

Community pitched in to help others over the Holidays

By Bill Rea

The spirit of helping and giving has always been strong in Caledon, and that was certainly the case over the Holidays.

Caledon Community Services (CCS) once again ran their annual Santa Fund in support of families in the area facing hard times.

Fiona Coughlin, director of fund raising and communications with CCS, said there were more than 150 families needing assistance, and that included more than 300 children. She observed that works out to about one child in every classroom in Caledon.

"It's about even with last year," she added.

Coughlin said the effort has gathered support from many groups and individuals, including businesses. Caledon OPP dropped off many contributions collected from schools through the Cram the Cruiser program. As well, she said there's been "amazing support from a variety of school groups coming in."

The contributions went to the Exchange on Healey Road in Bolton this year.

"People are definitely donating and they know where we are, which is wonderful," Coughlin said.

For the sixth year in a row, Husky Injection Molding Systems matched every dollar donated to the Santa Fund up to \$25,000.

"Husky is proud to support Caledon Community Services," said Husky's Vice President of Corporate Services and General Counsel Michael McKendry. "We have participated in the annual Santa Fund campaign for six years and are happy to contribute to this worthy cause that helps to assist families and children in need at this time of year. I hope that we can encourage other local business leaders to help the Santa Fund reach its goal by generously giving back to the community during the holiday season."

"It is the community's residents and business owners that drive the Santa Fund to success," observed Monty Laskin, CEO of CCS.

"It is through our community's support that hundreds of families celebrate the holidays and build hope for the year ahead. Having Husky in our corner is extraordinary; it brings Caledon together in the spirit of giving."

Many local schools helped out with the CCS efforts, but there were other activities some of them were involved with.

Staff and students at Belfountain Public School were involved in the Share the Joy program, which was put on by the Peel District School Board, according to Office Manager Debbie Sutton.

She explained the Board provided the details of a family in Peel that was going through difficult times, including what they needed, and the school community pitched in to help.

Share the Joy benefitted from the efforts of Credit View Public School.

"The community has donated a lot of items," observed Principal David Abelo.

He also said the school collected non-perishable food items for the Caledon Firefighters Food Bank.

CCS benefitted from a toy drive that was organized by Holy Family Elementary School in Bolton, Head Secretary Margaret Proctor reported.

She also said the school's youth faith ambassadors had been making gingerbread houses with residents of the Davis Centre in Bolton, and they were to be raffled off, with the money going to ShareLife, the annual charitable appeal, of the Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto.

The community at Caledon East Public School were among those taking part in Share the Joy, and Principal Heather Denley said they managed to raise some \$1,500 in cash and gift cards.

"I think that's pretty impressive for a school of 250 kids," she said.

The community at Macville Public School had a couple of projects on the go, according to behavioral teaching assistant Louise Milliken. She said the school contributed to the CCS food drive, as well as gathering items from a hat and mitten tree for CCS.

Staff from James Bolton Public School worked to help a family through the Share the Joy program, Principal Laurie Allison reported.

The school as a whole collected food contributions for the breakfast program at a school in Brampton. And there were other food contributions that were delivered to CCS through the Cram the Cruiser program of Caledon OPP. As well, the Home and School headed up a toy drive for CCS. She also said gently-used snow suits, hats, mittens and boots were collected to donate to a school in Milton.

There was quite a bit of charitable activity for the Holidays around Herb Campbell Public School.

Teacher Kelly Peake reported they were taking part in the Share the Joy program, gathering food, gift and household items for a struggling family.

The school also collected food items for OPP to deliver to CCS by cramming cruisers.

As well, there was a Candy Cane Tree set up at the school, with students taking a cane with information on a child and buying an

appropriate gift.

"Every day, we come to school and the pile of gifts keeps growing," Peake observed in the days leading up to the holidays. CCS benefitted from the charitable efforts of the Ellwood Memorial Public School community.

Assistant Secretary Brenda Conforti said CCS received the contributions of a Mitten and Hat Tree. And the school also crammed a couple of cruisers with food items for the police to deliver.

Students at Palgrave Public School also crammed their share of cruisers; eight in all, according to Principal Julia Breen.

The school is also very active with Sleeping Children Around the World, which supplied bed kits to children in the Third World. The students and staff at St. Cornelius Elementary School in Caledon East were also involved in cramming cruisers, along with some other charitable work over the season, according to Assistant Secretary Marisa Cafagna.

As well, the school is involved in Project Gift. The students were compiling shoe boxes and filling them with toiletries, toys and other useful items for an under-privileged child.

A toy drive in support of CCS was among the projects undertaken by the community at St. John the Baptist Elementary School in Bolton.

Head Secretary Louise Grant also said the school was working to support a couple of local families in need of assistance.

Allan Drive Middle School in Bolton collected 616 canned-goods items to contribute to CCS through the Cram the Cruiser program. Students were also selling Rafiki bracelets, with proceeds going to Free the Children.

