

Operation Christmas Tree turns 25

Posted By Steve Coleman



Despite predictions of doom-and-gloom for the economy, Operation Christmas Tree didn't see more business than usual getting ready for its 25th Christmas.

Still, business as usual is more than enough to keep volunteers hopping during the holidays.

The Christmas aid program will help between 110-120 families over the holidays, including both food and presents for the kids.

"That's about 450 people," said Ron Skreptak, one of the Optimist Club of Moore members behind the project. "It's about average. We expect it could go up next year."

Before last weekend's drop off depot at the Corunna OPP station, had 12,655 cans of food stashed for Christmas hampers courtesy of area schools.

A usual Christmas means delivering between six and eight tons of food to local families.

In the event there's any left over once the boxes go together, the extra won't go to waste, Skreptak said. The shelves at the St. Vincent de Paul food cupboard in Corunna are empty at the moment.

People seemed to show better-than-average support last Saturday afternoon. Cars were lined up 15 minutes before the start of the day-long depot and arrived in a steady stream during the four hours volunteers collected toy and food donations.

They expected to deliver about three pickup trucks of donations to the main storage site at the end of the day.

The OPP are more than happy to be involved with the annual project, said Sgt. Paul Futers, the Corunna detachment commander. Provincial police volunteered to get involved at a community policing meeting.

Operation Christmas tree used to be just a St. Clair Township Fire Department exercise, although it's firefighters who still deliver the food from the Murray Street warehouse.

Any cash donations collected during the annual campaign also go a long way, Skreptak said.

Volunteers spend about \$15,000-\$20,000 on perishable food items, like potatoes, every year.