



## Family the right ingredient for chili; community



L to R – Kelsey Halbesma, Stan Halbesma, Debbie Halbesma –  
*a happy affair even with onions*

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You'd be surprised what lessons can be learned during a family session of chili cooking, and just how much of it has nothing to do with cooking at all.

Just ask Stan Halbesma, the owner of Harry's Foods and a member of the Selkirk and District Community Foundation board of directors. Halbesma assembled most of his family – daughter Jessica moved to Calgary recently and couldn't be there – to whip up an extra large batch for the Holiday Alley Chili Cook Off held Dec. 3.

Sure, there was Stan's advice to his daughters and grandson on how many cans of kidney beans make the perfect chili, but Halbesma is hoping what they soaked up most was why they were cooking.

The Halbesma clan's batch was the official SDCF entry into the cook off – and for Halbesma it was just another opportunity to expose his family to giving back, and make them aware that you are fortunate, to be fortunate, in this world.

"I'm a very lucky person. In spite of the fact that I've had a very busy career, I've always found time to do things with my family," Halbesma said.

"We've spent hours together in the kitchen cooking and it's really important to me that I expose my daughters, my family, to some of the less fortunate people in the community."

Halbesma is in his sixth and final year as a member of the foundation board, and he said he's gone from knowing very little about the foundation to now knowing a whole lot about it and his community.

"I was asked five-and-a-half years ago by then Mayor Don Forfar to join the foundation, and I admit I knew nothing of the foundation and I knew nothing of how foundations worked," he said.

"But I did some research and I went through the interview process and was chosen to be on the board. After a while of being a deer in the headlights and trying to figure out exactly what was going on, I have a much better understanding and have come to realize it is a fantastic group of volunteers."

Over the past six years Halbesma said he's been impressed with the generosity of a community that never fails to donate to the foundation and entrust their gifts to its staff and board members.

"When you become an active board member of the foundation you really become aware of two things – one is how much need there is in our community for all these different organizations, and that's no different than any other community," he said.

"But first and foremost is the amount of passion and commitment that so many people have to this community to make it a better place. That was the big thing that I took out of my years on the foundation – just how active of a volunteer base that we have in the community that is not always front and centre in the media and getting the attention."

The foundation has granted more than \$2 million to community groups since 1997 and almost \$250,000 in 2016-17 alone. Money has gone to all kinds of causes, from helmets for skating programs, to airbeds for palliative care. The foundation teamed up with the Community Fund for Canada's 150 and the Government of Canada to provide \$15,000 to Holiday Alley to purchase lights for participating businesses in Lighting the Night for 150.

"The whole concept of bringing the community together to kick off winter, to kick off Christmas I thought was just a wonderful idea. The fact the lights brought attention to that, that kind of got that whole ball rolling...it was a huge success," Halbesma said.

And so it only makes sense that Halbesma would be raising, so to speak, the next generation of volunteers, of people who realize how important it is to give back to the place that helped raise them.

While it was important to have all the right ingredients when making the chili, the most important ingredient was family, Halbesma said. And he figures if his kids and grandkids can learn that family extends beyond the walls of their own home and

into the streets of their community, maybe they will be the next generation that makes a difference.

“We’ve done things such as delivering Christmas hampers and volunteered at other events, but what I’m so proud of is I just have to explain to my family the concept, we’re doing this chili cook off, I want everybody to come to the store, and we’re going to make it together, I never have to ask twice, they’re very enthusiastic about jumping in there and giving a hand. We enjoy doing those things together,” he said.

“I hope I’m teaching them the importance of giving back to the community, the importance of volunteering their time to help people help the community. Over the years you wonder sometimes, has that message settled in, and when I see the enthusiasm of my family helping out, including my young grandson, I think that the message has sunk in and I’m very proud of that.”

The Selkirk and District Community Foundation is a charitable organization that provides financial support to charitable causes and agencies in their region, which includes Selkirk, St. Andrews and St. Clements. Gifts from donors enable the Foundation to support countless groups and individuals in our community. The Foundation has given in excess of \$2 million to more than 125 local charities and community organizations.