

EDITORIAL

With Frances Learment

Help for the hungry

Pure gratitude. That was the immediate, heartfelt reaction from the first two Acton women to receive grocery vouchers to replace food lost when the power was knocked out by the pre-Christmas ice storm.

In all, the province and private sector made available \$450,000 in grocery store cards - good only at Metro and Food Basics, meaning they can't be used in Acton. But, that did not matter to the two Acton recipients who were happy that help was offered. In Acton the vouchers are available at the Salvation Army today (Thursday) and Friday, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

One Acton woman lost \$1,000 worth of meat, and a single mother of three lost most of her holiday shopping and neither could afford to replace the lost food. They said the vouchers - \$100 for a family and \$50 for individuals - meant they could at least replace the basics.

Another voucher recipient found the Acton service "fast and efficient," adding she really didn't expect any government/private sector help, so this program was even more appreciated.

Both women arrived early at the at the Acton Salvation Army Corp at 114 Mill St. on Wednesday morning, expecting a long line-up, and potential hassles like in Toronto last week when vouchers repeatedly ran out leaving hundreds waiting in vain. There were also numerous reports of well-heeled people lining up for taxpayer and corporation-subsidized food vouchers meant for the poor, but organizers said screening would prevent that from occurring.

Volunteers at five Salvation Amy locations in Halton checked power outage maps for eligibility, and used established screening criteria to assess financial need, asking for a recent Income Tax Assessment, a bank statement, paystub, or verification of social assistance like Ontario Works or ODSP.

Local municipalities will hand out \$450,000 in grocery store cards this week in Dufferin, Halton, Hamilton, Peel, Waterloo Wellington and York, in addition to the \$842,600 worth of food gift cards distributed last week in Toronto.

Glad that at least initially, there was not a long line-up of Acton residents requiring help buying food, but glad the help is there to those most in need.



VOUCHER VOLUNTEERS: On Wednesday morning, Acton Salvation Army Corps members Susan Kuechler (left) and Marlene Marsh were ready to process requests for grocery store vouchers made available to help those hardest hit by the ice storm to replace spoiled food. - Frances Learment photo



TOY DRIVE: There were many happy faces Christmas morning in the Acton area thanks to the McKenzie-Smith Bennett School Student Leaders who staged a very successful toy drive. - Submitted photo

Job well done



By **Angela Tyler**

Like thousands of others, I am a ice storm survivor. Just after supper on the Saturday night our hydro went out and I learned quickly that without hydro, the water pump doesn't run and that translates into simple things like not washing your hands with water from a faucet, or more importantly, flushing the toilet. Ty convincing a two-year-old and four-year-old not to flush after you spent the last two years reminding them to flush and wash their hands.

Our property has a lot of trees. Saturday night was scary. I've never heard trees snap and bend and moan and groan like that in my life. We had one large tree snap about 20 or so feet from the ground onto the dog run. I was so thankful I locked our dog inside a few hours earlier. That night I lay in bed and listened. I listened to Mother Nature and I waited patiently for that magical sound of the hydro starting up again with all the clocks, lights, computers and other things that make noise when started. I lay there for a long time and nothing happened.

Saturday turned into Sunday, and like the rest of the town, we huddled to keep warm and waited and turned to social media for information. I was very im-

pressed with the updates Halton Hills Hydro provided Facebook, Twitter and their own website.

By Monday, a lot of people in town had their power back. We did not. Monday turned into Tuesday and we were still in out. During the day we headed to town to visit grandparents and wash up. At night, we returned home to keep our fireplaces going. By the third day, the Dude offered to send me and the kids to a hotel. He was worried about us, but I told him we were fine. We were together and safe. That was all we needed.

Christmas Eve we sat by the fire, we left Santa his treats and prayed for a Christmas present of hydro returning. By Boxing Day night, five days after our ordeal began, we literally saw the light. Around 8 p.m. after returning from a family get together, we entered our black hole with flashlights in hand and as we started to prepare to stoke the fires and, as they say, let there be light. Our hydro had been restored.

On Christmas night, as I thought about what I had planned and what actually transpired, and feeling a tad disappointed as a mother, Little J proclaimed it was the best Christmas EVER. In retrospect, I'd prefer to have hydro and running water but it did show us what a resilient family we are and gave us some very valuable time together that we might not have otherwise had.

Yes, we lost hundreds of dollars in food from our refrigerator; we were cold; we were inconvenienced; our Christmas certainly wasn't what it was supposed to be, yet as much as it would have been easy to grumble or complain about the hydro and why it took so long, I'd rather be thankful for what they did to get our hydro working after Mother Nature had a little hissy fit.

I can't imagine what those crews went through out in the field, or one of the customer service employees who answered 2,000 calls in a day. A community of about 60,000 people was broken, then rebuilt by a small group of people who didn't stop until the job was done.

A job well done, as well... thank you.



THE NEW Tanner
PUBLISHING LTD.

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Distributed to every home in Acton and area, as well as adjoining communities.

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