

First-ever toy drive hopes to boost gift donations

Community comes together to support Cloverdale Christmas Hamper

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Cloverdale Reporter

The first-ever toy drive for the Cloverdale Christmas Hamper will soon take place, now that a team of leadership students at the new Salish Secondary School have volunteered to take on the project.

Cloverdale's Pacific Community Church has organized the hamper program for more than 25 years. Each year, it provides hampers of food and gifts to hundreds of families during the holiday season.

The program relies on the generosity of its community to supply food and gifts.

"Last year we were starting to get a little short on the toys," said hamper director Matthew Campbell. "Everybody still got one, but the selection and availability by the end got a little tight."

"We want to give people food," he said. "But

we also want to make sure there are toys to bring happiness to the season for the kids. So they can see that people do care for them and love them. That the community loves them."

And so, the idea for a toy drive was born.

Clayton businesswoman Jen Temple, who is a longtime hamper volunteer, proposed bringing the project to Cloverdale's newest school, Salish Secondary.

"We were thinking of a way for Salish [Secondary] to make a big splash in Cloverdale, with something they can take ownership of," said Temple.

When teacher Michelle Young presented the idea to her leadership class, it turned out that a few students had already been thinking about organizing a similar event.

"It was a community member and a program they trusted," said Young.

"We knew it was something we wanted to go



Every year, the Cloverdale Christmas Hamper provides hundreds of local families with food and gifts for the holiday season.

forward with."

A group of five students is spearheading the project, and the rest of the class will be available on the day of the toy drive to receive, organize and move donations.

Community members can drop off unwrapped gifts on Thursday, Dec. 6, from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. Student volunteers will be stationed in front of the school, located at 7278 184 Street. If it rains that

night, students will move the collection point to just inside the school doors.

The student volunteers will join thousands of others in the Cloverdale community who work to make the hamper happen.

Last year, close to 2,000 people volunteered for the program. Classes of students, Girl Guide troops, church groups, businesses and soccer teams all came down to help sort, pack and organize the thousands of pounds of food into hampers and organize the "toy room," where families can choose gifts for their children and teens.

"It's all about making it an awesome Christmas for everybody. I just really want to help make it spectacular. I think it's great that all levels of the community come together to help support this amazing cause," said Temple.

The Cloverdale Christmas Hamper gratefully accepts any unwrapped gift for children and teens up to the age of 18, said Temple.

The hamper struggles with getting gifts for pre-teens and teenagers every year. To fill that need, organizers suggest gift cards, such as for a local

mall or electronics store, headphones, iTunes cards, complex LEGO sets, make up, or clothes for 12 to 14 year olds.

The hamper also accepts cash donations, from individuals and businesses, which organizers use to purchase gift and food items that they may be short on. This year, Elements Casino gave \$2,500 to the Cloverdale Christmas Hamper at a Chamber of Commerce luncheon, challenging other businesses to give back to the community as well.

Many Cloverdale businesses will have collection boxes as the holiday approaches. Donations can also be dropped off at Cloverdale Library, the Cloverdale Recreation Centre, or at the Pacific Community Church at 5337 180 Street.

For more information on donating, visit cloverdalechristmashamper.ca or email Lindsay Rempel at lindsay@mycck.ca.