

# Unpacking a Harvest hamper 3: The baby kit



## Feeding babies • Nurturing parents

The fourth and final box in the Harvest Hamper was labeled 'Baby Kit.'

As I start unboxing, I see it contains formula, pablum, diapers and wipes. I imagine that for a family with a newborn, this is pure gold. But more powerfully, when I hold the two Ziploc bags of disposable diapers in my hands, what I feel is connection and love. Both bags have been packed and labelled by hand. One bag is marked 'Size 1' and the other is 'Size 3-4T'.

I found out later that volunteers love working on the 'baby box.' I can understand why. In this moment, as my hands are physically feeling the cool plastic bag outside and baby-soft contents inside, it's easy to imagine how a stressed parent could feel that they came not from a hamper but from the hands of another mom or dad who understood the feelings of joy and stress of a new baby.

I believe this empathy, this feeling of connection, family, and community is part of the

Harvest experience we all share. It happens whether we give or receive. Add in a baby and it really hits home.

### Contents may vary

There is a lot of very basic, practical baby food here. Formula is a staple. A child's first 'solid food' could come from one these four boxes of baby cereal. They're non-GMO, banana-rice made by Gerber. Every spoonful gives baby about 25 calories along with 13 vitamins and minerals. There is no added sugar, salt or preservatives. The best before date is more than a month away.

*Baby formula/food is one of Harvest Manitoba's Top 10 most-needed Tin for the Bin items.*

### Feeding babies since 2008

Baby kits are fairly new to Harvest. According to Colleen McVarish, director of corporate partnerships, "Harvest Manitoba started distributing baby kits through its 'Hunger



Supplied photo

Harvest volunteers often say that one of their favourite tasks is packing baby kits for mothers and children who need empathy, support and love.

for Hope' program in 2008. The mission was 'To make sure no child goes to bed hungry.' In 2017, we changed the name to 'First Steps - Feeding Hungry Babies.' We would supply baby formula to mothers depending on what we had on hand. In 2018 or 2019 we officially included baby food and cereal in the program."

### Harvest Stars shining

Since March 2020 when the COVID pandemic began, requests for Harvest baby kits have increased dramatically. Right now, Harvest makes and distributes 350 to 400 kits per month.

About 30 per cent of the baby kit comes from food and product donations. Approximately 1,000 pounds of baby kit products are collected through Harvest's Tin for the Bin program at grocery stores every month. Hopefully, this figure will increase with a renewed focus on Harvest's new Tin for the Bin program once public health orders lift and Manitobans return to the stores.

The remaining 70 per cent is funded through the generosity of Harvest donations from Manitobans. Also, many wholesale and retail partners have stepped up with deep discounts that allow Harvest to create as many baby kits as they do.

They are true Harvest Stars working behind the scenes to feed our community.

### Formula for caring

As I step back and look at this baby kit

again, I can see many hands helping. I see flailing baby hands, spoons flying, sounds of laughter, chaos and love. And I'm pretty sure this is what Harvest means when they say "nourishing our community and our sense of community."

This is the final instalment of the 'Unpacking a Harvest Hamper' series. Stay tuned for some interesting and inspiring stories every month about how our province comes together through Harvest, and how, with our tins, dollars and good nature, we make ourselves a Community of Harvest Stars.

For more information on Harvest Manitoba and its programs, visit [www.harvestmanitoba.ca](http://www.harvestmanitoba.ca)



CONTACT US AT 204.697-7050  
or email [sales@canstarnews.com](mailto:sales@canstarnews.com)

**CANSTAR**  
COMMUNITY NEWS

Visit our website for additional community news @  
[www.canstarnews.com](http://www.canstarnews.com)

**THE HARVEST MANITOBA**  
*Lee Newton*  
MEMORIAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

**Tee Up to Prevent Hunger!**  
Wednesday, August 11, 2021 • Shotgun start at 12 Noon  
\$195 per golfer. Includes 18 holes, cart, food, fun and prizes.  
Sponsorship opportunities also available.

For more details and to register, please visit: [HarvestManitoba.ca/Golf](http://HarvestManitoba.ca/Golf)