

Every bell counts for Salvation Army's annual Kettle Campaign

The holidays are a season for giving and the Salvation Army is reminding residents that something they always have to give is a few hours of their time ? and every minute counts when it comes to their annual Kettle Campaign.

The Salvation Army Kettle Campaign, which supports the organization's myriad community programs, is underway with dozens of volunteers fanning out across Aurora and Newmarket to staff the kettles, ring their bells, and draw attention to the cause.

The local kettle drive is being spearheaded once again this year by Lori Hoyes and the organization says, in their experience, while some kettles are unstaffed in a tap-and-go setup, you lose between \$300 - \$500 in donations if someone isn't there to lend a hand.

?It's my honour and pleasure to be back again this year as the Kettle Campaign coordinator,? says Hoyes. ?I've always enjoyed helping out the community and the Salvation Army does great work and helps so many people throughout the year.?

?Right now, my plea would be for more people to help out by standing at a kettle for a minimum two-hour shift,? Hoyes continues. ?It's very rewarding. I hear so many stories from people who volunteer at the kettles that people are always lovely, they're so generous, and there's often stories about how when their parents came to Canada, the Salvation Army helped them out and that is one charity people will always donate to because they do such great work in the community.?

Volunteering at a kettle, she adds, is also a great way for high school students to collect their Community Service Hours.

Some of the more popular locations for Kettle shifts are at Upper Canada Mall and Newmarket's two Costco locations, but there are plenty of opportunities throughout both municipalities to get involved, including grocery stores and LCBOs.

?Our locations are all indoors, but a lot of them are near-doors so you do have to wear coats as it can be breezy, but you're not outside in the snow or whatever there might be,? says Hoyes. ?Students can get their volunteer hours and we do have some high school students signed up, but it's an easy way to get two hours and they can do more than one shift at a time. I don't encourage more than two shifts at a time because four hours is a long time to stand at a kettle, but there is always a chair beside the kettle for our seniors or whoever needs to sit down for a while.?

Angela Covert of Salvation Army Northridge says Hoyes has been ?very gifted? in identifying top kettle spots, as well as where gaps exist. Now it's a matter of filling those gaps.

?There's some gaps where we can maybe move someone from a kettle that maybe hasn't been as strong for us, and we start to learn over the years, of course, which kettles do better,? she says. ?As we get closer [to the end of the campaign] the reason why we need more volunteers is we want every shift filled.

?I was on a shift on Saturday morning and I have averaged over my years of doing kettles you lose about \$300 to \$500 at most kettles if you don't have a volunteer.?

If you're interested in picking up a shift, contact Lori Hoyes at Lori.Hoyes@salvationarmy.ca.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter