

Lonely seniors get Christmas boost from caring community

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isolated seniors feel better at this time of year.

Valiera Luttrell, who established community group the Grandparent Connection with her 93-year-old mother three years ago, has always had an "affinity for working with seniors."

She said she and her mom saw a need to bring smiles to seniors and to connect community groups like Beavers and Scouts, as well as elementary school students, with seniors who don't get out or receive much company.

"We don't host functions. We collect greeting cards and stuff stockings and distribute them to seniors, either in their homes or in long-term care facilities," said Luttrell.

She said she has connected with all the long-term care homes in Newmarket and said there has also been interest in start-

ing similar groups in Aurora and Keswick.

"But it takes time and it's a lot of work," said Luttrell, who works full-time as an office administrator/bookkeeper and is also a caregiver for her mother. She said her husband also has an elderly mother so the family is kept busy.

"There has been an amazing reaction to the gifts we have put together for our seniors. It's been a very good response.

"The primary students do artwork, pictures and cards for the seniors and it really brings out the smiles. They love it," said Luttrell, whose group also keeps up the good deeds throughout the year, not just at Christmas-time.

For more information, visit www.thegrandparentconnection.com.

In Nobleton, the Lion's Christmas dinner for seniors is an annual can't miss event for many old-timers.

Paul Olsen of the Lions, who has been involved in the dinner for many years and at 72 is a senior himself enjoys taking part.

Olsen, who says he is a "senior serving seniors", said the dinner started out with the Lions delivering poinsettias 30 years ago and eventually evolved into the 150-160-strong sit-down meal that takes place today.

Olsen said the dinner is by invitation only, but that is just because if it wasn't then the event would be overloaded.

"We try not trying to exclude anybody, and if anyone needs to be included they can notify the Lions," he added.

The main course is always roast beef, cake is dessert and there is a glass of wine for everyone who tips.

Most importantly, Olsen assures, a great time is had by all.

"Some start arriving an hour early. We have the Girl

Guides come and sing Christmas Carols and old-time fiddlers play music. We have a lot of people who are there year after year after year. They really look forward to it," he said.

He also said it gives the Lions a chance to put their own group front and centre.

"A lot of our support comes from older people and it's an opportunity to get together with them on a large scale. So, I guess there's an ulterior motive too," he said with a chuckle.

Still, with some of the attendees not thinking they were old enough to attend "until they were 80," said Olsen, it's a chance for many friends to see each other at least once a year.

"They love the sense of community. It gives them a chance to get together," said Olsen.

For more information visit www.nobletonlions.com.

"Be a Santa to a Senior" is how Home Instead Senior



Steve Somerville/Metroland

Event organizer and host, Vince Cancelli, tells jokes prior to everyone joining in a Christmas carol sing-a-long during the King Township Seniors Centre open house earlier this month.

Care of York Region wants to connect local York Region community organizations and seniors who may be home alone this Christmas.

The program aims to provide gifts to 100 seniors from members of the community through the support of nonprofit organizations, businesses and volunteers.

"The holidays can be a troubling time for seniors.

They may feel the absence or the distance of loved ones," said Faryar Foroodi of the York Region Home Instead Senior Care office.

"Be a Santa to a Senior provides a ray of hope for many seniors, and it means so much for them to know that people care and value them as members of our community.

For more information, visit www.BeaSantatoaSenior.ca.

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