

Santa looking for helpers for Nobleton Christmas Drive

By Mark Pavilons

No one should go without during the holidays.

And seeing a child's eyes light up on Christmas morning is magical.

It's that very magic that keeps the smiles on young faces in Nobleton, thanks to 'Santa's helper' Mary 'Mimi' Buchanan.

Buchanan has been helping spread joy to families in the small community for the past 18 years and while the task can be challenging, she's not slowing down.

Buchanan is the founder of the Nobleton Christmas Drive, often affectionately referred to as 'Noblekids.' The 41-year resident got the idea for the program many years ago, when she overheard a mom saying she didn't have an oven to cook Christmas dinner.

Buchanan's immediate response was: 'Can I help?' With a wish list in hand, she went shopping, cooked and made a special house call.

'I realized if there's one, there are others,' she said.

And her quest to give back began.

With close ties to Nobleton Public School and its secretary Peggy Weir, they set to work, and approached school staff with a plan.

Phone calls were made and some needy kids were pleasantly surprised.

While the numbers vary, there has been as many as 30 children on Santa's list. This year, there are roughly 20 so far, but more are welcome. Lending a hand to the cause are the Lions and Rotary.

Their priorities include outerwear, clothing and toys. At this point, Buchanan said they need monetary donations the most, including gift cards. The money allows her to 'purchase exactly what we need.'

The wish lists go home with students in inconspicuous brown envelopes and families fill out the specifics relating to age, gender, size and colour preferences.

Buchanan has her system down to an art. Despite some physical issues, she simply 'has to get out there' each year.

She and Weir are personally involved in the distribution, but noted anonymity and confidentiality are big parts of this program to everyone's benefit.

Over the years, she has received many heartfelt sentiments in letters and notes from appreciative families. That, and the wide-eyed wonderment of children on Christmas morning, keep her going strong.

'I think we should all be giving back,' she said.

Buchanan admitted she's been blessed and her father had a long history of community involvement.

'It's important that we instill this (giving back) in our kids,' she observed.

While the school supplies a list of names, Buchanan is more than willing to help anyone in need in her community.

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