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## Volunteers preparing for busy Christmas season

By **JANET BAINE**  
Staff writer

The Christmas hamper program is a massive team effort which takes the cooperation of several organizations and several dozen volunteers each year.

"The public response is always tremendous. It's one of these community efforts that can't happen without all sorts of goodhearted people contributing in all sorts of ways," said Captain David Kennedy of the Georgetown Salvation Army which coordinates the program.

This year work on the program, which ensures no one in Halton Hills goes without at Christmastime, is well underway already.

"Until this spring, the Acton Salvation Army was responsible for Georgetown as well. The Georgetown (church) is in the fledgling stages and we've been working with them to prepare them," Capt. Linda McNutt of the Acton church said.

In Acton, the Salvation Army works with the International Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE), the Rotary Club and St. Vincent de Paul, a Catholic service organization associated with St. Joseph's Church.

The application deadline for both communities is Friday, Dec. 10 and applications can be picked up and dropped off at Family Services or the Thrift Store in Acton, which is open each day except Sunday. Family Services is open weekday mornings.

In Georgetown applications must be made in person at Family Services 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. For more information about getting a hamper in Georgetown, call the church at 877-1374.

In Acton, the IODE usually contacts the schools to collect donations, while St. Vincent de Paul purchases the turkeys, chickens and hams. Teams of volunteers from all organizations sort all the toys and food donations at St. Joseph's School in Acton on Dec. 20 and 21. Then the hampers are either picked up on Dec. 22, or delivered by the Rotary Club members to those people who are unable to pick them up.

"We're grateful for the support of the other organizations that work with us. Without their help, we couldn't do this," McNutt said.

The amount of food in the hampers depends on the size of the family, but they include fresh fruit and vegetables, Christmas candy, a chicken or turkey, tea, juice, and other assorted goods. Each child under 16 receives two or three gifts, McNutt said. About 180 hampers were delivered in Georgetown last year.

In Georgetown collection of food and money for the hampers is done by the Good Neighbors, an organization which goes back several years and is made up primarily of Lionesses, said organizer Madeline Collier. The donations are collected at schools and churches, and are picked up by the Halton Regional Police, along with the help of high school students. Contributions of money are used to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables as well as turkeys and other items which are short, Collier said. Donations can be sent to the Christmas hamper program through Madeline Collier, 11 Orchard Blvd. in Georgetown, L7G 2Y7.

The Kinsmen, organized by David Lennon, carry out the toy drive in Georgetown. They have eight or 10 drop off points for new toys in Georgetown each year. The toys are all sorted out for children up to 16 years old, and are then put in the hampers for each family. So far only one drop-off point has been confirmed, and it is at A. F. Johnson and Associates real estate office at Georgetown Marketplace Mall. Cash will also be accepted by Lennon by calling him at his home, 877-6116.

The Georgetown Salvation Army is looking for the use of a warehouse for two weeks, Dec. 13 to Dec. 24, Kennedy said. This will be used to collect and sort all the items and divide them up into hampers. This is a major undertaking and requires the assistance of lots of volunteers, Collier said.

Acton Food Share and Georgetown's Love in Christ food bank also have a role to play: once all the hampers are delivered, there are always some people who missed the deadline and didn't receive anything. These hampers are made up by the food banks.

"We've made hampers and delivered them on Dec. 24," said Laura Ellison of Love in Christ Food Bank.



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