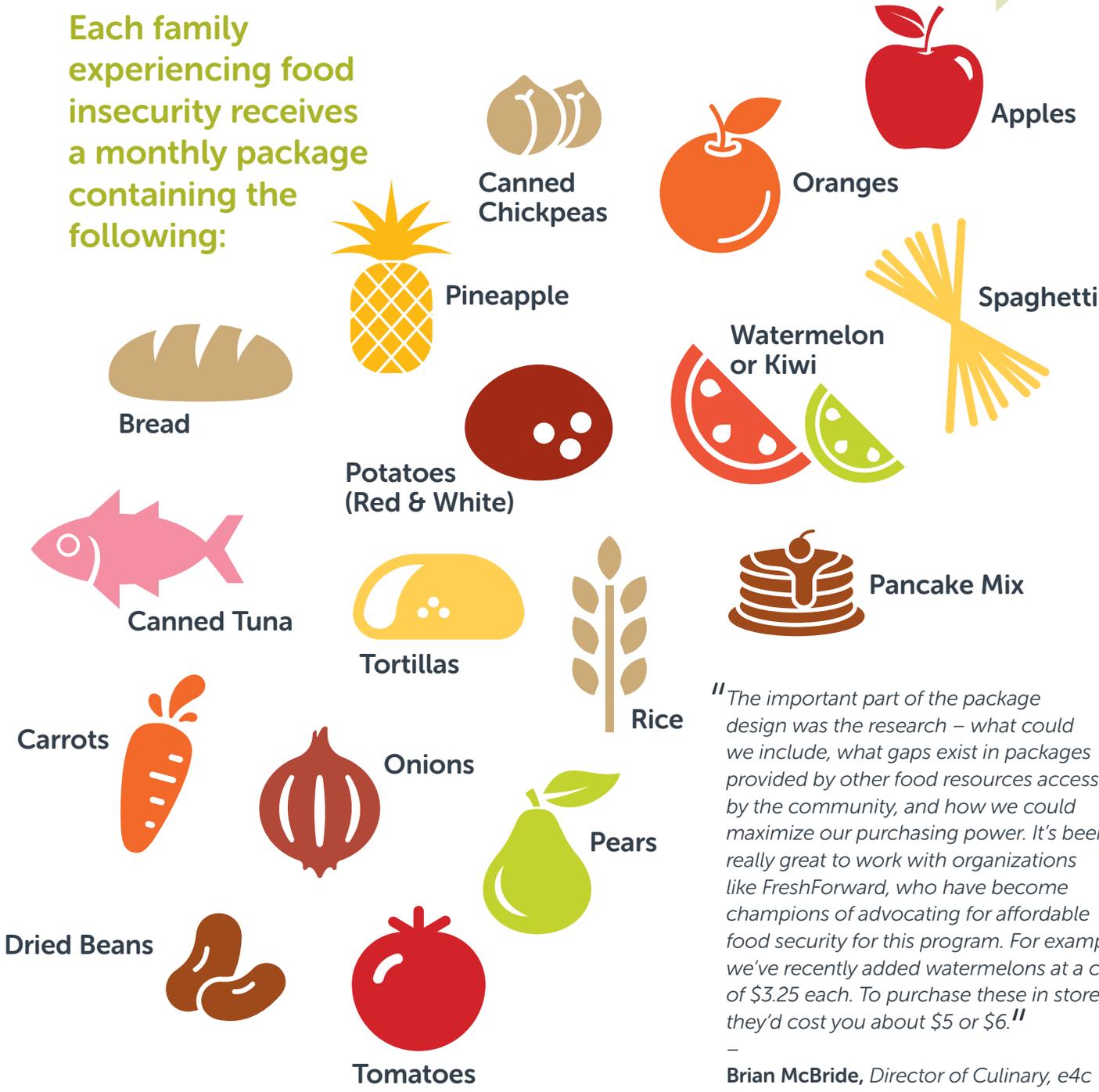
"When our schools transitioned to online learning, we knew that the universal School Nutrition Program could not be delivered in the same fashion, yet we knew that food security remained a challenge for families. Online learning meant that principals and teachers were more connected to families, and they would be able to identify those families facing challenges. In collaboration with funders, school nutrition dollars remained connected to food security, resulting in support for the kids and families that need it most."

—
Nancy Petersen, Managing Director,
Strategic District Supports, Edmonton Public Schools

Evolution Nutrition Programming

A Community Response to COVID-19

Each family experiencing food insecurity receives a monthly package containing the following:



"The important part of the package design was the research – what could we include, what gaps exist in packages provided by other food resources accessed by the community, and how we could maximize our purchasing power. It's been really great to work with organizations like FreshForward, who have become champions of advocating for affordable food security for this program. For example, we've recently added watermelons at a cost of \$3.25 each. To purchase these in store, they'd cost you about \$5 or \$6."

