

EDITORIAL: All I want for Christmas...

This Christmas, it's my turn to give back ? even if I'm only coordinating the effort.

Through the three papers that I edit ? The Times of New Tecumseth & Adjala?Tosorontio, The Innisfil Scope and the Shelburne Free Press ? we have launched ?The Giving Back Project?.

The goal of the project is to match local families (or individuals) in need, with families (or individuals) living in abundance.

Not that long ago, I was the person at the receiving end. I used the food bank and I also accepted Christmas presents from local people who knew I would struggle to give my son a proper Christmas. I knew one day that it would be my turn to ?give back? thus, the name of our new initiative.

I remember feeling guilty about accepting ?charity? from other people at the time, but my son didn't know the difference ? Santa had arrived on Christmas morning, and I was glad I could still pay my rent.

So far, we have had three people step up and offer to sponsor a family, and only one person ?nominate? a friend as a recipient. I'm glad that if no one else steps forward that we helped even one family this holiday season. They have no idea we're coming on Christmas Eve, my son and myself, to make their Christmas exciting. The worst thing that could happen is they feel depressed about being a ?charity case?. That would be bad, and defeat the purpose of this project. I hope that doesn't happen, and I hope all of our recipients can see that their chance to ?pay it forward? will one day come.

On the lighter side, I was sharing a tale from Christmas past with my co-workers the other day. I think you'll find it amusing...

When I was about 7 years old, all I wanted for Christmas was one of those hairdressing heads on a platform. The platform itself had various receptacles to store clips, elastics and other do-dads to hold your hairstyling masterpiece in place. The doll head had thick blonde hair that was all one length. You could comb it, braid it, put it in a ponytail, cut it ? whatever you wanted to do with it.

I needed this toy. I had to have it.

My parents got the message too ? perhaps it was the endless whining and crying, or the pictures cut out of the Sears Wish Book and the local flyers (posted in obvious places, like the fridge and their bathroom mirror).

Sure enough, on Christmas morning my doll head was under the tree. Wrapped in shiny paper with a bow and everything. The problem was, it had my sister's name on it. You see, it appears that ?Santa's little helpers? had a few cocktails while wrapping gifts the night before and forgot to label as they went.

My sister, who never wanted or asked for the doll head with hair from the heavens refused to give it to me, even though my parents explained that Santa had made a mistake.

All day, she brushed the dolls hair and changed its look, running to show my parents with each new achievement. I spent Christmas devastated. The world would never be the same.

The next year, I asked for an Easy Bake Oven. My mom told me it was too messy and the cake mixes ? which mysteriously baked using only the heat from a low-watt light bulb ? were too expensive. I never got that either.

Now, even as an adult, I will stop in toy stores and look at the doll head ? which they still sell by the skid load ? and at the beginner oven, with lust.

Of course I'm over it (I think) but it's funny how the moments of Christmas past always stick with you.

Now, Christmas for me is watching the faces of my children as they tear open paper and screech with delight at what Santa has brought for them ? properly labelled, of course.

It's about the twinkling tree, the smell of baking in the oven and the look of satisfaction on the faces of my loved ones, after eating a turkey dinner.

As of this year, Christmas will also mean giving back to those I care about in my extended family ? the community that has always supported me.

The Giving Back Project is as exciting to me now, as that ridiculous doll head was when I was 7. It's the same feeling. Pure joy.

If you know of someone who needs a little help this holiday season, please let me know. Call me any time at 905-729-2287 ext. 109 or e-mail me at: wendy@simcoeyorkprinting.com. I'd be glad to put the connection together for you, and make Christmas a little brighter for the people you care about. Without participants, this is only a good idea.

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