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Local Hamper Program anticipating larger demand this year

Written By Paula Brown

The local Shelburne Hamper Program has started their annual Holiday Hamper fundraising and registration to offer families in the community a helping hand for the holiday season.

?There's a lot of very worthwhile programs, but this one is a little bit unique because all the money that's raised is from Shelburne residents and businesses and it goes directly to Shelburne families,? said Bobbi Ferguson, coordinator of the local initiative.

The Shelburne Christmas Hamper is a local program that has existed for over 50 years, and is organized and supported by the many service clubs in the town. The program gives out ?hampers? or boxes that contain staple foods and holiday specific foods such as ham or turkey, as well as gifts for children.

?Kids under 12 get toys that the parents can select and kids from 12 to 18 get a gift card,? said Ferguson.

With the COVID-19 pandemic and the financial impacts it has brought on families, Ferguson said the Shelburne Christmas Hamper is expecting upwards of 150 families registering for the program this year. When she started with the local program, six years ago she said there were around 80 families, but in 2019 they saw a 30% increase to 105 families.

?The numbers I've been seeing so far with our registration, some families are in a bad situation,? said Ferguson.

The Shelburne Christmas Hamper and Shepherd's Cupboard have partnered for 2020, allowing food bank clients to register for a hamper through the food bank, until the end of November.

Ardith Dunlop, volunteer coordinator at Shepherd's Cupboard, said at the local food bank they've seen a dramatic increase of clients registering for the Christmas hampers, and that numbers could go higher than 150.

Like many donation based programs across the province, the Shelburne Christmas Hamper questioned whether it would be able to gather enough donations to operate this year, with the schools as their main collections, not collecting donations. Despite the restrictions Ferguson said they've seen a pouring in of donations.

?I'm overwhelmed with the generosity of individuals, businesses and organizations in Shelburne,? she said. ?I've never seen [so many] people come forward and help as much as they can.?

In the past registration for the Shelburne Christmas Hamper has taken place over one day, but with COVID-19 registration it has been divided into two; allowing only one person in the registration room at a time. The Shelburne Christmas Hamper held its first registration day for the program on Nov. 25 and will holding the second date on Nov. 3, between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. at the Mel Lloyd Centre

Donations of non-perishable foods and new, unwrapped toys can be made at various business in Shelburne with Christmas Hamper boxes, and for monetary donations email shelburnechristmashampers@gmail.com.