

Needy families worldwide to receive local food donations

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

Over the next few months, hundreds of needy families will be receiving food thanks to the efforts of an army of volunteers working for the Mennonite Central Committee.

On April 16, about 150 people will devote their time to canning turkey thighs at the HJ Heinz Grading Station in Leamington. The meat will be sent to some of the poorest parts of the world.

Last year, 73,900 pounds were sent to Haiti, 67,200 pounds went to Ukraine and 5,000 pounds were distributed throughout Canada. In total, 672,235 pounds of meat were shipped to 25 countries.

Leamington will be the second last stop for the MCC's mobile canning station, which travels across the United States and into Canada and is used by vol-

unteers in each region for canning and labeling.

Leamington resident Jacob Tiessen, who's been involved with the project for nine years, said this year volunteers will be arriving from all across Essex County to help out.

"We've got volunteers from all over - Amherstburg, Harrow, Stoney Point," Tiessen said. "And we're getting more high school kids involved. Different people come in and see the process for the first time and they are amazed."

There is enough food in each can to feed a family of four for a week. The recipients are often so poor that after finishing the contents, they use the can to cook out of or to patch leaks in their roofs. They also use the labels as writing paper.

"There's nothing going to waste," Tiessen said.

However, the MCC has

experienced difficulties in the past with foreign governments not allowing the shipments into their country, sometimes cutting off the donations to where they are needed most, Tiessen said.

Many of the meat shipments are sent to countries in Africa, Asia and South America. Regions in the United States that are reeling from the devastations of tornadoes or floods will also receive the food.

The local volunteers are working to raise \$70,000 to fund the project this year and have recently been holding church dinners to collect donations.

The group has raised about half of what they need so far, and Tiessen says the most funding usually comes in during canning week.

Helping to feed needy families has always been a priority for Tiessen, who said his own family



Volunteers share a laugh while canning turkey meat destined to feed needy families. On April 16, more than 100 people from across Essex County will devote their time to the annual can drive.

received food parcels while growing up in Russia after the devastations of the First World War.

"If it wouldn't have been for humans speaking out, we wouldn't have sur-

vived," he said.

The MCC program began in Virginia during the Second World War as a way to feed the growing number of hungry and homeless people throughout Europe.

This year, the mobile canning unit will be traveling to 33 locations in 11 states and two provinces.

To volunteer in the Leamington can drive, call 519-839-5126.



EASTER DELIGHTS - The 12th annual Essex BIA Frootloops with the Bunny was held last Saturday at the Kinsman Fieldhouse. The star of the show, the Easter Bunny, had a strong supporting cast, including Tony the Tiger, courtesy of Kelloggs, and Essex Foodland, represented by Vicki McMurren, pictured above. Firefighter Kevin Fram of Essex Fire and Rescue Service also gave the kids a tour of a real fire engine.



TEA FOR TWO - The 1st Woodslee Sparks pose with their mothers at their Mother-Daughter Tea Party March 27 at Woodslee United Church. Back row, left to right: Nancy Moore, Renee Gombar, Tiffany Lenhart, Lynn Rose, Tina Mullins, Cheryl MacDonald, Mary Reid (great grandmother). Front row: Allison Moore, Hannah Gombar, Kiara Lenhart, Cassie Rose, Autumn Mullins, Sydney MacDonald, Emily Voakes.

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