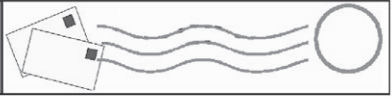


Letters



Saw Christ in Christmas at dinner Christmas Day

To the editor,

I saw the UNITY in Comm-unity at the Christmas dinner on Christmas Day, prepared and served in the Beth-El Christian Reformed Church in Acton.

I saw the CHRIST in Christmas witnessed through the many people who came to serve and dine at the dinner, taking time from their own busy lives, hoping to make Christmas Day better for someone else. Serving and loving others as Jesus did.

I saw love, hope, peace and joy in the smiling faces of everyone from children to adults as they gathered together to share a meal.

People coming together, many unknown to each other, working and then dining together to celebrate a very special day. Christmas for some can be a difficult time but the community dinner provided a place to find caring and a sense of belonging. The food was extraordinary, too.

If we could bottle the concept and share it with the world, the world could be a much better place.

I cannot begin to name the people who contributed to the dinner but I know their contributions were from the heart and large or small they were not intended to be "glorified." All contributions from cooking to setting up and cleaning up to organizing carol singing and gift giving as well as the monetary donations and advertising should be acknowledged and are appreciated.

The committee thanks everyone for making a vision become a reality for the fifth year in a row.

See you next year!

Ann Adema

and the Christmas Dinner Committee

Acton hamper program fills over 80 hampers for town, area needy

By Matthew Reid

The Acton Christmas Hamper Committee was busy at work on December 20, 21, 22. Working to make Christmas a little brighter for needy families in Acton. Over 80 hampers were filled to the flaps with non-perishable food items.

Volunteers filled the basement of the St. Joseph Church. On the Thursday, they sorted hundreds of pieces of non-perishable food products. On Friday, they were packed into small and large hampers. And finally on Saturday, they were distributed to needy families all across Acton.

The project is a collaborative effort by The Salvation Army, Acton Rotary Club, the IODE and St. Joseph Church St. Vincent Charities. They come together each year to create the Acton Christmas Hamper Committee. The IODE has been involved in this event since 1975.

"It's definitely a big job," says coordinator Kathy Sanford. "Some people don't realize actually how much work goes into it."

Snow brings out the best...

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How about stopping and helping that mom who is stuck on a patch of ice? Instead of grumbling about the Town snow plow not plowing your road, why not bring him a hot chocolate when he plows by or even just a wave to say thanks?

Acton area schools including MSB, Acton High and Robert Little Public School all collected plenty of food for the charity.

Needy families in the community needed to apply in order to receive a food hamper. They were accepted depending on their absolute need. The size of the family also dictated what size of hamper they would receive. A large family received a large hamper and a small family received a smaller one.

The hampers are given a number instead of a family's name for confidentiality. On the day of pick up, there may also be some fresh produce placed in the hampers. They contain a variety of foods from canned soup, to pastas and bread. And some contained a little extra present as well.

"Each box will also get a Sobeys gift card," says Sanford. The gift cards were just that little something extra during this cash-strapping time of the season.

"Small families will get a smaller value and larger families will get a larger one," she said.

Like it or not, we live in a place that has snow so we might as well make the most of it and start the New Year off on a 'pay it forward' path.

What goes around comes around, so let's make it go around in a good way.

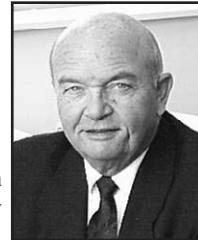


SKATING AWAY: Many people took advantage of the free skate at the Acton Arena and Community Centre last Friday to spend some quality family time on the ice. The free skate was sponsored by the Halton Fire Fighters Association. - Tracey Gardner photo

Here we go again

The Way I See It

with Mike O'Leary



Another New Year has rolled around. I can still remember when it seemed like ages between one New Year and the next. These days, however, it seems I barely have time for a cup of tea before it's time for another New Year.

Over the years, "the bride" and I have run the gambit looking for a satisfying New Year's celebration. We started out with house parties then tried dances and even spent a couple of years at expensive hotel ballroom extravaganzas. It always seemed to us that we had to work much too hard at appearing to have a good time.

