

Believe Bags help single moms in need over Christmas



By Jasen Obermeyer

Orangeville's Believe Bags, an annual collection held at Christmas since 2012 by local resident Karen Ross-Smith, has once again had a successful year, helping local single moms in need.

"I was out Christmas shopping myself one day, and saw Toys for Tots, and Hampers for Grandparents, all great causes, but I thought to myself, "Well who looks after the moms that are struggling to get Christmas together for their kids?" explained Ms. Ross-Smith. Instead of doing secret Santa with some of her friends, she decided to make bags for the women at Family Transition Place (FTP), but donations now include Dufferin Child and Family Services (DCAFS), the Orangeville Food Bank, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Dufferin, for the kids to take home to their moms.

The number of Believe Bags raised has grown exponentially, from 12 bags in its first year, to 209 this year.

In an interview with the Citizen, Ms. Ross-Smith said she calls it Believe Bags because "everyone should believe in something. We believe in an awesome community, and we believe in Christmas, and we believe in giving."

Asked why single moms specifically, she says that "If you're just a struggling mom, you have a partner that can go out and give you a little shopping, but if you've got young kids and no support, there's nobody to buy a little gift."

Donations began at the end of November, and the bags were stuffed over the weekend, and delivered to the organizations this past Monday (Dec. 18), in time for Christmas.

Items collected range from toiletries, scarves, makeup, jewelry, magazines, to chocolates, and candles, luxury items that can help women feel more confident during hard times.

"People are thrilled that it all stays completely local," says Ms. Ross-Smith.

Baskets were put in 16 locations around town, including The Body Bar Day Spa, Citrus Dance Inc., Tony's Garage, Shoppers Drug Mart on Broadway, and Highland Restoration DKI, to name a few.

Ms. Ross-Smith says it's unbelievable how the community helps and donates every year, which, along with helping others, is the most rewarding for her. "It's heart-warming, it makes Christmas for me. Christmas isn't really all about gifts for me, it's all about giving."