



Operation Sharing's Christmas Place volunteers stuff envelopes to get the word out about the program.

Yule Operation Sharing happenings

Some families use Operation Sharing's Christmas Place generation after generation to buy inexpensive Yule gifts. Others use it just for a year or two to get them through hard times.

And it is particularly gratifying to Christmas Place Director Kathy Gilverson to see some of them become donors of gifts in subsequent years.

"That (generosity) is very satisfying to see," Gilverson said.

Donations of new gifts for the Christmas Place, which operates out of College Avenue United Church in Woodstock, can start coming into the church (at the corner of Peel and Wilson streets, please use the Peel Street entrance) on weekdays starting Nov. 20 from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. You can also phone Gilverson at 519-533-7493 to make arrangements or for information on how to donate cash.

Gifts are priced at anywhere from \$1 to \$3 and parents and grandparents can shop at the church on Dec. 6 and 7 from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. The kids' shopping day, when ages three-16 can shop for their par-

ents and grandparents, is Dec. 9 from 9 a.m.-noon. Shoppers need to get an invitation, which is available at various venues including all churches in Oxford County.

Last year things were looking bleak for available gifts for a time, Gilverson said, until a public appeal brought in plenty more gifts. Some of those were also made available for last year's Christmas Day Event, also held at the church.

The event, which will run from about 10 a. m. to 3 p.m. on Christmas Day, will include more than just gifts. It will involve music, food and games, said Coordinator Marilyn Schmiedl.

"More people are getting involved in volunteering" for the event, said Schmiedl, adding a dozen or more volunteers were involved last year. And at last year's Operation Sharing event, about 300 people turned out for the festivities (although not all at the same time). Last year's event drew good reviews, Schmiedl said, adding she hopes the event will do as well as or better this year for Dec. 25.

Volunteer profile

A rewarding experience

By Eric Schmiedl

Judi Moore-Gwynne's volunteering with a Syrian refugee family has enriched her life.

"It's been enriching, through teaching them English," said Moore-Gwynne, who began volunteering with Ingersoll's Mira family through Operation Sharing's Extended Family Project.

It has been a rewarding experience, said Moore-Gwynne. Her volunteering with the Miras, which began in 2016, was put on hiatus when mother Manal Mira was expecting her fourth child. However, Moore-Gwynne is eager to resume her English teaching with the family or to start volunteering with other people in the future.

Moore-Gwynne, who has more than 40 years teaching experience (as a retired teacher and principal with the Waterloo District Catholic School Board and a former teacher with Kitchener's Hollingworth Language Services), now resides in



Judi Moore-Gwynne

Woodstock and was searching for a way to volunteer. A story in the *Sentinel-Review* in early 2016 about a volunteer teaching math and English eventually led to her linking with Operation Sharing's Extended Family Project.

Of the story, she said: "I think I could do that. I was looking for a volunteer opportunity." Following a volunteer session and police background check, she was good to go with Extended Family.

As for Extended Family, it is a national award-winning program that began more than a decade ago and links people in need with teams of two-three volunteers for a few hours a week. Other examples of what Extended Family does has included a team working with a person on math and cooking skills, while another volunteer accompanies a man with mobility issues to doctor appointments.

Another volunteer meets a man with schizophrenia, who has limited social outlets, in his home to play cards and chat.

Submissions to newsletter are welcome

Submissions to *Helping in Unity* are welcome. They are subject to editing for spelling and grammar, legal issues and other editorial considerations. Submissions could include information on events concerning Operation Sharing and letters to the editor.

The editor reserves the right to withhold publication of various submissions in the newsletter.

Submissions for consideration to be published can be e-mailed to eric Schmiedl@yahoo.ca — first and last name as well as a phone number should accompany submissions.

Call 519-539-3361 for information about any of our programs.



Dr. Lynn McIntyre speaks at the town hall meeting at Unifor Local 636 hall.

Battling Oxford County poverty

By Eric Schmiedl

Operation Sharing will be heading up an Oxford County poverty reduction effort following a public town hall meeting and subsequent brainstorming session with community leaders and led by renowned researcher Dr. Lynn McIntyre.

“This (poverty reduction effort) is now owned by you,” McIntyre told community leaders at the session at its conclusion, and Operation Sharing Executive Director Stephen Giuliano took up that ownership.

“It (the effort) needs its own identity,” Giuliano said.

The late September brainstorming session at College Avenue United Church – which included about 30 municipal politicians, clergy, civic and social services leaders – led to a collective declaration to pinpoint the aim of the strategy.

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Coats for Kids/Adults

WOODSTOCK – Various free winter clothing items for children and adults will be available at this year’s program, held at College Avenue United Church.

The program will go on Nov. 17 from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and 6-8 p.m.

and on Nov. 18 from 8 a.m.-noon.

Food for Friends

OXFORD COUNTY - Please remember to continue to give generously your 25 cents each time you shop at local supporting grocery stores in Woodstock and Ingersoll year round.

Inn Out of the Cold

WOODSTOCK – The homeless shelter opens Nov. 12 at Old St. Paul’s Anglican Church. It will be open from 7 p.m. to 7:30 a.m. seven days a week.

Guests will receive a meal at night and a modest breakfast.

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More than 100 people gathered at the Unifor Local 636 hall for the town hall meeting.

Battling Oxford County poverty

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The declaration is as follows:

“Reducing poverty in Oxford County is the right thing to do. Through leadership, innovation and transformed relationships, by working to eliminate poverty, Oxford County will achieve health, wellbeing and prosperity gains, and be a stronger community for all.”

In the previous night’s town hall meeting, for which McIntyre was keynote speaker, the researcher said food relief efforts like food banks aren’t the answer. Instead, she pointed to a guaranteed annual income of \$16,850 to make things better for those in poverty and the overall community as a whole.

“We need a basic income program. We need it tomorrow,” said Paul Beaton, one of the panellists for the evening, held at Unifor Local 636 hall. Beaton is director

of human services for the County of Oxford.

Lack of access to food is due to lack of financial resources, McIntyre said. Problems ranging from increased asthma to depression and suicide ideation result from that lack, she added.

“This is a huge problem,” affecting millions of Canadians, she said. One in six Canadian children live in households with food insecurity and their health suffers more as they grow older.

“Those (poverty) results match up with very, very poor health outcomes.

“It’s about stress causing health problems.”

Food insecurity is “toxic” and is very expensive to society as a whole, McIntyre said. In areas where finances to the poor were hiked, food insecurity went down.

“Food insecurity is one of the preventables.”

Various levels of government could work together to fight food insecurity.

And no study has shown food insecurity has been reduced by a food program, she said. “This is an income problem, not a food problem.”

As for Oxford County, it has a lot to build on in terms of poverty reduction, McIntyre said.

“I think all members of Oxford County deserve dignity,” said panellist Vanessa Giuliano.

Giuliano is formerly with the Salvation Army in Woodstock and now works with Operation Sharing.

Panellist and researcher Dr. Tracy Smith-Carrier said the problem is a lack of financial resources. She suggested if the money being put into poverty programs now could be given to the people who need it, the problem could be solved.

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