

Salvation Army needs more hands to run Kettle drive



By Brock Weir

Every dime you drop in a Salvation Army kettle this year stay within the community to help those calling it home ? but if there aren't enough volunteers to keep a kettle warm this season, those dimes will be hard to come by.

The Salvation Army of Central York Region, based out of Aurora's Northridge Community Church, is continually looking for volunteers to lend a hand this holiday season, donating two hours of their time to fill a shift at kettles scattered at locations throughout the community.

While it depends on the day and hour, the local Salvation Army is currently averaging at about 60 per cent when it comes to filling volunteer slots. Of course, that ebbs and flows, with this past Monday reaching 100 per cent capacity, but the more hands on deck, the happier a Christmas and New Year for some of our most vulnerable.

?Probably the biggest thing people don't realise is money that goes into the kettles stay within the community. It does not go downtown to a big sorting location to be spread out throughout the Salvation Army locations across Canada,? says Nancy Harrison, Coordinator for Northridge's Kettle Drive. ?Whatever is raised in the kettle in Central York Region stays here in Central York Region, going back to the community through our Christmas Hamper program, our Senior Support programs, kids camps, affordable counselling programs, and everything that keeps our community services running here.?

Ms. Harrison joined the Salvation Army in October after leaving a private sector job to help the cause.

She was first introduced to the behind-the-scenes work of the kettles last year working a contract position, but when the opportunity to fill the shoes of the retiring long-time coordinator, she jumped at the chance to throw herself in from the deep end.

There was no option but to hit the ground running she says, there was no time for a full-blown game plan for the program, although she says there will be a game plan in place by the time the 2018 Holiday Season rolls around, so it was full steam ahead this year.

?The organization is wonderful and it is an organization that puts so much back into the community,? she says. ?Community is where my heart is and that is why I do it. I love the volunteers, they're amazing people. Everyone's different, but the time they give and their kindness is just awesome.

?Two hours a week of your time can truly make a difference in somebody's life. Poverty is not always easy to see. Yes, there is poverty in Aurora, there are homeless in Aurora -- but if you can't volunteer on a kettle, just say hello to your kettle worker.?

One such kettle worker last week was Mayor Geoff Dawe.

Stationed at the LCBO on Yonge Street at Brookland on Friday afternoon, he shared many of Ms. Harrison's sentiments.

?It is fun, you can have a few laughs [working the kettle], but notwithstanding Aurora is a highly affluent town, there are still lots of people who need help. The Salvation Army does a great job, through the Kettle Program, to help residents.?

If you have some time to spare and would like to take a shift on the kettle, contact Nancy Harrison at nancy.harrison@northridgesa.com.