

Business community rallies to aid residents before and after storm

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power back on for Christmas.

"One by one as the power came on they picked it up," said Bonnett.

The 20 unclaimed turkeys that were left over were cooked and put into meat pies, Bonnett said. He had to toss out quite a bit of regular stock frozen/refrigerated items in the shop that went bad due to the outage and he estimates he lost about \$10,000 worth of pre-Christmas business, but he's not stressing about it.

"All of my staff were really good, my customers were really understanding," said Bonnett.

Opa Taylor, manager of Georgetown Thai Cuisine, said they also lost a good portion of their refrigerated food while the restaurant's power was out for about 2.5 days.

They also missed a lot of business those days as several big groups had booked to come in.

But once their power was back up they decided to stay open Christmas Day "to give people a chance to find a hot meal," which many area residents were happy about. Many also took the chance to recharge their cell phones there, she said.

Cecilia Jackman, manager of United Home Hardware in Georgetown, said they placed an emergency order on Saturday for most needed items such as lamp oil, ice salt, batteries, fuel, propane and chainsaws to help people.

The store stayed open with long line-ups of people despite the fact it didn't have power, with staff writing bills by hand. On Monday (Dec. 23) Jackman said the line stretched from the front to the back of the store for hours.

"We just wanted to help the community," said Jackman. "There were so many grateful people there," she said.

Following the ice storm Helen Marshall of Acton Home Hardware, which was without power for two days, said they went through skids of salt, selling out of that and washer fluid. She said many customers were looking for generators but unfortunately they don't sell them. They checked at the distribution centre for them, but

they were sold out.

Lana Walsma Hoar who runs Deker Electric with her electrician husband Derek, says they and their staff have been going full speed since the storm, including Christmas Day. The couple was up north when the ice storm hit, and when they heard, they quickly headed back, but stopped briefly along the way to buy generators as they suspected they would be needed by area residents. By Christmas

had some.

She said it was frustrating for both them and their customers that they couldn't get some supplies needed to make some repairs as many of their suppliers were closed for the holidays.

"It's nice to know we can answer the phone and help our customers out," said Walsma Hoar.

Michelle Lemme of Colonial Tree Service said they too have been working long

out power Sunday and Monday—two of the prime shopping days before Christmas, and many of the restaurants had to scramble to save their food supplies.

She said the loss of sales for the merchants was "extremely significant," adding much of what they make then carries them through to about Easter.

She added by the time Christmas Eve came around, while power had been restored, residents were not shopping, as many of them still didn't have power.

"They were in survival mode," said Farrow-Reed. But she said the merchants' attitudes have been great. "They really understood," she said.

General manager Herminia Henderson said Georgetown Market Place was without power on Sunday before Christmas, losing one of the busiest days of the year.

"However, it could have been worse," said Henderson. "I understand some businesses lost up to five days, we were very lucky!"

She said The Beer Store, LCBO and Payless only lost a couple of hours while Buck or Two, Global Pet, Bank of Nova Scotia and Kelsey's lost a couple of days.

She said mall tenants made the best of it, and were ready to open on the Monday.

"The food court was busy preparing hot food for all their customers who had no heat and power. It was quite interesting to see so many people come to the mall to power up their cell phones, computers and iPads, I don't think I ever remember seeing all our electrical outlets used so much. Many people came in to use the free WiFi in the food court. I think people used the mall as shelter; we open the doors at 8 a.m. and close at 9 p.m., that is 11 hours were they can stay warm," said Henderson.

As for sales, she said she wouldn't know how much was lost until all sales are submitted to the office. Some tenants said their customers were being careful, not buying fresh food or flowers because they had no place to keep it once they got home.

"So obviously sales would be down in these categories," she said.

"I think everyone did their best considering the circumstances," she said.



After having been without power for several days, (from left) Peter Bot, Diana Zawacki and Paul Simpkin, all of Georgetown, were among the many who dropped by the Salvation Army Community Church in Georgetown to pick up grocery vouchers, supplied by the Province, to help restock their refrigerators after losing food to spoilage. The program, organized by Halton Region Social and Community Services Department, supplied the gift cards to those who had been without power for an extended period of time.

Photo by Ted Brown

Day Walsma Hoar said they had sold 48 generators.

They have been manning the phones 24/7 taking hundreds of calls from customers looking for generators or needing their electrical service on their property repaired or reconnected.

On the Monday following the storm alone she said they received 275 calls. With no generators to be had in the area, Walsma Hoar headed back up north that day to buy whatever generators she could find and bring them back. Fortunately that area had not been hit by the ice so stores

days since the storm.

"It hasn't really let up," she said. "We haven't stopped."

Initially they were working with hydro crews and currently are doing a lot of clean up of tree limbs for school boards, and are just getting to the non-emergency residential clean-up now.

"All the staff has been really accommodating working extra hours," said Lemme, who estimates the backlog will continue for quite a few weeks.

Wendy Farrow-Reed of Georgetown BIA said much of the downtown was with-

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