Truth be told, we find the birth of the New Year to be rather anticlimatic. Other than all the kissing, which I rather enjoyed, I have never understood what the big deal is. The only New Year's I can really recall are ones where I was darn glad to see the old one finished and hoped my luck would change in the new one. I find that the older I get the more this appears to be a trend.

2008 looks to be a challenging year. All the indicators are pointing to a downturn in the economy. Of course, the big bad Americans are to blame. With the world's largest economy on our doorstep, if the American's sneeze we get pneumonia.

One of our daughters is an economist and she observed over Christmas that this coming year will be a good time to be in a strong cash position and pay down debt. Most people from my generation have followed that principle for much of their adult lives. I do worry about our children though. With the low down payment mortgages available these days and significant downturn in housing values could wipe them out financially.

But then I'm not so sure we were that different. When we bought our house we had a larger down payment percentage-wise to our total mortgage, but the mortgage was still three years gross earnings. That was based on one salary, though, since "the bride" stayed home with the children.

When I hear what kids today are paying in monthly mortgage pay-

ments I tend to over-react. I often fail to take into consideration that in today's world, two incomes are the norm. Even so, the percentage of monthly incomes going to mortgage payments today is on the rise compared to what we paid in the past.

The reason I mention this is because of the sub-prime mortgage and credit crisis currently causing financial migraines stateside. Canadians have a historically high credit obligation. If, as the Prime Minister has stated, 2008 is going to be a financial challenge, then this debt equity ratio will become increasingly worrisome as our economy slows.

Regular readers will know that I don't make New Year's resolutions public because I would probably break them by the time you read this column. I have lots of "will power" but am somewhat lacking in "won't power." Predictions, though, are a fun exercise. This is what I see in my crystal ball but don't make any foolish bets on the following.

The environment will continue to be a hot button topic. Global Warming will be accepted by the vast majority of our people as being a real danger to our future. Skeptics will be won over by more irrefutable evidence. But Canadians will balk at the huge costs that fixing some of our real problems on the national scene on both a job loss and taxation level.

We're not talking simple cures such as adding a little more insulation or changing a few light bulbs, although all those measures help. I'm referring more to the massive retrofits that will be necessary to clean up some of our most polluting industries. We've already seen the closing of Ontario's coal fired generating stations put off 'til God knows when as an example.

Growth in the Golden Horseshoe will continue to cause ulcers in senior politicians. Here in Acton we are for-

tunate because we are surrounded by the Greenbelt. In addition we have to be patient with the lack of water and wastewater capacity. Except for some infilling development, that has already received water/wastewater allocation, don't expect our town to grow to any great degree in 2008.

On the Federal political scene expect a late spring election. The economy is rolling along nicely now but Mr. Harper won't want to risk waiting for too long for fear it will cool down substantially.

I see the Tories being returned to government but not with the majority the P.M. wants so badly. Most Canadians misunderstand the conservative strategy regarding the environment because the P.M.O. has done such a lousy job of communicating it. The fact Canada has three national parties plus one gang of traitors all competing for seats makes the prospect of majority government seem highly unlikely.

So unless the Tories can come up with an incriminating video of Mr. Dion barbequing Kyoto with his Hummer idling in the background and singing the French national anthem (dual citizenship, remember?), then I predict another minority federal government.

A final thank you to all you readers who agreed with my "Stomp out Festive" and "Keep Christ in Christmas" campaign. The Christmas signs were obvious as I travelled around town this year. They will be back in time for Christmas 2008 for those of you who couldn't find one.

Wal-Mart and Canadian Tire have used the word Christmas in their in-store promotions. Most of our local stores wished their customers a hearty Merry Christmas as I exited their businesses.

We are not trying to denigrate any other customs. We are simply determined not to give up on Christmas or any of its traditions.

I was disappointed to hear that a young co-worker of mine was ignored by an employee at Chapters when she wished the cashier a Merry Christmas. A polite "you too" would have sufficed.