

Campaign short on cash, volunteers

BY SIMON MOUNTFORD
Special

Markham and Whitchurch-Stouffville's growing population is not translating into more volunteers or donations to the annual Salvation Army Christmas drive.

Two years ago, the organization raised \$185,000 in corporate and public donations. Last year, the number plummeted \$75,000. This year, Pastor Rob Pollett of the Salvation Army Community Church on McCowan Road is simply hoping to match the 2002 number, but is already \$10,000 behind.

Mr. Pollett believes the poor results are because people don't see the growing need. "It's just a matter of letting people know what we do," he said.

Without volunteers, the campaign wouldn't be possible but even their numbers are dropping off. This year's drive has between 35 and 40 volunteers, at least 10 fewer than 2002.

USELESS TOYS, ALCOHOL DONATED

As if that isn't enough, useless old toys, alcohol and expired foods are popping up in donation bins. What's needed are cash donations, especially corporate, unopened gifts for young teens and non-perishable foods.

Despite the challenges, Capt. Pollett maintains "We're very pleased with the community's response (to the drive)."

However, "every year we see a growing and greater need. More needs to be done (so) more people will have to step up to the plate. The campaign provides Christmas for people who wouldn't be able to have it otherwise."

He encourages donations be made before Dec. 21, so presents can be given out before Boxing Day. Cash is collected through the traditional Christmas kettles in shopping malls.

Toys, food and corporate donations can be made at the Salvation Army Church at 9329 McCowan Rd. just north of 16th Avenue or at the organization's collection centre, 5051 Hwy. 7, across from Markville Shopping Centre. For more information, call 905-471-1038.

Children's Aid needs clothes, sports equipment

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and she started to cry.

Mr. Varkki admitted he found it difficult to keep his emotions in check.

"It was hard to talk to her, just to keep it together," he said, adding he invited the woman and her children to attend a free Christmas concert hosted by the Salvation Army at its Northridge Community Church in Newmarket tomorrow.

The family is just one of about 300 the Salvation Army congregation will help in the northern communities of York Region this Christmas.

Thousands of other residents will be finding some holiday cheer this year through organizations such as the Children's Aid Society and York Regional Police.

Many shopping malls are accepting donations, which are forwarded to agencies across the region to help needy families.

Many businesses are also hosting fundraising drives.

For example, the York Region Newspaper Group has adopted 38 families for Christmas, providing them with toys, food and goodies.

With Christmas only a week and a half away, volunteers are scrambling to make sure needy recipients across the region are provided for.

"When we hear about the circumstances of these people, it's not nice. But the reality is many people living here

are very close to that," Mr. Varkki said.

"Many of us are living with surging debt, living so close to the situation these people are in. It just takes one illness or job loss and most people would be in that situation."

Mary Waite, Christmas drive organizer for York Region's Children's Aid Society, said the agency needs winter clothes and winter sports equipment, such as toboggans and hockey sticks and pucks, for the 900 to 1,000 children it will help this year.

Ms. Waite added there is also a record number of families with babies needing assistance. She hopes residents will open their hearts to needy children whose families are in turmoil.

"These are kids that are active open cases. Their families are in crisis and their families are needy," she said.

Everyone has turmoil in their family but these are ones that are coming to the attention of the Children's Aid, so it means the children are at risk in some way. And that blossoms into the fact their parents aren't capable of giving them a Christmas.

The drive also desperately needs volunteers during weekdays to sort donations.

"We didn't find a site (to sort toys) until very late this year, which set us back a whole week. Now, we have to make up for that," Ms. Waite said.

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York Region

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The Regional Municipality of York is seeking applications from individuals interested in serving as a Citizen Appointment to the Police Services Board for a term not to exceed three years.

The Regional Municipality of York Police Services Board is responsible for the provision of police services, law enforcement and crime prevention within the Region of York.

In order to be eligible for appointment to the Police Services Board, you must be:

- a resident of the Region of York
- a Canadian citizen at least 18 years of age
- not a police officer
- not a judge or justice of the peace
- not a person who practices criminal law as defence counsel

Preference will be given to applicants with the following qualifications:

- a demonstrated history of community service
- ability to devote at least 20 hours per month to Police Services Board matters including availability during business hours
- skills or leadership in business or a profession which demonstrates ability to work effectively as a member of a board.

Those persons interested in serving the York Region community in this capacity should contact the Regional Clerk's office at (905) 830-4444, Extension 1303 to receive a Regional Municipality of York Police Services Appointment Application Form. Application forms are also available on the York Region Website at www.region.york.on.ca. Please feel free to include a C.V. Applications will be accepted until January 15, 2004.

We thank all applicants for their interest, however, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

Information is collected under the Police Services Act, s. 27 and used to determine suitability for appointment to the York Region Police Services Board.