Special Education Teacher Sean Hennessy said it's part of the effort to get students involved in being community leaders.

He added Rafiki bracelets are hand-made in Kenya. "It's Swahili for 'friendship,'" he said. He observed that \$50 could buy a goat which could help a family support itself. "We sold 200 bracelets and raised \$1,000," he said.

There were a couple of projects undertaken at Mayfield Secondary School.

Special Ed. Teacher Meghan Barson said families in Peel Region were adopted to receive donations and gift cards. As well, toiletries, gift cards and clothing were contributed to the efforts of CCS, and staff collected contributions to a women's shelter.

Things have been busy, from a charitable point of view, at St. Michael Catholic Secondary School in Bolton.

Chaplain Colette Sicoli reported students were busy putting Christmas baskets together for families in the community.

In addition, she said items like dried beans, soap, powdered milk, etc. have been collected at the school to go recipients in the Third World, mainly in Central and South America, through Canadian Food for Children.

"If we have families in need in the school community, we assist them too," she said.

Students and staff at SouthFields Village Public School were busy collecting items to cram into police cruisers, filling three of them.

Teacher Christine Byrne Martin said they also collected 12 boxes of personal care items for Peel Children's Aid Society.

The efforts at Alloa Public School included collecting hats and mittens for Single Women in Progress Peel, a group for single mothers, according to Principal Tammy King.

As well, she said the school collected food contributions to Peel Outreach.

"We collected just over 800 items," she said. "We had quite a bit for a little school."

There was a food drive at Caledon Central Public School in support of CCS, Principal Lynn Bristoll reported. She added two students at the school were sponsored under the Caledon OPP Shop with a Cop program.

Students at Alton Public School made contributions of hats and mittens to a Mitten Tree, with the items being distributed in the Orangeville area, according to Principal Laurie Johnson.

She also said Grade 5 and 6 students are going to start learning about addressing poverty in the new year by holding a food drive. As well, Johnson said they were gathering gently used coats and snow suits for students at a needy school in Peel.

The efforts from St. John Paul II Catholic Elementary School included collecting school-age toys for the efforts of CCS, according to parent volunteer Serina Acocella.

The charitable work at Robert F. Hall Catholic Secondary School included a food drive in support of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Orangeville, according to Chaplain Brenda Holtkamp.

She said students took tags of a tree. The tags represented a child in need and the student bought a gift for that child.

As well, Holtkamp said they collected more than 1,100 pairs of socks for Good Shepherd Ministries in Toronto, and put together Christmas baskets for families using Romero House, a Toronto centre for refugees.

The people at St. Nicholas Elementary School in Bolton have been doing "tons" of charitable work for the Holidays, according to Vice-Principal Velia Viola. "We did so much."

She said they made contributions to Dr. Simone, who supplied candy to children in the Third World, also supplying hygiene items in ziplock bags.

?We always give to ShareLife,? Viola added.

There were several activities being carried out at Humberview Secondary School, according to Principal Sue Fried.

There has been a Me to We Boutique, which saw a number of items for sale to support the Me To We Club. It raises funds for both local and international charities. Items include Rafiki Chains, which she said made excellent stocking stuffers and they are made by African women who are working to earn a sustainable income for their families.

The Interact Club made cards for the King Centre for seniors and ornaments to decorate for the Rotary Christmas Dinner.

Fried added members of the Interact Club will be volunteering at the Exchange Jan. 13.

The Student Activity Council (SAC) raised more than \$1000 for the Santa Fund. In excess of 200 students donated a portion of the price of their Semi-Formal ticket towards the fund.

?The SAC wanted a practical demonstration for our concern for others and enriches everyone's lives,? she observed.



Staff at Rowland Investments in Caledon dropped off a wide assortment of food contributions at the Exchange in Bolton, helping the efforts of Caledon Community Services (CCS). The company has made annual donations to the Santa fund for more than 15 years, always matched by Manulife Financial. Kim D'Eri, manager of community animation for CCS, Event Planner Shona Lauzon and Board Member Bill Dunne accepted the contributions from Bente and Jim Rowland and Julianne Carras. One of the company's product partners will be matching the contribution. Photo by Bill Rea



Allan Drive Middle School in Bolton was one of the schools where students were invited to cram Caledon OPP?cruisers.



The front hall of James Bolton Public School was filled recently with contributions from the school's charitable efforts. Seen here are Principal Laurie Allison, Vice-Principal Jeremy Taylor, Samantha Di Virgilio of the Home and School Association, and students

Sophia Tsitsias, Renee Favot, Sydney Bennett, Nicholas Lowther, Melina Barker, Sophie Rapallo and Taylor Robinson. Photo by Bill Rea



Fr. Bob Glynn and Chaplain Brenda Holtkamp joined students of Robert F. Hall Catholic Secondary School in the midst of the contributions they collected for the less fortunate.