

Adopt a family in need this holiday season, Neighbourhood Network urges

Whether you live in Aurora, King, Newmarket, Whitchurch-Stouffville, East Gwillimbury, or Georgina, Neighbourhood Network is urging you to consider adopting a family in need this holiday season.

Neighbourhood Network, the Aurora-based organization that helps connect volunteers with opportunities that suit their interests, and with non-profits and charities in need, is currently in the midst of their Holiday Gift Drive.

Running through December 11, the program is collecting urgently-needed donations for just about every demographic: gift cards for all ages, new and unwrapped toys, winter wear, toiletries, diapers and more ? each critical in meeting the needs of more than 400 charitable partners.

?We're always moved by the community's willingness to give,? says Erin Cerenzia, Manager of Community Relations for Magna and Neighbourhood Network. ?This program is designed to make it easy for everyone to join in ? whether you're choosing items from our virtual lists or personally shopping for a family, each gift truly lights up someone's holiday.

?For some families, even basic essentials are out of reach. Each donation, no matter the size, brings real hope and comfort to neighbours who are facing challenging times this season!?

Neighbourhood Network's Amanda Hardman notes that last year's demand was ?so great and this year we're on the same path.?

?The need is actually greater than last year with the rise of grocery costs and just the cost of living in general,? says Hardman. ?We're at similar numbers already to what we had last year, so the need is definitely there again. Right now, we have 100 wish lists that have been submitted. The majority of these wish lists are for families, so single parents or parents who are together with their kids. We also have individuals who have submitted wish lists as well, so it is a mix of a little bit of everything. We have all ages who are part of the drive and we have seniors all the way down to newborn babies.?

At press time this week, Hardman said they have about 30 families on the list who are in need of a sponsor and that number will only go up as the holiday season approaches in earnest.

?I think the sponsorship piece is really important but another thing to keep in mind is we totally understand that sponsoring a family can be kind of daunting, it seems like a lot,? she says. ?There are a lot of people who are struggling right now, so we understand sponsoring a whole family might not be an option. If you're looking to give but you can't sponsor a whole family, just giving an individual gift is fantastic because any families that aren't matched with a sponsor, we will fill their family wish list with the general donations we get from the community.

?Any donation big or small makes a difference, whether you're sponsoring an entire family or whether you're dropping off one gift card, one toy, or a winter hat ? whatever it is, big or small, it truly does make such a big impact in our community. We just want to show the community there are different ways of giving back at this time of year.?

Donations can be dropped off at two locations through December 31 ? at Neighbourhood Network's office at 337 Magna Drive, Aurora, which can receive any day of the week, 24-hours a day; as well as the Central York Chamber of Commerce offices at 470 Davis Drive, Newmarket. This latter option is open Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

For more information on current and urgent needs, and how to sponsor an individual or family, visit nnetwork.org/HGD.

By Brock Weir