



Thursday » December
10 » 2009

Bureau expects a tough season

Charity concerned that donations will decrease

Jennifer Moreau

Burnaby Now

Saturday, November 21, 2009

Organizers behind the Burnaby Christmas Bureau expect a tough year for the 2009 holiday season.

"Our biggest challenge, with the whole (economic) crisis, is that people will not donate much," said Claudine Souza of Burnaby Community Connections. The non-profit group facilitates the bureau, which makes sure local low-income families have food and new toys at Christmas. In 2008, they distributed \$132,000 in food gift certificates to 4,400 people and gave out enough toys for 2,432 children. Souza said donations were down last year and they are expecting a decrease this year as well. The bureau is trying to cut down on expenses to adjust. They also reduced the amount for the food gift certificates. Last year it was \$30 per person, this year it will be \$25.

"We are expecting we are going to be helping more people this year," Souza said.

But, despite tough economic times, Souza remains hopeful.

"We have loyal donors," she said, adding everything goes straight to local families.

But, Souza said they need more donations, especially cash donations to buy food gift certificates.

-

There are several ways to get involved with the Christmas Bureau:

- Start an angel project: An angel project is where a person or group gets a number of cards from the bureau. Each card has the name and age of a typical child that would be receiving gifts from the bureau. The cards are displayed in public, taped to a wall or hung on a tree for example, and people are encouraged to buy a present for that child. The name and age are typical, not actual, for privacy reasons but also to ensure there are enough age- and gender-appropriate presents. An angel project can be set up in any organization, like schools, workplaces and hospitals. Once the toys are collected, they can be dropped off or picked up by a bureau volunteer.

- Sponsor a family: This can be done by one person or a group. Sponsors get matched with families registered with the bureau. Sponsors are responsible for contacting the family to see what they want for Christmas and then buying food and presents, which have to be delivered by Dec. 21. The deadline to apply as a sponsor is Dec. 4.

- Straight up monetary donations: The money goes towards gift certificates for food. The bureau likes to let families pick what they want to eat for the holidays instead of donating food. Donations can be made via cheque, cash, Visa or MasterCard, and you'll get a tax receipt, too. You can mail donations to Burnaby Community

Connections, 204-2101 Holdom Ave., Burnaby, V5B-0A4 or drop them off at the office Monday to Friday, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

- Donate new toys: The bureau runs a toy room, where registered families can pick out presents for their kids. The bureau tries to make sure there are enough toys for all ages and genders, so check out the toy suggestions on their website. They can only accept new toys. This year, the toy room is set up in Brentwood Town Centre, in unit 200, on the second floor, next to Sears. The toy room is accepting donations Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. You can also call 604-299-5778 to make other drop off arrangements.

- Volunteer: The bureau always needs help, whether it's making pick-ups of donations or sorting through toys. Volunteers need to commit to at least two weekday shifts, between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., but there are some evening and weekend hours open.

Also, you have to be at least 14 years old.

- Seniors' hampers: This is a relatively new thing the bureau is doing, and it's a bit like sponsoring a family. People can put together hampers for low-income seniors for about \$80 each or \$150 for a couple. The bureau matches seniors with donors who call them and find out what kind of food they need. The hampers have to be ready and delivered by Dec. 22.

For more information, call 604-299-5778 or visit www.burnabycommunityconnections.com. Click on Family and then the Burnaby Christmas Bureau to download application forms.

© Burnaby Now 2009

CLOSE WINDOW

Copyright © 2009 CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.](#) All rights reserved.
CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.](#) All rights reserved.