

Derek Wilson, 7th Inning Youth Worker



**In the Photo:
Derek Wilson, Langs Child and Youth Worker helping deliver food.
A partnership with the Cambridge Self Help Food Bank**

Derek Wilson was in a meeting when he got a text message saying Ontario had closed schools indefinitely. For the grade 7/8 students who attend Langs 7th Inning Program, it meant removing a lifeline of a safe space they depend on for structure, food, community and trusted resources to navigate school and life.

For Derek and the team, an additional weight of knowledge was the anticipated rise in child and domestic abuse due to the stresses of the pandemic. Their inability to see the dynamics in the home, how and if the family might be struggling, if the students were tired, hungry, injured, or if they might be 'using' meant Derek and the team needed to come up with a way to re-establish connection fast. The team started with daily phone check-ins, provided direct numbers for students to call for assistance and even lent out Chrome books for completion of school work. They compiled lists of what each child and family needed, making resource connections and delivering care packages of food, toiletries, and physical fitness supplies. They arranged for virtual counselling, stress management seminars, even a 'hotline' number to access Derek day or night.

To top it off, as a member of the Langs Community Services Team, Derek helped to deliver 100's of food hampers (practicing physical distancing and wearing PPE) to Langs' families with mobility issues. Derek effortlessly role models for the youth he serves. "It's been a stressful month with many challenges, but being part of the solution is how I deal. I love to help and I love to be on the front line. I feel most confident and happy when I'm 'being useful'."
