

Community Food Mentor Success Story Ashley Brown



“The greatest success story is the fact that a number of special people walked into my life just when I needed them. If I didn’t connect with my Corbett Avenue Wesleyan Church family, Greener Village’s Teaching kitchen, and the Community Food Mentor Program there would be no meal assembly workshop” –Ashley Brown, Owner of Dinner’s Done Meal Assembly Workshop

I got the idea when I was living in Saskatchewan where I attended my first meal assembly workshop. As a single parent moving to New Brunswick and working full time with a 9 ½ month year old daughter I was finding it very difficult to prepare healthful nutritious meals. That is when I decided to make a positive change by implementing the meal assembly workshop in my own home. The stress removed from my life was incredible and in return had a positive effect not only me, but on my daughter as well.

I decided to implement the program with my fellow single parents at Corbett Avenue Wesleyan Church to help reduce their stress of meal planning. With the amazing support of the leaders with Solo Ministries, the pastoral staff and the congregation made this dream possible. With time, food and cash donations made the workshops a truly humbling experience. To date, we have been able to host two meal assembly workshops at my church. We assembled 54 meals in less than 2 hours and each participant took home six meals that will feed between 4-6 people.

Once I saw the success it had with my church I thought to myself there must be a way I can reach out to other community members. This is where the Greener Village Community Food Centre came into play. This past year I have been going to Greener Village for my Community Food Smart Bags and I knew they had a teaching kitchen. I got into contact with Lisa Wilby, their Greener Teaching Kitchen Manager to see how we could partner up to make these classes happen. Lisa then led me to the Community Food Mentor Program (CFM). The CFM program helped me not only make some amazing community connections yet, it also helped me obtain my food safety certification, increase my hands on-meal preparation skills and learn how to cook healthful nutritious meals on a budget.

The Community Food Mentor Program helped inspire me to move forward with this small business initiative. Through the support, insight, encouragement and collaboration amongst other community food mentor students I was able to make my very first workshop happen in Greener Village's Teaching Kitchen. By pairing up with one of my CFM classmates who is passionate about vegetarianism, we were able to make my workshops that much more inclusive by converting my recipes to meet the needs of a broader population. The workshop included myself and 4 of my CFM classmates who came together to assemble 35 meals and each of us were able to take 7 freezer bag meals home. My CFM classmates helped spread the word about my workshop through picture taking, social media and sharing to friends, family and coworkers.

Greener Villages Teaching Kitchen is honestly the hinge in business idea. It provides me with an affordable, inclusive and certified kitchen for people to come together and assemble meals. I am truly thankful for Lisa, Rachel, Cliff, the Community Food Mentor course, classmates and my Church family to have provided me with the knowledge and inspiration to pursue my Meal Assembly Workshop vision.

My ultimate goal is to be able to provide these classes to single parents, free of charge, as I have seen how it has helped me overcome various barriers when it comes to healthy, nutritious, and most importantly AFFORDABLE food for all.

If you are interested in attending a **Dinner's Done Meal Assembly Workshop** you can contact Ashley Brown at the following places:

Website: <http://dinnerdonemeal.weebly.com/reserve.html>

Facebook: @DinnersDoneMeal

Or by Email: dinnerdonemeal@gmail.com

