

Boutique launches holiday giving for Food Pantry, Belinda's Place, Marquee



Oakridge's Fashions has always made gift-giving easy, and now it's making sure your gifts have the maximum impact on the local community.

On Monday, the boutique, located in the heart of Aurora's Historic Downtown Core on Yonge Street, just south of Wellington, welcomed the public in for the lighting of its Christmas Tree. But this was more than just a traditional tree lighting ceremony; it was the launch of their Holiday Giving Program, which will see a portion of proceeds from a number of gift items for men and women alike benefit the Aurora Food Pantry, Belinda's Place women's shelter, and the non-profit Marquee Theatrical Productions.

Oakridge's Fashions has been a long-time supporter of the Aurora Food Pantry, particularly during the holiday season when the proceeds from felted mouse Christmas tree ornaments go directly back to the local food bank.

The mice are back this year, as is a new children's book inspired by the mice's journey by Ms. Clark herself ? and the sales of both will go to the food pantry ? but they're casting a much wider net this holiday season.

?The story centres around seven of these little ornaments that were left behind in the factory because they weren't quite perfect,? Deb Clark shares. ?They were sad they were left behind in the factory but they have this lovely friendship amongst them and really want to find a home for the holidays to be loved and cherished. They hatch up plans to make a getaway to Oakridge's and reunite with all the ornaments.

?The Food Pantry was such an easy decision a few years ago as a recipient for funds being raised because during the holidays it can be a particularly difficult time financially for families that are already very, very close to the mark with their finances. Things can occur that can upset that delicate economic family balance and we always felt that that source of food is so important, especially at this time of year. That relationship is still ongoing [but] it was time to take this concept of giving back into the community and cast the net a little further. That began not only the return of the holiday mice and the children's book to go with it, but we decided that we would do a very specific and deliberate buy for giftables that are now already in store at Oakridge's: things for men, for families, for neighbours, a gift for your book club, for the office exchange ? items that are as low as under \$10.?

Gifts include international items, farmers' market bags, pyjamas, Frasier fir candles, jams and spreads, and much more.

The items are now under the banner of the ?Oakridge's Giving Shop? with a portion of the proceeds going to the new charitable partners.

?We felt that if we wanted to encourage ? and we do, of course ? the community to consider Oakridge's as it fulfils its gift list, the best way we can do that is to assure them that as they do that they will also be giving back into the community,? says Clark. ?As we consider recipient organizations, we don't make too huge of a list because want each one to receive a sizable donations, we will continue on with the Pantry being the recipient from the mouse program but we wanted to support Belinda's Place this season and we also chose Marquee Theatrical Productions. It not only gives children a wonderful outlet through the learning of theatre, song, arts and culture, but it does so for adults in the community, as well. We felt that was a pretty big gift they're giving.

?It becomes a partnership of Oakridge's along with customers in the community all coming together through gift buying to support the community. The more days and weeks we have to accomplish that, the better. We, as a retailer, can offer a really genuine opportunity for everyone to do their Christmas giving and, at the same time, support the community we all live and work in.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter