

Cardinal Carter team aims to make Christmas brighter for local family-of-three



If you're looking to get a few unique gifts for that special someone on your Christmas list while helping a family in need experience the joy of the holidays, come out to Cardinal Carter Catholic High School this Friday for a special Christmas Market Fair.

Set to take place at the Bloomington Road school on December 6 from 3 ? 8.30 p.m., more than 80 vendors are expected to participate in the Fair, with all proceeds going towards buying holiday gifts and seasonal necessities for a Newmarket mother and her two young children.

Ann Brand, a Cardinal Carter teacher and co-organizer of the Christmas Market Fair, says she and the team ? including several students ? are looking for a way to ?pay it forward.? Having experienced like kindness as a youngster, it is a cause Ms. Brand says is very close to her heart.

?I have been wanting to pay the kindness that was shown to me when I was younger forward for a long time and this was a great opportunity,? she says. ?Last year was the first year I was in charge and we raised the money but I didn't know of a family who really needed the help. So, I reached out to the (York Regional Police) constable who looks after our school [to see if she knew anyone and she] reached out to the elementary school constables. Between them, they found a young Newmarket mom of four boys and we delivered it the week before Christmas. She was emotional, grateful and it was worth all the work.?

They have no doubt that this year's Market Fair will all be worth it again.

?The YRP gave us a family this year of a single mom of two kids ? a 10-year-old girl and a 12-year-old boy,? says Ms. Brand. ?The 10-year-old is in Sick Kids right now, and has been for a while, with a serious health condition. The mom is unable to work because their child [is in hospital] and we're going to do what we can to take care of some of the family's needs ? anything from toiletries to gifts for Christmas, just to take that stress off mum so she can get through the

holidays, and we want to show her that her community is here for her.?

Last year's Fair raised approximately \$1,100 and the team hopes to top \$2,000 this year.

?It is important for me to not just carry it forward with the kids, but get them to carry it forward when they are older as well to see what it does for people,? says Ms. Brand.

This is a philosophy shared with student Shon Zax, who is helping with the Market Fair for the second year running.

?When I first came here, I had no clue what this was, just a chance to help out and volunteer,? he said. ?When Ms. Brand explained the whole cause I thought it was so important and felt it was really necessary to help out. I want to help more than one family. For someone who might be an immigrant or might be experiencing poverty and not being able to experience a really fun Christmas, all the wishes you put on the Christmas list, it is really hard as a parent because you want to give your kid everything he or she wants.?

There are plenty of opportunities to help the team on the way to their goal. In addition to the vendors themselves, who pay an entry fee to participate, they have also donated products that have been turned into a variety of gift baskets set to be raffled, each of which is valued in the neighbourhood of \$100. A silent auction will offer a wide variety of products, services and experiences while fun activities include virtual reality demonstrations, a kids area featuring face painting and colouring, all free of charge.

?We have something for everyone,? says Ms. Brand. ?No matter what your age, bring your loved ones, bring your friends, and have a fun night shopping and finding everything you need for Christmas.?

By Brock Weir