

Local program looks after seniors for the holidays]

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Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Senior's Santa Christmas Stockings Program is working to bring some Christmas magic to local seniors this holiday season.

The Dufferin County-based organization is collecting donation items for their annual initiative that looks to provide gifts to local seniors living in long-term care homes, retirement facilities and within the community.

"Our goal is to put a smile on all seniors' faces and touch them with a little bit of Christmas magic so they know they haven't been forgotten," said Julie Evason, organizer of the annual fundraiser.

The Senior's Santa Christmas Stocking Program began in 2015, and Evason has been a part of the initiative as a volunteer since its second year.

"I had lost both my parents and Christmas really wasn't special for me. Working in health care I saw the number of seniors that didn't have visitors and it really touched me," explained Evason. "I decided to reach out and join, and I loved every second of it; it really warmed my heart."

The Senior's Santa Christmas Stocking Program works by having local residents fill stockings (bags or boxes) with a variety of gifts and donating them. Those stockings are then sorted through and distributed on Christmas Day (Dec. 25).

The initiative also offers residents the opportunity to be a sponsor for a senior, where they buy gifts specific to one senior.

"These stockings and sponsored gifts give the seniors essential items and also gives them a little fun to brighten their day," said Evason.

As part of the fundraiser, the Senior's Santa Christmas Stocking Program is also hosting an online auction to help raise funds to go towards filling stockings.

The online auction will run until Dec. 15 and includes items such as an Instant Pot, restaurant gift certificates, Pandora items, and candles.

Long-term care homes and retirement facilities involved in the Christmas program include Dufferin Oaks, Shelburne Long Term Care Home & Retirement Community, Avalon, Bethsaida and the Lord Dufferin Centre.

According to Evason, there are already over 560 seniors lined up to receive a stocking but she expects the number to rise closer to 800.

Specific items asked for to stuff the stockings include toiletries such as soap, lip balm, tissues, baby powder, hairspray and shampoo as well as personal items including word search/puzzle books, tea or coffee, slippers, calendars and gift cards for local business. The initiative asks that metal nail files and alcohol-based items are not included.

Monetary donations can be made by e-transfer at seniorssantasstockings@gmail.com.

Senior's Santa Christmas Stockings Program has a number of donation drop-off locations within Dufferin County.

Shelburne Drop-off Location:

? Marg McCarthy Realty (110 Centennial Road)

Mono Drop-off Locations:

? Nifty Nook Restaurant (633432 Hwy. 10)

? JAKL Kids Store (Mono Plaza, 633419 Hwy 10)

Orangeville Drop-off Locations:

? Head Elf Head Quarters (98 Church Street)

? Re/Max Real Estate Centre (115 First Street ? ask for Lorie Haddock and Kim Giles)

? Anytime Fitness Orangeville (224 Centennial Rd #13)

? Headwaters Physiotherapy (48 Centennial Rd, Unit 18)

? Absolute Insurance (71 5th Avenue)

? Expedia Cruise (489 Broadway, Unit 11)

? Nichol Insurance (4 Clara Street)

?Anyone who would like to donate but doesn't drive or have a means of transportation, I'm more than happy to pick up and I do have volunteers who are also willing to pick up items,? added Evason.

If you know a senior who is struggling this holiday season and could use the help contact the Senior's Santa Christmas Stocking Program by phone at 519-215-8485 or by email at seniorssantasstockings@gmail.com.