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Children?s Christmas Market in Melancthon helps kids with holiday shopping

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The Helping Hands Project is running a Christmas market from Dec. 12 to Dec. 14 at Tripp Fields in Melancthon.

Sometimes, Christmas shopping isn't very affordable. That's even more apparent if you're a kid looking to get something thoughtful for your parents, siblings, or someone else who's close.

But that's where the Helping Hands Project aims to step in. They have gathered a large assortment of donated items to be sold for affordable prices, so that kids can have a chance to purchase something nice for Christmas.

Brenda Serbin, one of many volunteers with Helping Hands, said the goal was to give kids some independence.

?The general philosophy behind the market was to provide the kids with an opportunity to go out shopping without breaking the family budget,? she said. ?It's also an independence thing, giving them the freedom of purchasing and gifting something to someone they care about, to know that feeling of giving.?

This market sells items priced from $1 to $5, no matter what they are. This allows kids on a tight budget to purchase several items for as little as $10. The money isn't the focus, but the heartfelt gift the kids will give is.

?Everything is priced from $1 to $5, so that kids can come to the market with $20 and maybe get something for the whole family with cash left over,? Serbin said. ?As a mom or grandma, if your child's gone and picked out an item that didn't break your budget, you're quite happy. It could be a plastic ring, and you'd still say ?wow' because it's a genuine gift they picked for you from their heart.?

All of the money raised by the market will stay in the community and be donated to other charitable causes, such as local food banks.

Of course, for that extra special touch, the market also has a gift wrapping station, so when the kids have picked out what they'd like to get, they can have their choices wrapped up for them.

The Helping Hands Project is also preparing some shopping certificates for kids. Cash donations, such as a very generous $500 donation from a local resident, will be broken down into small, $10 packages to be given to kids who might have a little bit more cash for their Christmas shopping.

For parents on a tight budget during the holiday season, a special area has also been set aside. Concealed from the rest of the market, adults can come in and shop for items they might want as gifts, in comfort and privacy.

Serbin said that there will be a variety of items to choose from.

?We have things like brand new roasters, jewelry, toys, and stuff,? she said. ?There's a lot to pick from. I have a banquet hall on my property, a 3,000 square foot building, and it's absolutely packed with stuff we collected this year from donations.?

The Helping Hands Project is a relatively new but very busy and spirited organization. There is no hierarchy in the group; they maintain a collaborative atmosphere where everyone can propose new ideas freely, and it's been that way since the group was founded.

?Everything is done by voting here, including our name. They just thought of some names, and the Helping Hands Project was the one we went with,? Serbin said. ?We all own our own successes and failures. At the end of the day, we are just a bunch of people that love doing initiatives like this.?

The project is also looking to partner with local businesses.

?We would really love to have more businesses donate, as we haven't had too many step up yet,? Serbin said. ?Even if it was $20 per business, we could give out a bunch of $10 shopping certificates to kids. It would make a huge difference.?

While they might be new, the Helping Hands Project is full of passion and energy, and has committed itself to bringing more positivity to a world that needs it. They hope that anyone interested will visit their market and consider supporting them in the future.

The market will be open from 4:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Dec. 12, and open at 11 a.m. on both Dec. 13 and 14. It will be set up at Tripp Fields, 723190 Sideroad 250, Melancthon.

For more information about the Helping Hands Project and the market, contact Brenda Serbin at 519-943-3582.