

A new way of life in a new environment.

Following the outbreak of Covid 19 in the UK and the lockdown requested by the government, I received an email from Chippenham Rotary Club requesting help for the local Food bank run by the Salvation Army.



Being one of the Rotary members in the age group who did not need to isolate, I chose to volunteer to help. On the first day I met friends from Rotary, Bridge and Church all offering to give a hand. With the help of regular volunteers on our first day we made and delivered food parcels equivalent to which they normally distribute in one month. Seeing the need and the high level of contributions needed for the food bank to cope, prior to returning for another day I phoned round the local supermarkets for help (either with donations or giving us the opportunity to buy the level of food we would require). Morrisons came up trumps and asked me to call round at 2.30pm for a donation of fresh food. They offered more than I could take in one car and I discovered on returning to the Food Bank they had phoned in and asked us to collect more. We had a large stock of pasta from Christmas donations, but found sourcing milk, tinned meat, tinned fruit and loo rolls in large quantities difficult. Having a wholesaler's account I volunteered to go on a buying hunt, only to find limited stocks at the wholesaler. Having cleared their shelves of what they had, I googled the nearest Tesco and headed off to them. On route I passed a Lidl. They had tinned meat in stock and kindly relaxed strict rules and let me have half their entire stock.



On arrival at Tesco (Trowbridge) I asked the manager for help. He was fantastic and let me have all we needed.

All this has been funded by donations from the public, Chippenham Borough Lands and The Rotary and Inner Wheel Trust of Chippenham. Then came the news that all cafés and non essential shops had to close. The National Trust, T K Max, Grounded, Rivo, Greigs and many more kindly brought us fresh produce to distribute. The M.O.D closed their canteen and late on a Friday afternoon gave us 250 sealed packs of sandwiches. Many went out to those in need, but to save on waste I was tasked with finding a home for them. I googled local care homes and our great team of fellow volunteers delivered all we had to over ten grateful care homes.



Another week came along and again we were running out of stock, this time of baked beans, (where did they all go) no joy at the Wholesaler, again Tesco came to the rescue with 250 tins of baked beans. The Food Bank also receives a good supply of food from Fair Share, who have been so helpful in providing food that is really useful.



Morrisons continued to provide with fresh veg and even more bread, in fact hundreds of loaves of bread, so yet again we reached to the phones, spread our wings and delivered 600 loaves to even more care homes (I think everyone in Calne, Chippenham and Corsham care homes must now have their fill of sandwiches and bread and butter pudding).



Just as we were running out of breakfast cereals we received a call from Nestle who wanted to donate some, and they delivered them just in time. As our team of volunteers increased along came a Rotarian from Calne. We have sorters, packers, distributors, food, cleaners, cooks (meals for the homeless) and collectors.



Stocks unsurprisingly run low again. When asked the manager from Lidl's said "I have a full store room now, If I have it you can have what you need". I did not have to queue for too long either. (No pictures very shy staff)



Then in the afternoon as promised we received a donation of tinned food from Morrisons central food warehouse. Amazingly they supplied everything we were running short off that I had difficulty obtaining locally. Ie tinned potatoes, tinned tomatoes, tinned sweetcorn and tea.

One more week went by and we had run out of tinned meat, baked beans, tinned fruit, tinned fish, potatoes, carrots parsnips and milk. A further trip to the wholesaler proved a success, £750 lighter and another generous delivery from Morrisons head office and we were

fully stocked again. Some items still prove difficult to obtain, parsnips seemed to be in short supply, pasta was running out and fresh fruit was often like gold dust. Then the next day it is all back on the shelf.

Just as we thought we had a poor selection of cereals left along came Nestle again, only with more than ever in number and choice, all safely stored away for the weeks ahead.



People and firms keep on giving, and thanks to them we are keeping up our stock levels, Today Nationwide Building Society provided a tray of Easter eggs for our families, Marks and Spencer provided over 60 large Easter eggs and boxes of small Easter eggs.

But it never lasts long and I am sure when so many people will receive little or no pay this month the demand will grow. The challenge is will we be able to meet the need in the coming weeks, maybe months?