

Successful 'adoption' made Christmas merry for Aurora seniors



By Brock Weir

Senior residents of Chartwell Aurora, as well as Newmarket seniors, had a very Merry Christmas thanks to local companies and individuals taking up the challenge issued by Ingrid Davis to 'adopt' a senior, or an entire floor of a nursing home for the season of giving.

Companies such as the Aurora Public Library, Hollandview Trail Retirement Residence, Sutton Group's Michelle Haick, Prime Data, Renoir Retirement Residence, Starlane Homes, and the York Region District School Board pooled their resources to provide gifts to whole floors while 15 families adopted individual seniors, and donations of 50 nightgowns, 100 crossword puzzle books, 35 blankets and 75 pieces of jewellery rolled in.

In all, over 480 residents in Aurora and Newmarket received gifts this year thanks to these donors and sponsors.

'The Aurora and Newmarket communities have been extremely generous,' said Ingrid Davis, an Aurora resident who serves as coordinator for the York Region chapter of the Senior Wish Association, following a morning just before Christmas where 10 volunteers spent two hours wrapping over 150 donated gifts. 'We received more than enough donations, but we're also getting a lot more streamlined in delivering the gifts to the seniors because our Adopt a Senior and Adopt a Floor program really took off. We had huge support and that made the wrapping even easier because people wrapped them, labelled them, and delivered them directly to Chartwell Aurora and Southlake Village.

'I even received a phone call from a lady whose mum died two weeks ago and she just wanted to give the seniors so much. She got her bowling league gals together, put it on Facebook, and we received so many gifts from them.'

Looking over the expanse of gifts, Ms. Davis said the response for 2015 was humbling, but it also presented challenges when it came to some of the more unusual and specific gift requests.

'There was a lady at Chartwell Aurora who is a Russian doctor. She asked for Russian novels as her Christmas wish. I looked everywhere for the Russian novels and couldn't find them, so the Aurora Public Library had about six of them they wrapped and gave to her,' says Ms. Davis. 'There was a lady who requested Chinese magazines, which were incredibly difficult to find, but Karen Brown, an Aurora resident, had made a beautiful black and white quilt with Chinese writing on it. I was so excited to see that and instead of getting the magazines, she is going to get an absolutely beautiful Chinese quilt. At Chartwell, they have a doll therapy program with four ladies every week who go and take care of their babies. A friend of mine's mum knitted some doll clothes for these ladies so they now can have something to put their babies in. These really had an impact this year.'

Following the volunteers' marathon wrapping session, hosted by Hollandview Trail, the concealed gifts were loaded up in vans and delivered to their ultimate destinations before Santa helped distribute the goodies on Christmas morning.

Once they had been delivered, the jobs of Ms. Davis and the volunteers ? with the exception of those volunteers who also work at Chartwell and Southlake Village ? were done, but Ms. Davis was still looking forward to the magical day itself.

?I have seen some gifts where the children have written handmade cards to the residents who are going to be getting their gifts, which is really cool, but it is also about knowing the staff knows they are not alone,? she says. ?Their jobs can be quite solitary because taking care of seniors is a tough job. To know that the community remembers them at this time and gives them gifts to help out, I think will be huge.?