— Brian McBride, Director of Culinary, e4c

Packages cost \$100 each wholesale, and are designed to supplement a family's existing food source on a monthly basis. Currently, close to 2,000 families are supported through this initiative. Supplementary packages are picked up on a scheduled basis by Edmonton School Division & ECSD drivers, and distributed to the schools for pick-up and distribution to families. Families connected to e4c programming initiatives like Early Learning, also are receiving packages.

"Our truck drivers typically deliver mail, and supplies, and furniture. This has been a great opportunity for our drivers to feel connected to the children and families, and play a key role in a meaningful solution during uncertain times in our community. The packages are enormous! I've seen photos of them, and read testimonials from schools and families. It's been such a story of hope!"

— Nancy Petersen, Managing Director, Strategic Supports, Edmonton Public Schools



\$200,000

The cost of supplementing 2,000 food insecure families' monthly food source.

"I had the privilege of dropping off some of these packages to families, and their faces just lit up with all of the fresh food! Keep up the amazing support for our families – it is greatly needed!"

— Kim, Teacher



Pandemic Partnerships

At the start of the pandemic, supplementary packages were created and distributed at the Hallway Café within Edmonton City Hall. With the closure of City Hall, and the restrictions on physical distancing, e4c reached out to community partners at the Edmonton Convention Centre as potential space for package assembly.

They provided a large hall free of charge to prepare the packages, and access to their loading bay for pick-ups and drop offs. All 2,000+ supplementary food packages are prepared and distributed through this hub.

LEFTOVERS
RESCUE FOOD

Edmonton Coin Vending

COVID-19 has strengthened community partnerships, including a generous donation for a sweet treats as a surprise for Edmonton students: granola bars, protein bars, and potato chips from the Edmonton Coin Vending Association.

e4c is a member of Edmonton Food Council, alongside LeftoversYEG. With the launch of the supplementary food package program, LeftoversYEG reached out to offer 250 pounds of potatoes for the packages, directly supporting students and families in the Edmonton area.

Thank You!

Recipes for Success

Including items like pineapple and kiwi into packages sparked the idea amongst our nutrition staff to provide educational support resources within each package.

Focusing on the e4c pillar of Education & Skill Development, and lessons taught in our Young Chefs program, the resource book enhances a family's ability to use more of the items within their packages.

Experiential learning through cooking, measuring, chopping, and baking helps students at home understand cooking basics, and working together to prepare a meal for their family.

Including essential information like how to wash fruits and vegetables, food preparation, knife skills, and varieties of cooking potatoes, the recipe book aims to educate youth & families, while simultaneously providing a wealth of recipes to maximize the use of each ingredient.

Let's Cook! Black Bean Hash

Your Equipment List



Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons oil
- 4 cups chopped potatoes
- 1 cup cooked beans
- 1 onion
- 2 tomatoes
- Salt and pepper to taste or any other seasoning (ex. cumin, taco seasoning)
- 1/2 cup grated cheese (optional)
- 4 eggs (optional)

Steps:

- Cook dried beans
- Cut potatoes, onion and tomatoes into small pieces
- Rinse potatoes under cold water after cutting
- Heat pan on medium heat and pour oil into the pan
- Add onions to the pan and stir with spatula to keep them from burning
- Put potatoes in the pan and use a spatula to mix. Cook the potatoes until golden brown. This will take about 10 minutes
- *Optional step:* Crack eggs into a bowl and stir with a fork. Pour eggs into the potato mixture. Use the spatula to stir the mixture and scramble the eggs
- Take pan off heat and stir in cooked beans, tomatoes, and cheese
- Stir in seasoning of your choice



Try the recipe out and share your masterpiece on social media using tag [#RecipesForSuccess @e4calberta](#)

Early Learning

While Edmonton Schools shuttered in March in light of COVID-19, our Early Learning program which includes Head Start programming, mobilized to online supports as well,

supporting over 300 children and families

to continue to hit their milestones and prepare for kindergarten.



"Creating online programming was a challenge. Many families don't have access, or don't know how to use technology like Zoom or FaceTime. Some families didn't have art supplies. We were able to pivot, and provide interactive art packages containing things like glue, construction paper, and crayons. A lot of our families are facing multiple challenges, and so reducing stressors on things like art supplies or providing books helps them focus on their most urgent needs."

–
Jennie Wiles, Professional Practice Lead,
Home Support

"Families enrolled in English Conversation Circle have handled the pandemic in stride. This past Friday, the families completed an 8-week scaled course on English Grammar offered online through the Edmonton Public Library. Each family will be receiving a certificate delivered to their house, recognizing their hard work and completion. Something really unique that has come out of the program is the fact that our family groups were able to come together over Zoom – and continue to build relationships, socialize, and practice what they've learned. The parents have decided to continue to work together on their own in the coming weeks, and have signed up for a GED math course. Each of these courses can be added to a resume to enhance their skill set and job opportunities."

