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ETCETERA

Spirit of the season

BY FRED SIMPSON
Staff Writer

The Christmas cup of giving is running over, as York Region residents take time out from buying gifts to remember those who, in some cases, are not sure even where their next meal is coming from.

It's proving to be a lesson for a lot of young people. "I wanted to teach my two young children to realize it is better to give food than to get another toy," said Susan Lee-Pollack of Thornhill, as she explained what prompted her husband, Howard, to donate 100 turkeys to the Salvation Army.

While the children, Leanne, 7, and Sarah, 6, are very young, it's not too soon to remind them that there are people in need out there, she explained.

"We decided it would be a positive way to show them that it would be better to spend the money this way and cross some toys off our list."

The inspiration to donate the turkeys came from reading in The Liberal that thieves had made off with \$7,000 in cash and coupons last week that would have provided 300 needy families with turkeys and toys for Christmas.

The theft was from the Salvation Army's Family Services Centre on Bullock Drive in Markham.

"We couldn't find 300 turkeys, so we settled for this number," added Lee-Pollack.

The turkeys, which averaged a little over eight pounds each, were purchased from an outlet, Royce Dupont, in Toronto, for \$1,200.

"My young children helped us load the turkeys on to the truck," Lee-Pollack said.

The 100 children at Kids Come First Child Care Centre and 500 students at Louis-Honore Frechette Public School in Thornhill have banded together to collect more than 270 boxes of clothing, food and toys, which are being delivered to the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, near Sioux Lookout.

"They need these things because they don't have anything," said Adam Lieberman, 4. "I helped put the boxes on the truck," he added.

"They need warm clothes," chimed in Sean Sorok, 5. "It's a great idea."

Kids Come First executive director Maxine Roness pointed out the effort was a "miracle in logistics" with the school, students, teachers, a trucking company and an airline all joining forces.

Roness said her daughter, Grace Teskey, who works for Independent First Nation Alliance in Thunder Bay, originally broached her with the idea of getting supplies to the five communities concerned.

"Getting the clothes would not be difficult," said Roness. "We sent flyers throughout the school asking everyone to start collecting."

But there were major challenges remaining. A box broker company from Toronto came through with the 270 boxes but transportation was still needed.

"When we started collecting two weeks ago, we still didn't know how we were going to get the stuff up north," Roness

said.

"We didn't have any money to pay for the transportation, so we started making a lot of phone calls to trucking companies."

Riding to the rescue was the Quik X Transportation Company in Toronto, which provided a van to deliver the merchandise to Thunder Bay and then to Sioux Lookout.

There will be twice yearly excursions to the communities. Further problems arose because only two of the five communities of Pikangikum, Muskrat Dam, Lac Seul, Whitesand and Big Trout Lake could be reached by truck.

The other three were only accessible by airplane.

It was then that Roness found out about Bearskin Airline of Thunder Bay and appealed to that company for help.

Bearskin came through and the day was won.

Roness heaved one of those great big sighs of relief.

She was also quick to point out any number of volunteers made the junket possible.

"It was all volunteer work by teachers in their off hours, the children, parents, etc.," Roness said. "We couldn't have done it otherwise."

A unique twist on the giving-rather-than-receiving theme came from Johnsvie Village Public School teacher Len Phillips and his special education class.

They designed a three-foot-high, four-foot-wide condominium complex made of boxes with slots where coins can be deposited.

Each window in the model is made of cellophane.

For every dollar donated to a local food bank, the donor gets his picture in the window.

"The kids are really into it," said Johnsvie teacher Barbara Nemoy. "They are enjoying raising money for the homeless at Christmas."

"To date, we've raised \$150 and we only started a week-and-a-half ago."

She said students from kindergarten to Grade eight are participating.

Homebuilders across the GTA have launched a clothing drive to help the homeless.

Donations of warm clothing can be dropped off at any one of 24 participating new home sales offices in the Toronto area.

"Death on our streets through homelessness is not something that can be tolerated in any

modern society," says organizing group spokesperson Lianne McQuat of Partnership Marketing.

