

OPS holding annual toy and food drive, magical Christmas forest



By Jasen Obermeyer

Orangeville Police are hosting their annual toy and food drive, along with their "Magical Christmas Forest," to further help kids in need during the Christmas season.

Members of the Auxiliary Unit will be at Walmart the next three weekends, on Friday from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from noon to 4:00 p.m., collecting new, unwrapped toys, cash, and non-perishable food items.

Other locations include the Orangeville Police Service (OPS) trailer at Kay Cee Gardens, the Salvation Army Thrift Store on Broadway, Orangeville Town Hall, LCBO, Shoeless Joe's, and Royal Lepage RCR Realty.

They will also be collecting Canadian Tire money, with a canister set up at the store, while donations can be dropped off at the station's wooden sleigh, dubbed "Santa's Cruiser," as well as the donation bin at Winners.

"The residents of Orangeville and area are extremely generous and that generosity speaks to the continued success of this initiative," said Chief Wayne Kalinski.

In addition to toy drive, police will also be collecting non-perishable food items for the Orangeville Food Bank. "We are proud to support the Orangeville Food Bank and to raise awareness of the great public service of the food bank volunteers," said Chief Kalinski.

All toy donations will be dropped off at the Salvation Army's New Hope Community Church on Riddell Road, and will then be distributed locally through the Dufferin Christmas Hamper Program and various community partners. Food donations will be delivered to the Orangeville Food Bank.

To gain further donations, OPS will host their second annual "Magical Christmas forest," where area emergency service partners, service clubs and businesses are invited to decorate a Christmas tree to represent their organization or business.

The trees will be set up on display in the auditorium of St. John's Church, on Highway 9, on the weekend of December 8 to the 10. The public will be invited to attend the Church to place a toy or food item under their favorite tree.

"We were thrilled with the support of this initiative last year and we hope that the forest grows with even more participants this year," said Constable Scott Davis.

People wanting to make a donation will have an opportunity to fill out a ballot for their chance to win some of the Christmas trees and decorations on display.

Constable Davis described the Christmas forest event as a fun avenue to accept donations, and was an idea from Rev. John Lockyer, the church's former rector. "Their church traditionally has been very supportive of the program, and their congregation has given generously."

He says the tree with the most items will be deemed the "most popular tree in the forest."

Constable Davis says the donation drives have been great every year. "It's a community event, and it goes back into the community? It fills the need for kids."

He adds that cash collected will be turned into gift cards, for older youth and teenagers. "If they have a gift card, they can get something specific for their liking."

If you are interested in participating in the Christmas tree challenge, contact the Orangeville Police Service at 519-941-2522 ext. 2221, or email scottdavis@orangevillepolice.ca.