

Food Relief for International Students- update to October 2020

When the Rotary Club of Box Hill Burwood became aware of the urgent need to provide food support to many hundreds of university and TAFE students at Deakin University and Box Hill TAFE left stranded when the Covid 19 pandemic hit in March, they took immediate action. Nearly all these students lost their part-time jobs and do not receive Job Seeker or any other ongoing government support.

In August, RCBHB director Simon Wheelton heard about a fledgling food pantry for Deakin students run by St Thomas`s Church in Burwood. Each Saturday it provided food basics and vouchers for up to 50 students. Since then, with the help of RCBHB (now the principal sponsor) and other generous donors, the program has grown to nearly 200 students each week and the food offered has expanded to 100s of bread and pastry products each week, meal packs with all ingredients included and nearly 200 cooked dinners. On Saturdays 120 dinners are delivered for Deakin students.

Simon says that "Apart from being a major financial supporter of the St Tom`s Hope project, members of our club each week collect and deliver:

- donated fresh fruit and vegetables
- trays of end-of-day bakery goods from Bakers Delight in Victoria Gardens and Bread Street Bakery in Mont Albert
- 100 meals cooked in the Parliament House kitchens
- 100 meals cooked by Alex Makes Meals in Preston
- free-range eggs donated by Green Eggs in Ararat each month."

Using the St Tom`s Hope initiative as a model, RCBHB looked to see what could be done for students at Box Hill TAFE.

- A Food Pantry provided by Box Hill Community Information & Support, at the rear of Box Hill Town Hall has provided a pantry/pick up grocery service for the needy for many years and are happy to include the students.
- A Meals On Wheels (MOW) initiative by Mont Albert baker David Winter delivers to nearly 200 lonely and isolated needy residents in the City of Whitehorse twice each week. Volunteers cook and deliver the meals on Monday and Friday. A growing number are students from Box Hill TAFE.

RCBHB is now a significant sponsor of these initiatives despite its own fundraising activities having all but ground to a halt due to the pandemic. Plus there have been significant community donations.

17/09/20 – This week RCBHB will deliver to St Tom`s:

- 200kg of rice and noodles, 40kg of onions; boxes of fruits donated by the Indian Community
- 5 trays of bakery goods from David Winter`s Bread Street and Bakers Delight in Victoria Gardens
- 6 cartons (180 dozen) eggs from Green Eggs in Ararat
- 100 meals cooked in the Parliament House kitchens
- 100 meals cooked by a restaurant in Preston
- 20 cartons of Kefir Water from Emma and Toms juices.

24/09/20 – Excellent news. RCBHB received an email from John Devereaux, Executive Director, Division of Student Life Deakin University about a significant donation to our food project.

"I am really pleased to advise that our Vice-Chancellor has approved a donation of \$20 000 from our Student Financial Hardship Fund. The funds will be provided to Box Hill Burwood Rotary to support

the provision of food and other relief to students. As I've said before we are very grateful and appreciative of the efforts of so many in the community".

22/10/2020

St Tom`s Hope Food Pantry welcomes donations to the pantry and collections or drop offs can be arranged through Trami Truong by calling her on 0411 688802

Simon Wheelton

Director

Rotary Club of Box Hill Burwood

Coordinator of RCBHB international student food relief program

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