

Volunteers' efforts feed needy families worldwide

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

An army of more than 500 volunteers was hard at work in Leamington Monday, canning thousands of pounds of turkey meat that will be shipped to some of the most impoverished places around the world.

For the ninth year, a local branch of the Mennonite Central Committee has devoted its time, up to 15 hours per day, to cooking, canning, labeling and packing about 17,000 cans.

"We'll do 30,000 pounds here in one day," said local MCC chair Marlene Schmidtgall.

Each can contains about two pounds of meat and Schmidtgall said many families can blend it with rice to make it last longer. But she added that she's heard "a real horror story about one person who ate from a can for a month."

Going hungry is not an unfamiliar experience for some of the local volunteers, particularly those who recall living with famine and poverty during the Second World War.

But for most, the appreciation they feel for never having to go hungry is motivation enough to help those less fortunate.

Martin Rahn, a federal meat inspector and one of the organizers of the local project, said he grew up hearing stories about his parents living in desperate times and their lives being saved by selfless volunteers.

Rahn said his parents were forced into German relief camps during the Second World War and



Volunteers stir a steaming vat of turkey meat inside the Mennonite Central Committee's mobile canning unit in Leamington Monday. Since October, the vehicle has visited two provinces and 11 U.S. states, working with volunteers to cook and can thousands of pounds of turkey meat that will be shipped to needy families around the world.

"would've died without food aid."

Now, he said the joy he experiences after a day of canning is "an unbelievable rush."

"With every passing can you know that a family is going to get a meal," he said. "It's really rewarding."

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

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, cans were shipped to 25 countries.



THE JOY OF READING – AM 800 Radio personality Mike Kakuk, left, reads a story with a little help from senior kindergartener Tony Froese and teacher Danielle Barnewall. Kakuk and his radio show co-host Lisa Williams visited Sun Parlor Junior School's Kindergarten classes Monday as a part of Guest Reader Week. Until Friday, the school will be having more than 30 guests come into classes to read for students. Firefighters, members of the Essex 73's, retired teachers and parent volunteers will all have participated in the week-long event.

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