The Christmas spirit lives in us all

by Helen Murray

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus.

That one sentence is perhaps the most famous line ever written in a newspaper, and is probably the most borrowed.

It was in response to a small girl's letter many years ago to a newspaper editor asking if there was a Santa Claus. That was his answer, followed by an explanation of how Santa lives in all of us, in our hearts and in our souls, not just at Christmas, but all year.

And as Christmas draws nearer, the people of Acton have demonstrated exactly what the editor was describing.

Schools, churches, service organizations and individuals have all gone out of their way in the past few weeks to help those less fortunate then themselves; to help make Christmas a little cheerier than it would be if no one cared.

Almost 30 homes in town will be brightened tomorrow night, (Wednesday) when the Rotary Club makes their annual rounds with Christmas hampers. The Lakeside chapter of the IODE gather the food goods and make up hampers consisting of canned goods, cereal, pudding or Christmas cake, oranges, tea, bread and a turkey.

School children from Robert Little, M. Z. Bennett, McKenzie-Smith and Acton High School have been gathering items to donate to the IODE fund for several weeks now.

Joyce Sprowl of the IODE explains that recipients' names are taken from the Ministry of Social Services in Oakville. Hampers are made up after the name is received and that way families get exactly what they need. She said that a mother with two young children needs a different package than two adults and four children.

After the hampers are made up, the Rotary club distributes them. Anything left over is given to Halton Women's Place.

The Salvation Army also gives out hampers to the needy in town but on Christmas Eve. Lieutenant Lorne Pritchett notes they work closely with the IODE to make sure there is no duplication in names.

Pritchett emphasized however, they are trying to reach people who may not be on the welfare list. "We have to reach these people who may not be unemployed, but faced with a mortgage crisis, or other financial problems."

So far, he said, applications for the hampers have been sparse. "We hope the needy step forward."

"There are lots of people who have said they are going to have a rough time, and there are a lot of people who want to help," Pritchette said, but not too many have come forward.

The Salvation Army has ordered $2,500 worth of food for the hampers and people have been donating new toys for children.

The Christmas Cheer Bubbles outside stores is their fund raising drive. Usually, Pritchett says, enough money is put in the kettles to last until next Christmas. In Halton Hills, kettles are placed outside the Brewers Retail stores in Georgetown and Acton, and outside Zellers in Georgetown.

Money has also been brought into the Thrift Store for Christmas donations. One person made a donation of $180. "The people of Acton really care," he said.

Groceries not used will be kept and given to needy families throughout the year.

Acton High school students had a spirit week last week and sold roses to raise money for a wheelchair to give to a handicapped person who cannot afford one. The proceeds of the November and December dances will also go towards the wheelchair.

Acton Legion is giving hampers to war veterans and legion members who are in need. Food and toys (if children are involved) will be in these hampers.

The Pine Valley Squares donated $50 to the Acton Social Services and Information Centre and the Catholic Women's League gives potted plants to shut-ins at the local rest homes, including Mapleview Lodge and Milton Manor. These are delivered on Christmas Eve to church members.

Knox Presbyterian Church had a White Gift Service and children and adults brought gifts to be given to those less fortunate. Sunday was Rocio Day when the children break into the banks they have been saving all fall and give the money to the Sunday School's foster child in Bolivia.

Seemed like the whole town got into the act of sharing for the less fortunate at Christmas time. Acton High School was one of the many schools in town who collected groceries to give the needy. Debbie Baum, Paul Smith, Patti Miller andDebbie Paine look over the food goods.

The United Church Women also fix up Christmas hampers for rest homes and individuals. Gifts from the Trinity United Church White Gift Service go to Halton Women's Place.

Rev. Chuck Beaton notes there are two families in the church who each contribute the makings of a complete Christmas Dinner and gifts. It is up to Rev. Beaton to distribute them.

One Acton family donated five bags of groceries for a needy family. They gave the food to St. Alban's Rev. Art Tribe who in turn took the groceries to the Social Services and Information Centre who gave them to a needy family.

"They (the donors) felt that there are a lot of needy people in town and they would like to help," Rev. Tribe said.

One Acton family gathered pop bottles to donate the money from returns to a needy cause.

Even the Christmas Seals is a sign of Santa Claus. The purchase of Christmas Seals is not necessarily helping anyone you may know, but you are still willing to do it. There are probably a hundred other stories, just in Acton, but no one wants anyone else to know.

So forget about a red suit, a long white beard, and a reindeer drawn sleigh. We all know that guy.

It is the other Santa, within us all, who doesn't get the proper notice.

So Christmas morning, when you see a child's eyes light up at the sight of the presents remember, there really is a Santa.

Defer ball diamond . . . .

(Continued from page 1)

on Mill St. West where development may take place, giving the Kingham area a much needed park, or possibly a deal could be struck to locate the diamond on the same street on the site of the new St. Joseph's School.

Mrs. P. Pope said the residents need more time to survey feelings as well as study the proposal. She contacted 11 neighbors and all but one family was opposed to the diamond plan.

There is no need for a park in the area since Sir Donald Mann Park is two blocks away.

The parking area for the diamond will quickly become overloaded and Mrs. Pope predicted cars will be parking on the street. The road is narrow and the whole area has been "overlooked" for improvements for some time. A ball diamond will attract few walkers, mostly people with cars, to a peaceful and quiet neighborhood.

Until Beardmore put up a barrier, the area had problems of weekend parties on the land. There are still some parties, but now people must walk on to the land.

The street is seldom patrolled by police, Mrs. Pope said, as well as out of the way and dark so the parking lot will become a popular party spot.

Another resident said the street is not built for heavy traffic while Ed Footitt noted he was concerned about drivers roaring over the bridge and hitting his home. He added all residents on Poplar Ave. should receive letters outlining the proposal.

Dave Robuck, another Poplar resident, asked if residents shouldn't have been given 21 days notice of the plan and time to object, but Mayor Peter Pomeroy said that rule only applies to zoning changes.

Letters supporting the ball field proposal from the Acton Ladies Recreational Softball League and Acton Condo Sports Association were received by council.

Barb Robinson, chairman of the Outreach and Social Action Committee of Trinity United Church, donates a cheque for $200 to Dr. Geoffrey Chada of Zimbabwe for the Jairos Jirri Foundation for the handicapped in Zimbabwe.

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