

Shelburne Christmas Hamper program starting up again

Written By PAULA BROWN

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The local Shelburne Hamper Program has started collecting donations for their annual Holiday Hampers as they look to provide a helping hand to families in the community over the holiday season.

"[The Shelburne Hamper Program] is really the community coming together," said Bobbi Ferguson, chair of the local initiative. "It's a project that helps anyone, no matter how you celebrate the holidays, it's a community coming together to help local families."

Existing locally for over 50 years, the Shelburne Christmas Hamper program is organized and supported by the many service clubs in town. The program traditionally gives out "hampers" or boxes containing both staple and holiday specific foods as well as grocery gift cards for families to purchase a turkey, ham, or traditional favourites. Children are also given gifts with those aged 12 and under receiving a toy, and gift cards for ages 12-18.

Last year, the Shelburne Christmas Hamper saw just under 150 families access the program, and with the financial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic still being felt, Ferguson said they are anticipating to see similar numbers again this year. As of Nov. 18 the Shelburne Christmas Hamper has had 90 registrations.

Starting with the holiday hampers seven years ago, Ferguson has seen demand for the program increase from around 80 families to 105 in 2019, and 147 in 2020.

"There's been a 40 per cent increase since 2019," said Ferguson.

The Shelburne Christmas Hamper and Shepherd's Cupboard have partnered again this year for the month of November, allowing food bank clients to register for the hamper through the food bank.

For those looking to help Shelburne Christmas Hamper, Ferguson said the best way is through cash donations.

"Although we very much appreciate all donations of toys and food, the reality is that the best way to help is with a cash donation. This enables the purchase of gift cards for older children and food items to complete the hampers," said Ferguson.

The program has provided examples of how accumulative cash donations are used such as \$20 for stocking stuffers, \$50 for toys or gift cards for children, \$75 for a senior hamper, and \$150 for a large family food hamper.

Registration for the 2021 Shelburne Christmas Hamper has been running during regular hours at the food bank throughout the month of November. The Shelburne Christmas Hamper is also holding an alternative registration date for Dec. 2 between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. at the Mel Lloyd Centre Community Meeting Room, entrance C.

Donations of non-perishable food items and toys can be dropped off at the Shelburne Town Hall until Dec. 16 and the Mel Lloyd Centre Community Meeting Room between Dec. 14 and Dec. 17. For information on the Shelburne Christmas Hampers email ShelburneChristmasHampers@gmail.com or call 519-278-4578.