



Megan McGrath, President of the Eganville & District Seniors, accepts a cheque for \$2,000 from Bernadette Reinert, Branch Manager at Pembroke Royal Canadian Bank, while executive director Kayla Menkhorst, Executive Director, Kathy Herback, Commercial Account Manager RBC, Jackie Laughlin, Community Manager RBC for Ottawa Valley, and EDS board members look on.

New Eganville and District Seniors cooking program supported with \$2,000 RBC grant

By Johanna Zomers

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Eganville -- "I watch cooking change the cook, just as it transforms food."

So said Laura Esquivel, the Mexican novelist and politician, who wrote *"Like Water for Chocolate"*.

In that spirit, a generous contribution from the RBC Foundation will assist the Eganville & District Seniors (EDS) with a new program to meet the cooking, nutritional and social needs of seniors and singles in the area. The project, titled *Cooking for One (or Two!)* will guide participants through the process of creating healthy, affordable meals for themselves while preparing an extra portion or two to share with someone else who may not be part of the program. The shared portion will encourage friendly interactions with others who may be feeling socially isolated because we know that cooking and eating food can break down barriers and build friendships. In

the words of Cesar Chavez, "If you really want to make a friend, go to someone's house and eat with him... The people who give you their food, give you their heart."

EDS Executive Director, Kayla Menkhorst, applied for the RBC grant hoping to fund a program to teach or improve cooking skills and to offer low cost, healthy food options to seniors in the community. Ms. Menkhorst noted many seniors have been cooking for families or large gatherings and they struggle with making a meal for one or two people, so they resort to quick and easy options, perhaps less healthy than they cooked before. Also, many seniors are on a fixed income and the cost of food is rising, making it even harder for them to make healthy, delicious meals.

The program, slated to begin this fall depending on COVID-19 restrictions, will draw on the expertise of local chefs and cooks and take place at the Echo Centre at 30 Bell St.

which is equipped with a commercial kitchen. Depending on the demand, there may also be specialized classes to cook gluten free and diabetic friendly meals. Each participant will receive recipe cards as well as a grocery gift card to purchase additional groceries to cook the meal again at home.

The RBC Foundation has been committed to helping communities prosper during these unprecedented times by donating to charitable organizations that have been directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff at EDS noted that the isolation of COVID-19 was seriously affecting the mental health of many senior and disabled members of the community, noting it was harder to reach out to ask for help and many have gotten into the habit of being alone.

Bernadette Reinert, Branch Manager at Pembroke RBC, who presented the \$2,000 cheque, stated RBC is proud to work with organizations such as EDS, citing their exceptional

work to help the most vulnerable in the community.

The EDS, founded in 1987, provides crucial services through their Home Support Program, including Meals on Wheels, Frozen Meals, Home Maintenance, Transportation and Social and Security to seniors, disabled and recently discharged hospital patients in Bonnechere Valley, Admaston/Bromley, North Algona Wilberforce and Pikwakanagan. Previous to COVID-19 restrictions, the Seniors Active Living Centre at the Echo Centre hosted regular weekly card parties, and a range of exercise, craft, computer and art classes. Regular activities are slowly resuming with proof of full vaccination required to participate.

For more information or to sign up for the classes, call (613) 628-2354 or email info@eganvilleseniors.com. Schedules, activities, volunteer opportunities and more are available at www.eganvilleseniors.com