

The Observer

Operation Christmas Tree drive thru nets holiday donations

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SHAWN JEFFORDS The Observer Const. John Vince of the Lambton OPP stands with Sarnian Bob Moore as he drops off some canned goods at the Corunna detachment during the 4th annual "drive thru" to help Operation Christmas Tree. Accepting the goods are, from left, Nicholas Parkes, Santa Claus, Luke Habel and Meagan Parkes.
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The boys and girls in blue partnered with one famous jolly elf in red this weekend to combat poverty in St. Clair Township.

Lambton OPP held their fourth annual "Drive Thru" at the Corunna detachment for Operation Christmas Tree on Saturday. The officers, along with a few dozen volunteers and special-guest Santa Claus, gathered canned goods and toys from people who drove by to drop off the treats.

"It really brings the community together," Sgt. Paul Futers said. "It's so important to help people in need at this time of year, especially with the economic trouble."

The event is part of the larger annual drive that gathers food for hampers that are delivered to about 120 families each year. It's sad that the need seems to always be there, but an important lesson for some, Futers said.

"It really shows young people the need to help others around you," he said. "Who knows, someday it could be you that needs the help."

Ron Skreptak, president of Operation Christmas Tree, lauded local police and fire services for their help. The officers and firefighters traveled to local schools, many on their days off, to pick up thousands of cans gathered during the drive which has been running since late November.

"We'd be lost with them," he said.

Skreptak said right now they are in most desperate need of toys and games for older children, aged 10-15.

"Everyone buys for the young ones but we need to give the older children something too," he said. "We try to give everyone something."

Skreptak said over 12,655 nonperishable food items have been gathered so far. The hampers are being assembled at the old Murray St. School in Corunna. They will be delivered Dec. 20.

"It's a good feeling because in many cases you know that these families don't have much, if anything," he said. "You know you're really helping."