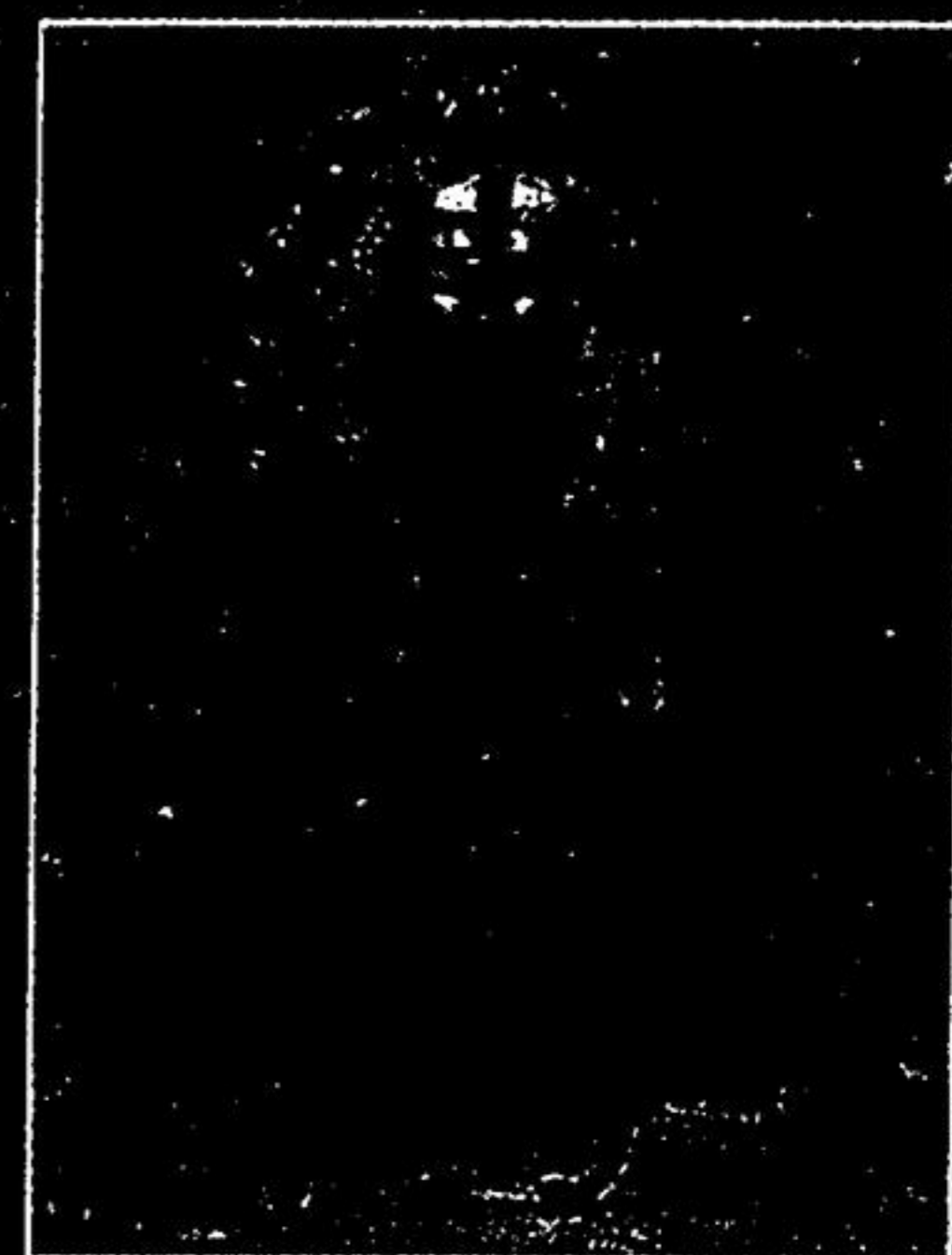
Alliance Homes, Emery Homes, Exeter Developments, Lakeview Homes, National Homes, Stone Manor Developments, Wycliffe Homes and Saberwood Homes are all participating.

Builders Helping the Homeless promises to take clothing to the streets by delivering to aid organizations directly serving those in need: Street Haven, Scott Mission and Anishnawbe Street Patrol.



Alexander Ahland-Strack shows off his 'take-and-give' gingerbread house on display at The Fine Cake Shop in Newmarket. Customers are invited to take a candy off the house and donate to help the animals at the OSPCA. See story on page B2.

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