–
Maple Hyunh, Family Literacy Coordinator

Mask Up

United Way is a funded partner of many e4c programs, including the All In For Youth (AIFY) partnership with the School Nutrition Program.

In early April, United Way generously donated 3,000 reusable masks to the Supplementary Package Program to be included in the packages. These masks provide peace of mind for families when using transit services, accessing community supports, or heading to the grocery store.



e4c's Early Learning programming supports children 2.6-5 years of age through half-day programming in a language-enriched environment. Learning is supported through specialized services with a team of professionals, including teachers, family support workers, speech pathologists, and other professionals working with the children and families to enhance growth and development.

Early Learning programming provides opportunities for children to develop skills and reach milestones to enter kindergarten; while also fostering moments for children and families to socialize, practice language, and form friendships and a sense of community.

COVID-19 presented the challenge of mobilizing to electronic webinars, recording, and other resources, continuing to support children and families during the pandemic.

"Families accessing Early Learning often do not have the funds or resources to send their children to specialized schools to address their challenges and to help meet their needs. When a child receives early intervention measures, we know that they are more likely to catch up to their peers, and hit those milestones. Some of our children this year were able to connect to the Glenrose Hospital, where families were able to get their child's challenges assessed, leading to a diagnosis. Our Home Support Workers were able to help each family navigate the supports available to them, and to provide advocacy where available. It's so much more than a school – it focuses on creating an impact on the families and children to create opportunities. These children are our future."

–
Jennie Wiles, Professional Practice Lead,
Home Supports

For the 2019–2020 School Year, our Early Learning & Head Start programming supported over 272 students and families, including over 171 graduates heading to kindergarten!

Graduates like Tessa will be headed to kindergarten in the fall, where she is most excited to "make new friends!"

Tessa, 5, struggled with speech development and conversation prior to attending e4c's Head Start. Now, she's a social butterfly.

"She talks in big sentences with fancy words. She used to sit and pout when she didn't get something she wanted, she wouldn't say what she wanted to say. Now, she says what she needs!"

These small wins amount to larger communication milestones and help with anger management, interpersonal communication, and making friends.



Programming provides early intervention support while simultaneously supporting parents and caregivers through capacity building. When children and families exit the program, our goals are to have fostered enough community connections and supports; empowering families to advocate for themselves and their children within their own community. Families are an integral component of all Early Learning programs and services. Providing 1:1 support with a Home Support worker, helps families work towards personal goals, like applying for employment, moving to a new home, budgeting, and navigating parenthood.

We're Live! Register for 2020-2021

e4c Early Learning is now online at: www.e4calberta.org/earlylearning, for information, questions, FAQ, and to register. Life is busy – creating an online presence is essential to reduce stress amongst families.

Registration is now open for the 2020-2021 school year. We encourage families of children 2.6-5 years old with low income to apply online through our website. A family support worker will follow up via phone to review your application.

Thank You Edmonton!

Resiliency has shone throughout the pandemic - within people supported through e4c programs and services, but also through the power and commitment of our local community.

Since the pandemic was declared in March, e4c has experienced an overwhelming response to appeals for community support. Ranging from monetary donations to support the Supplementary Package Program, to donations of PPE from as far away as Toronto, to homemade masks from our supporters at

home. Our community has mobilized and embraced the philosophy of giving, and for supporting vulnerable members of our community.

Something that we continue to hear and see are individuals and community partners reaching out and asking "how can I help?"

Financial donations remain essential to support the people we serve. A financial contribution may go towards:

\$25 purchasing hygiene products, or a set of pajamas for a womxn at WEAC.

\$50 purchasing school supplies for children in Early Learning programming.

\$100 supporting a family experiencing food insecurity through the provision of a supplementary food security package.

\$500 providing clean bedding (sheets, towels, pillow, and blankets) for 6 womxn staying at WEAC.

We understand that sometimes a financial gift is not possible. Consider supporting e4c with your intangible gifts of kind words, sharing our posts on social media, and discussing our work with your network of friends. No matter what avenue you chose to support - we appreciate and value you! Looking for more information, or have questions? Contact us at:

780.424.7543 x 114

While donors, stakeholders, and community supporters have many options available to them in terms of agencies and organizations to support, we are thankful for those that continue to choose to walk alongside us on this journey.

Thank you for your continued support, generosity, and messages of goodwill; we are all in this together.

Have a great summer!

For over 50 years, e4c has been helping Edmontonians get what they need to tackle life's challenges. e4c believes that people deserve to be listened to and respected, no matter what their circumstances or challenges. We see people and welcome them without judgment or bias.

e4c's vision is to limit, alleviate and eliminate poverty.

e4calberta.org

f **t** **@** Follow Us

780.424.7543

9321 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5H 3T7



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