

Salish Secondary secures another 200 toys

Malin Jordan
Cloverdale Reporter

Last year, students at Salish Secondary collected 200 toys for the Cloverdale Christmas Hamper program and now they have done it again.

Grade 11 student Joon Hyeong Sohn, one of the student coordinators, said they'd collected another 200 toys, along with gift cards and several boxes of canned food, in the second annual Salish Secondary Toy Drive.

"We were worried, initially, that many people would not donate because of the forecast of rainy weather," Sohn added. "Thankfully, by the time the toy drive started, (the rain) stopped."

Sohn said the response from students, teachers, parents, and members of the community for the school's toy drive Dec. 12 was fantastic.

"Our leadership students were a good mix of those who have experience running such an initiative and those who were totally new at it," Sohn said. "They had an amazing time and were inspired by the support of the broader community such as Jen Temple, the United Way of the Lower



Surrey South MLA Stephanie Cadieux delivers toys to Salish Secondary student volunteers Dec. 12 during the school's second annual toy drive. (Photo: Malin Jordan)

Mainland, Turkey's Party Makers, and MLA Stephanie Cadieux."

Sohn said his student group learned anyone can create a meaningful and enduring difference in the community by working hard, reaching out to the community, and bringing people together.

After much success last year, the idea of helping with this year's toy drive appealed to volunteer Kiera McAllister.

"This year, some more friends and I chose to get involved because we wanted to ensure that our struggling

local families, children and youth can enjoy a brighter and more joyous Christmas season," McAllister said. "Everyone deserves to enjoy a happy, spectacular Christmas."

As part of the toy drive event, a school group called Hold High the Torch set up a Christmas card initiative where people were encouraged to write Christmas cards to Canadian soldiers.

Sohn said the Christmas card initiative went well and that 25 cards were created.

"They were not sent to the

Trenton CFB base, as our troops overseas would not receive them in time, but we did send them to the navy base in Victoria for our Canadian Sailors."

Sohn hopes more members of the community get involved in the Christmas card writing endeavour next year.

"Lots of heartfelt, genuine messages were written, especially by the younger kids."

Sohn founded Hold High the Torch last year as a student-led organization striving to foster a "culture of remembrance in our communities and a personal appreciation of our cherished freedoms in today's youth."

Sending Christmas cards overseas is a Canadian tradition that stretches back to both World Wars, added Sohn.

"It is important to remind our community to be grateful for our troops for their service and sacrifice," Sohn explained. "They'll be far away from their families during Christmas, but we get to enjoy the Christmas season in peace and security. Sending Christmas cards is our small way of showing appreciation."

Inaugural toy drive collects toys and cash for hamper program

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The inaugural Cloverdale Toy Drive was a great success, according to Scott Wheatley.

Wheatley said they collected more than 200 toys and raised more than \$1,000 for the Cloverdale Christmas Hamper program.

"Overall, we are pretty happy with the way it went," said Wheatley, the executive director for the Cloverdale District Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber partnered with Elements Casino and Pulse 107.7 FM to sponsor the drive.

Wheatley said they would have liked to have raised more, but for an inaugural event, he was more than satisfied with the result.

"We are definitely going to do it next year," he added. "The vast majority of people didn't know about it, so we'll look at ways to get the word out next year."

Wheatley said he and Cheryl White, the Chamber's special events coordinator, set up from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in front of Elements Casino, but noted the majority of people

came by between 12 and 2 p.m.

Along with hundreds of toys, Wheatley and White collected \$260 in donations Dec. 8. This was added to \$760 raised in a table auction initiative Dec. 10, as part of the Chamber's monthly business luncheon, and more than \$1,000 was presented to the Christmas hamper program.

"This holiday season we wanted to give our valued members and our neighbours an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of children in Cloverdale—the community where we live, work, and play," said Wheatley.

Wheatley said when the Chamber was tossing around ideas about what sort of events they could do to help the less fortunate, they came up with the idea of a toy drive and they knew they wanted to bring in Elements.

"We have a long-standing relationship with Elements Casino," he said. "(We) know how much they support and give back to our community. It made sense to partner together to make sure every child in Cloverdale has a toy this Christmas."