

If you want to donate, think food over toys: Lions Club



By Brock Weir

It's a trend Jim Bondy would rather see be discontinued, but if the number continues to rise he and the Aurora Lions Club are ready to tackle it head-on.

The Lions kick-started their 2017 Christmas Campaign on Friday by recognizing local accounting firm Millard Foster Thibeault Youell for their annual \$2,000 donation towards the campaign.

In 2016, over 200 local families in need were served by the Aurora Lions Club at a cost of over \$12,000 to the club. Donations such as these go a long way towards making Christmas merry for those in Aurora who are struggling to make ends meet.

?I have been doing this for three years,? says Mr. Bondy. ?In the first year, we had 140 families, the next year 160, and last year we had 220 and I am hoping this trend doesn't continue ? not so much about the money that it costs, but 220 people in a community like Aurora is very, very high.?

This is a problem Tim Millard of Millard Foster Thibeault Youell knows all too well.

A former member of the local Lions Club himself, Mr. Millard says they make their ongoing donations to what they know is a good cause.

?It is just a straight donation,? he said. ?Being on some boards, you do see some waste and a lot of people who believe they are giving to charity but a lot of it gets sucked away through administration, salaries, overhead, rent or whatever. We're accountants for a lot of organizations, we see that firsthand, and we know this is a good one.?

For Mr. Millard, who, through this article, is issuing a challenge to other professionals within the Aurora community to match their \$2,000 donation, it is important to give organizations like the Aurora Lions a monetary donation rather than a truckload of toys because, with cash in hand, the Lions can seek out what the needs of local client families really are, and go to work to ensure those needs are met.

?I think a lot of people think Aurora is a rich town, which it is, but they don't realise that along with that, you have other people who just live on the margin or just get by,? says Linda Thibeault.

Adds Tim: ?Probably the pain of being the have-nots in Aurora is even more acute because your kids have to rub shoulders with those who have and it can be embarrassing.?

?When we give out the baskets at Christmas, we always run out of non-perishable food,? says Mr. Bondy. ?We have toys coming out of our ears because, for a lot of people, they feel better when they give toys rather than a jar of peanut butter or jam. I am trying to get across to a lot of our donors that we will take food rather than toys. At least give us a couple of years to use up the inventory of toys that we have!?

Each year, the Lions, in conjunction with the Salvation Army, work to supply non-perishable food baskets, toys, clothes and Christmas gifts to all in need.

The small recognition ceremony held by The Lions at the Yonge Street offices of Millard Foster Thibeault Youell was just the starting point for the hard task ahead.

Everything needs to be in place ? donations counted and sorted, grocery and gift cards bought, baskets assembled ? by the time they start distributing to the client families beginning December 18 and 19.

To that end, the Aurora Lions will be stationed once again at the Aurora Shopping Centre (No Frills) next month collecting donations of all kinds through their Charity Gift Wrap program where, in exchange for a monetary donation, the Lions will wrap all your Christmas gifts on your behalf.

The Wrapping will take place December 15 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., and continuing at the same time December 16, 22 and 23 ? and Santa will be on hand to watch his Lion helpers in action.

For more on the Aurora Lions Club campaign ? or to take up Tim Millard's \$2,000 donation challenge issued to local professionals ? email Lion Jim Bondy at jebondy@rogers.com.