

Markham resident opens her home to homeless for Christmas

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Christmas is a time for family, full of warm wishes and merry making - that is, if you have a family and warm home to go home to.

For many in the region, Christmas is just another cold day on the street.

One Markham woman is hoping to change that for a few of the region's hundreds of homeless residents.

"Christmas is a beautiful time and it deserves to be shared," said Sharon Chisholm, a single-mother with one daughter.

"There are many who go without. It's heart wrenching."

For years, Chisholm drove around the region on Christmas Eve with her daughter, Samantha, and handed out mitts, hats and a toonie for a warm coffee to those on the street.

"It's a small tip of the scale," she said. "You can

see how old they are, their hands are purple. In a minute, their face lights up and they can't believe someone cares."

While Chisholm plans to continue her mission to deliver warmth to homeless people on Christmas Eve, this year she wants to give a little more.

"We've been so blessed," she said. "We've had some hard times, too. We just want to help someone else in life. There is a lot of gratification in giving. Maybe that's selfish."

Chisholm is opening her Markham home to anyone in the area who is without one this Christmas.

"It's a couple more plates at the table and a couple more gifts under the tree," she said. "Everyone needs family for Christmas. Join us for dinner and be part of our extended family on Christmas Day."

According to the United Way Toronto and York Region, more than 1,100 people



Steve Somerville/Metroland

Sharon Chisholm, pictured here with her dog Valentino, is opening her home to the homeless on Christmas Day. Helping others is a family tradition as she and her daughter, Samantha, annually drive around Christmas Eve giving gloves, donated clothes and coffee.

used transition housing last year.

Based on a point-in-time survey completed over a 48-hour period in January 2015, more than 260 people

were living on the streets or in an emergency shelter in York Region.

For anyone interested, a warm home and a hot holiday meal will be provided.

Transportation and meeting in advance can also be arranged, Chisholm added.

Her hope is others in the community will consider opening their homes on

Christmas as well.

Looking for a warm place for Christmas, email Sharon Chisholm sharon.chisholm@century21.ca.

York Region's

Top 5 ways

to save time, money and reduce waste

For many families, shopping and preparing meals comes with a lot of food waste. On average, York Region households throw away \$1,500 worth of food each year. Here are some simple tips to reduce food waste and save time and money:

- 1 Plan ahead and shop with a list (check your cupboards in advance to avoid buying duplicates)
- 2 Buy only what you need; bulk buying or buying on sale is only cost effective if the product is actually used
- 3 Choose recipes you can make ahead, giving you more time with your family and friends
- 4 Serve smaller portions; preparing or setting out more than they can eat is more food wasted
- 5 Freeze leftovers to enjoy later; soups, stews, pasta and casseroles freeze well

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