

Students, Lions team up for merrier Christmases



By Brock Weir

The students of Regency Acres Public School have once again come through this holiday season for their annual toy drive and mitten tree.

For the past few years, the initiative has helped supply goods for the Aurora Lions Club Christmas Basket Program.

"The Aurora Lions Club has done the Christmas Basket program for over 35 years," said Lion member Trudy Stunden. "Fred Bullen, who had been a long time member and recently passed away, started it and we did not have the manpower or a facility big enough to enhance his program, so what we did was pair up with the Salvation Army."

This year applicants filled out forms outlining specific needs for their families, which was something the Lions program hadn't done in previous years.

The baskets are tailored to needs, age of children and what their interests are. This year, instead of giving away turkey and ham, the program has also made grocery store gift certificates available.

"We have been doing the drive this year with boxes at the fire halls, we work with the Food Pantry and we have a facility with the Salvation at 575 Penrose in Newmarket, so people are more than welcome to visit the depot and drop any donations off there," Stunden said.

This year the program has been short on mittens and hats, so the donations from the mitten tree at Regency Acres Public School have come at a perfect time.

"Regency Public School has been great," Stunden said. "The Aurora Lions Club does vision screening at all the schools in Aurora. I've been involved with that program for the last five years and this is how they know us here. I believe they have been doing the mitten and hat drive for the basket program for a number of years, so it's just continuing on."

Andrew Turriff, a Grade Seven student at Regency Acres, donated some things to the drive and said he thinks more people should get involved in helping out.

"We should spread the word and like tell people why we're doing this and how good it will make other people feel," he said. "I think it is important trying to make people happy and give them that special feeling that someone cares."

There are still many last minute needs to for the program, with Stunden mentioning a shortage in mittens and hats this year. Finding

sufficient gifts for teens is also an area they are looking for donations.

People can still donate or sign up for the program leading up to the holiday season. To find out more information, you can call the Aurora Lions Club at 905-727-6079 or the Salvation Army at 905-895-6276.