



Christmas Place: A holiday tradition



The Christmas Place, where new gifts will be available at greatly reduced prices, will run again at College Avenue United Church at 22 Wilson St. in Woodstock.

To make donations, call Kathy Gilverson at 519-533-7493. You can also drop off new, unwrapped gifts/gift cards at the church weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. This year, the Children's Aid Society has partnered with this program to increase donations in support of it. Parents and grandparents can shop from 9 a.m.-9 p.m. on Dec. 6-7 while the kids shopping day (for ages three-16) is 9 a.m.-noon on Dec. 9.

You can pick up free invitations on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9 a.m. to noon at the Operation Sharing office. For further information, call 519-539-3361.

Support for Operation Sharing

Financial donations for Operation Sharing can be forwarded to its treasurer at P.O. Box 20081, Woodstock, Ontario, N4S 8X8.

Operation Sharing is at College Avenue United Church at 22 Wilson St. Open Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9 a.m. to noon (otherwise by appointment only for early afternoons on Mondays and Wednesdays). Phone 519-539-3361. Chaplain/Director Stephen Giuliano can be reached at 519-281-6077.

Operation Sharing's website is www.operationsharing.com. Oxford Insight is an Operation Sharing publication and intended to speak to issues faced by Oxford County's impoverished.

County council backs poverty elimination

County of Oxford Council has voted to eradicate poverty within the municipality's borders.

However, just how that will play out remains to be seen.

"We don't have a definite plan," Peter Crockett, county CAO/clerk, told Oxford councillors before the vote at council's Nov. 22 meeting. Rather, citing various leaps of faith council had made previously regarding such things as aiming for a zero target for waste in Oxford, Crockett asked council to

Council voted to support that declaration in addition to its zero poverty in Oxford move. In addition, it directed county staff to work in consultation with the committee to come up with a draft Zero Poverty Oxford strategy.

Crockett said the aim would not be to provide people in poverty with lavish living. Rather, the goal would be to provide "reasonable lifestyles." Such things as housing and transportation are other issues that would need to be addressed.

A delegation representing the committee outlined the need for an anti-poverty strategy to council.

Delegation member Dr. Tracy Smith-Carrier, professor and researcher at King's College – University of Western Ontario in the department of social work, said "eliminating poverty is doable."

"Poverty is expensive," she said, remarking that increased health and social costs come as part of the price tag, in addition to issues of suicide ideation. Also, generally, 70 per cent of the people in poverty are working, sometimes juggling three to four jobs.

And council heard that 61 per cent of those in poverty in the county are working.

Coun. Deb Tait asked if there is a program to teach cooking to help those in poverty.

"There's never been a food program that eliminated poverty," Smith-Carrier replied. A food-based approach will never solve poverty, she added.

Vanessa Giuliano of Operation Sharing, and a member of the delegation, said the aim is to give people in poverty more money so they can buy more food.

In September's town hall meeting, renowned researcher Dr. Lynn McIntyre pegged the guaranteed annual income a person in poverty should receive at \$16,850.



Eric Schmiedl
Oxford Insight

make another such leap.

Something is certain: Cutting poverty to nil in the county won't happen quickly. In addition, it could involve various levels of government.

"It will not happen overnight. It will happen incrementally," Crockett said, adding other support programs for people in poverty are mere band-aids.

"It (eliminating poverty) is possible and it's the right thing to do.

"It's about the well-being of our community," Crockett said.

The council vote comes on the heels of a two-day event in September, organized by Operation Sharing, that included a town hall meeting and subsequent gathering of local leaders. That gathering led to the formation of the Zero Poverty Oxford Action Committee and a joint declaration against poverty. 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."

BRIEFS

Christmas Day Event

OXFORD COUNTY - The doors to the drop-in Christmas Day Event, running from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at College Avenue United Church in Woodstock, are open to everyone from around Oxford County regardless of wealth or lack of it. All who show up receive a gift and they can also indulge in loads of holiday food. The event also includes carolling, board games and raffles.

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.

By donating your quarter at the till, you provide dignity for those less fortunate. Food for Friends is now being adopted as an alternative to the food

bank system internationally.

Woodstock Sobeys and Foodland (Woodstock and Ingersoll) will again match money donated up to \$5,000 (from the stores' corporate office) in the two weeks leading up to Christmas.

Inn Out of the Cold

WOODSTOCK – The homeless shelter is open at Old St. Paul's Anglican Church. It is open from 7:30 p.m. to 7:30 a.m. seven days a week.

An evening meal, a modest breakfast, housing and addictions supports along with a welcoming environment will be provided.

Special thanks: Montana's, East Side Mario's, Kelsey's, Boston Pizza, Swiss Chalet, along with local teachers and families who also provide meals weekly. And words cannot say enough for what Old St. Paul's has done in dedication of this

program (and this year in particular for providing showers and laundry facilities).

Bullwinkles

WOODSTOCK – Bullwinkles Hospitality and Training Centre continues to successfully provide healthy meals in a dignified environment/manner while also providing an ongoing learning opportunity for those interested in training in the hospitality industry. The eatery is open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. with a pay-what-you-can donation between \$1 and \$7. For more information, call 519-539-3361.

A tremendous thanks to all the many businesses, service clubs and individuals for your continued support of our ongoing efforts within Operation Sharing. Your generosity has truly made a difference to those less fortunate within our community.