

Random Acts of Kindness can help spread some Christmas cheer: YRPA

Have you ever had your morning commute made a little bit brighter by pulling up to the drive-thru window and finding the driver ahead of you covered the cost of your coffee?

That simple act can put a spring in your step for the rest of the day, and the York Regional Police Association and Jewel 88.5 have teamed up to spread these Random Acts of Kindness far and wide this Holiday Season.

Now through Sunday, November 22, you can nominate a York Region individual and family who might be in need at this time of year for a little bit of extra holiday cheer.

Nominations are open to anyone from York Region who could use some help or a pick-me up. According to organizers, it may be a single parent working two jobs and having a hard time making ends meet, someone you know who recently lost a job, or a family struggling through the realities of what COVID-19 has brought.

Through the program, the York Regional Police Association (YRPA) will use money from member dues to cover anything from gifts under the tree to a hand paying the heating bill, proving that a little bit can indeed go a long way.

“In the past, we have helped out with rent, there may be gifts that some people might have on their list but because of the situation they are going through it might be single parent, loss of job, and obviously COVID, we're able to find something that is going to make that individual's Christmas for them,” says YRPA President Rob O'Quinn. “During Christmastime, frontline officers are always going around to all of these different peoples' houses. We might see there is so much need in the community, so for us to give back knowing the types of challenges people face, especially during the holidays, and then to have the nomination come from somebody that person knows [adds] to the beauty of what this idea is.”

This is the third year the YRPA has run the Random Acts of Kindness program, but even in that short period of time, they have seen changing needs in the community; this has only been accelerated by COVID. There is job loss, more people struggling to make ends meet, even questioning whether they will be able to make their monthly rent. Government assistance, says O'Quinn, is often simply not enough.

“People may want to go out and buy that Christmas dinner and they just don't have the funds for that. We can provide a gift card for them to go and shop for whatever it is they want to have for their Christmas. We have in the past provided rent so that somebody could pay their rent for a month or longer, if we are able to do that within the confines of what the drive is doing. We also have children who are now doing most of their learning at home, so maybe a single parent has a child that is doing the online learning and they don't have their own device and we can assist them with getting a device for that child. There are just so many things that are twisting now because of COVID.

“The simplest act can brighten someone's day and reinforce the true meaning of Christmas. That's all we're trying to do: bring that magic back for someone. If it is for one child, to touch that one person's life, that's a win and we'll take it. It is to pay it forward.

“If you have been in that situation and you remember what it felt like, pay it forward. Don't forget what it was like for you, pay it forward. If you can even imagine what that would be like, pay it forward. It comes back to that on a regular basis. How many of us have been in a Tim Hortons and someone paid for your coffee? how amazing do you feel getting a free coffee? Imagine what it is like for a child to receive a gift at Christmas. Pay it forward.”

To nominate a deserving individual and family in the community, visit jewel885.com. For further information, visit the link or contact the YRPA at yrpa.ca.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter