

## Food bank helps out needy North Yorkers

By LORNE MANLY

Have you ever wondered what happens to all those leftover hot dogs at Blue Jay games? It was exactly this question that began a sequence of events in the life of Loren Freid that culminated 18 months later in the opening of the North York Harvest food bank.

Freid a 1983 Political Economy graduate from the University of Toronto was "feeling out what (he) wanted to do" when the idea for a food bank came to him in the summer of 1984. After Freid looked at food banks in other Canadian cities such as Winnipeg and Regina he conducted research into the social conditions at York.

As he continued his research and started knocking on the doors of social agencies and churches looking for support, the need for a food bank in North York became evident. "I didn't realize there were these pockets of needy people in North York," Freid said. "People look wide-eyed at me when I tell them there are many needy people in North York. That was my reaction at first too."

Through his investigation, Freid identified five major areas of needy people in North York: the Jane-Finch area, the Jane-Wilson area, the Peanut area (Sheppard-Don Mills), Flemingdon Park (Don Mills-Eglinton), and Bathurst Heights (Dufferin-Lawrence).

"Statistics Canada claims that any family that spends 60 percent on the three basic essentials (food, shelter and clothing) lives at or below the poverty level," Freid said. "In 1981, when the last census was taken, 15 percent of the people in North York were at this level."

According to Freid, food is the "last priority people respond to," because of the necessity to pay rent and utilities first. "Food is bought with the money left over," Freid explained. If the money runs out, a proper diet is sacrificed. "The food bank tries to supplement these needs," Freid said. "That is the theory of the food bank."

North York Harvest distributes to social agencies such as the North York Women's Shelter, the Jane-Finch Family Service and churches. Freid said there are two reasons for this. "It's a rather debilitating process for these people to stand in line outside the food bank," he said. "Also, the churches and agencies know their neighborhoods better than we do."

The food bank has collected 15,000 of the 100,000 pounds of food targeted for this year. The majority of the donations come from the Daily Bread Food Bank downtown, consisting of Oreos, canned tomatoes, orange drink and baby food. "The programs we're running now, though, are bringing in a nice balance of food," Freid said. "Last Wednesday, we had the Night of the Arts where the Leah Posluns Theatre, the Variety Theatre, the Limelight, the Bayview Playhouse, Yuk-Yuks, and the Finch and Fairview Cineplex-Odeon theatres asked their patrons to bring food with them. . . Overall it was a success; it brought in over 400 pounds of food."

North York Harvest's next major food drive has already begun in conjunction with the North York Board of Education. Twenty-five schools in the city are trying to gather 25,000 pounds of food. Freid is optimistic about reaching this goal because

each school is asking its students to bring in non-perishable items from February 24 to March 5.

The food bank relies solely on volunteers. Even Freid, who is the coordinator, does not draw a salary but may do so in the future if finances allow. He hopes that at least "there will be enough money coming in to pay for a Metropass." Freid has not had to make too many financial sacrifices so far because he has a part-time job as a photographer at the Eaton Centre, and lives with his parents.

The food bank has "enough money for the next two or three months," according to Freid, but would appreciate any kind of assistance, be it in the form of manpower, food, or monetary donations. "We can always use volunteers," Freid said, "particularly following the food drive on March 6 and 7."

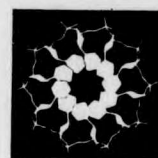
Interested persons can contact Loren Freid at 746-8438 or at the food bank located at 3640 Weston Road, Unit 11 (just north of Finch Avenue).

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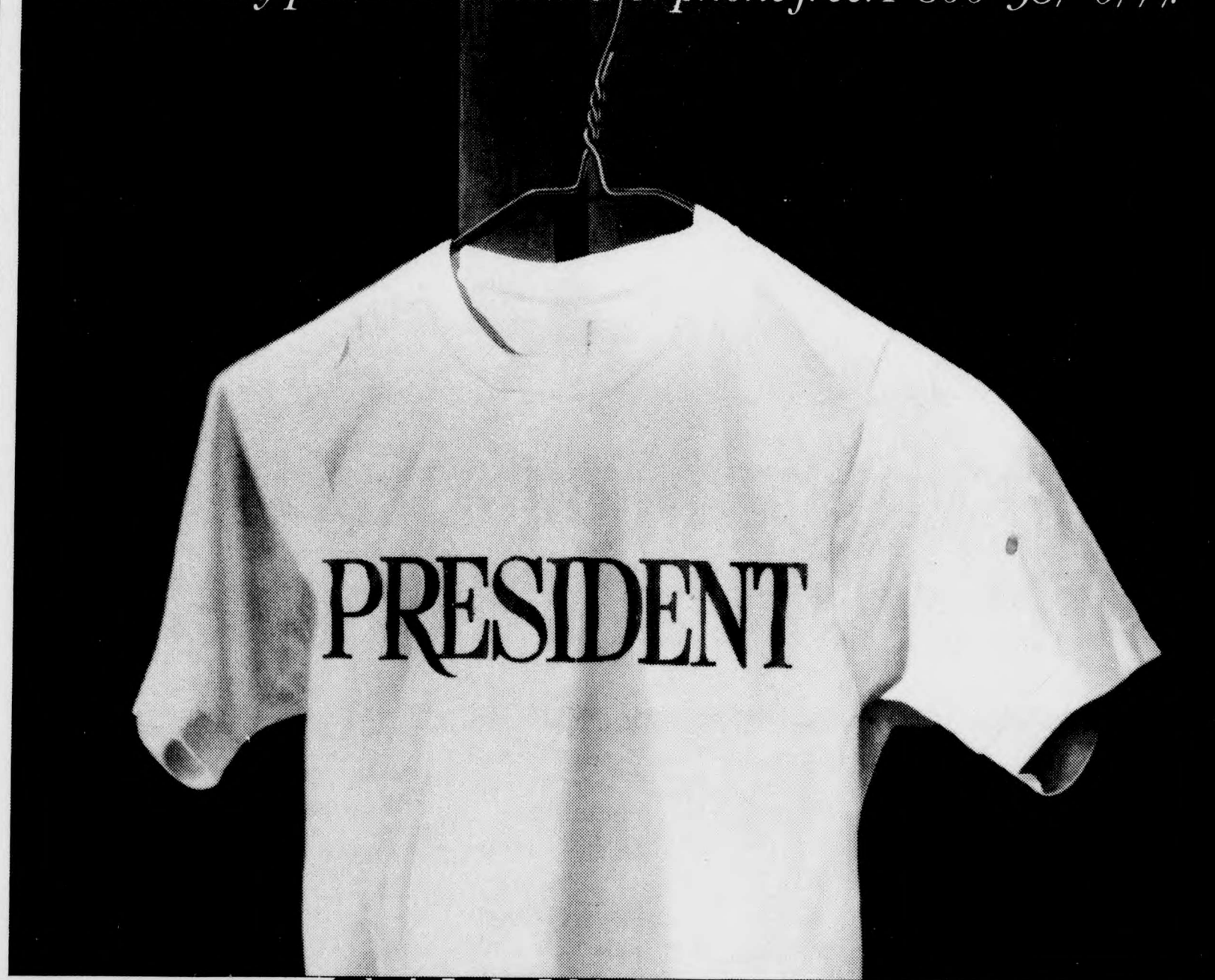
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