

Food Connections Project: Feeding communities in more ways than one

By Jessica Poitras



Wolseley Family Place's Food Connections Project is more than a pre-employment program. It's a place where employment skills are built, bonds are forged among new friends, and a sense of pride, security and confidence is fostered.

Teena Timm, Food Connections Project Coordinator sums the program up best: "We're feeding communities," she says. "It's a hub."

The project empowers participants through education, accountability and relevant work experience in the hospitality industry. It has five main components: catering, cooking class, breakfast club, community store and community gardening. LITE provides the critical funding that contributes to the wages of the 8-10 part time, year-round contract workers that participate in these initiatives.

The initiatives build both skills and community at the same time. For example, the catering program provides real work experience to learn and develop food handling skills, plus provides a service for businesses and organizations in the inner city at affordable prices.

For some contract workers, the project is about more than the skills they learn. It's about a sense of security. The Food Connections Project provides free childcare, and for mothers like Asaria Crowch and Bounma Chantharangs, this is invaluable. Crowch explains how having caring people watching her children just feet away helps her. "Because I trust, I can focus on work," says Crowch, adding that "It's like a second family."

"There's a learning component to the project too – learning about food and nutrition," adds Timm. She also beams at the work ethic developed by the contract workers. "It's incredible morale that we have here. This year we've taken on more orders than ever before and despite all the barriers we face, on all of these events, we've come together and that's really cool."

In addition to LITE's funding, LITE is a Food Connections Project customer, purchasing their homemade cookies for the Alternative Christmas Hampers and hiring the project staff as one of the caterers at the Annual Wild Blueberry Pancake Breakfast. The project's catering menu is also promoted on LITE's Social Purchasing Portal.

To support the Food Connections Project through the purchase of cookies for families in need this holiday season visit LITE's website at www.lite.mb.ca or call 942-8578!