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?Many hands make light work? as local service club prepare Christmas Hampers

Written By MARNI WALSH

The Christmas Hamper Assistance Program, Shelburne's annual holiday tradition sponsored by local service clubs, will hold registration for those in need starting on Nov. 27 from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Additional registration dates include Nov. 28 from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. and Dec. 4 from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

All three registrations will take place at the Mel Lloyd Centre Community Meeting Room (Entrance C) at 167 Centre Street in Shelburne.

?This program has been a holiday tradition in Shelburne for well over 50 years,? says Bobbi Ferguson, Chair and Organizer of the Shelburne Christmas Hamper Assistance Program. ?It was originated by the Lions Club, but more than 25 years ago it became too much for just one club and all the service clubs took a portion of the responsibility.

?Many hands made light work,? she says, as she describes the enormous efforts of Shelburne and area volunteers at local service clubs.

The Rotary Club puts up posters, develops sponsorships, picks up and delivers all collected toys and food to the Mel Lloyd Centre where they help sort food with students from Centre Dufferin District High School. The Rotary Club also donates monetarily to the program, as well as providing chocolates for the hampers.

The Lion's Club collects large hamper boxes, donates chocolates and ?mans' the collection site at Mel Lloyd the week prior to hamper distribution. Laurie Rutledge will be at the Mel Lloyd Centre to receive donations to the hampers from Dec. 18 to 20 between 10 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. The Kinsmen Club packs the hampers ready for pick up by hamper families. The Kinsmen and Rotary, along with volunteers, are also busy on pick-up day, helping to carry goods to cars and assisting moms and dads with toy selections for children under 12 years of age.

The Kinettes always make a generous donation and help out wherever needed, and the churches in our town are a huge part of the success of this program. Compass Church donates all the dairy products, so each family gets milk, cheese and butter and most of the other churches donate personal care items - all are greatly appreciated.

In 2018, Shelburne's Christmas Hamper Program assisted over 80 families - up by approximately 20 families from the previous year.

?I expect the same or more as our community continues to grow,? says the Hamper Chair. For residents who wish to donate to the Hamper Assistance Program, the most needed items are canned stews, soups, vegetables, tuna and salmon. As each family is provided a grocery gift card to purchase a turkey, chicken or ham for a holiday dinner - monetary donations or gift cards in $50 denominations for local grocery stores are much needed. It is difficult to deliver age appropriate toys for kids aged 8 to 11 years, but toys for ages new born to 11 are needed. Children 12 to 18 receive a gift card from either Giant Tiger, Walmart or Urban Planet - so donations to purchase these, or cards in $50 denominations, are also needed.

?What I love about this program, is that, although there is a registration process, it is open to anyone who has a need,? says Bobbi Ferguson. ?Whether it is every year, or just to help out this year, we can offer a helping hand with the additional financial needs of the holiday season. We never know what life will offer us, and, whether it is a temporary job loss or a single parent or senior trying to make ends meet, the Hamper Program can help. The service clubs work closely with the Shepherd's Cupboard Food Bank and the Salvation Army to make sure the word out to those in need.?

?Our community is always so generous in making sure that everyone has a wonderful Holiday Season,? says Bobbi Ferguson, ?and I

would expect nothing less than the tradition of kindness and giving from Shelburne in 2019.?

Confirmed collections sites for hamper donations thus far include: Shelburne Arena, Shelburne Town Hall and Shelburne Pace Credit Union. To make a monetary donation please contact Bobbi Ferguson at 519-278-4578 or shelburnechristmashampers@gmail.com or mail cheques to: Shelburne Christmas Hampers, Box 27 Stn Main, Shelburne, ON L9V 3L8.

Anyone wishing to register for the Hamper Assistance Program, should come to one of the three scheduled days with necessary information to register.