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HOLIDAY 2023
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FREE

AN UXBRIDGE DAILY LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE



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during the festive season

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FROM THE EDITOR

The holiday season is a magical time of year for many people all over the world and it's no different here in Uxbridge. The Fantasy of Lights, orchestrated by the Optimist Club of Uxbridge, has become a famous attraction - drawing in crowds from not just Uxbridge, but all over the GTA. We interviewed the Wilson Family who spend hours each year in Elgin Park during the months of November and December to coordinate over 95 displays that make up one of the biggest exhibits of Christmas lights in Canada.

After leaving the park, many attendees pivot to the downtown core to do some holiday shopping and are greeted by a stunning display outside Rutledge Jewellers at the corner of Brock and Church. We speak with Scott Rutledge who, along with his team, continues to innovate each season by creating family-photo-op-worthy themed installations outside the store.

But this time of year can also be a very difficult one for those who are unable to

take the time or spend the money to buy the gifts or food they want for their loved ones. There are a few holiday-specific programs that exist solely for the purpose of making the season a bit brighter for those who need it the most.

Learn about our local Toy Drive that has a long history here in town and continues to bring joy to hundreds of children each year. More recently, Uxbridge resident Lori Venhola started a new program to provide the opportunity for locals to Adopt a Senior which means that over 400 residents of nursing and retirement homes receive a basket of locally purchased items delivered right to their door.

The Salvation Army assists families with the Christmas Hampers they assemble and the Uxbridge Scugog Pet Food Bank, which operates year round, has a Christmas initiative which serves the 'invisible need' to help pets remain with their owners as the cost of necessities continues to rise.

In this issue, we not only bring to you the details about each of these initiatives, but we highlight the people who make these programs available - the Holiday Makers of Uxbridge.

Over the course of the first three issues of the magazine, we've learned that one of our favourite pieces to work on is the Product Feature section. We love curating a fun collection of goodies you can purchase right here in our community! For the Holiday issue, we expanded this feature to five unique collections so you can find that perfect gift for everyone on your list.

This edition of You Are Here serves as your all-in-one guide for the 2023 Holiday season, and we trust you'll find as much joy in reading it as we did in creating it.

Wishing you all the best this holiday season, from our family to yours.

— Caitlin Christoff Taillon

IN THE MAGAZINE HOLIDAY 2023



Rutledge Jewellers, November 2021

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FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 24TH & SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25TH

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Clearance



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IN OUR HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

YOU ARE HERE X PRODUCT FEATURES

WARM & COZY COLLECTION



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04

GIFT EXCHANGE GOALS COLLECTION

02



01



05



03



04

01 BRUNELLI SHAWN THROW

Low's Furniture
This deep green throw is 100% acrylic and super soft with a beautiful modern stitch. Perfect for curling up with a book, watching a movie, or taking a nap.
\$95.00

lowsfurniture.com

02 KIVA MOCCASIN MITT

Woods Clothing
Moccasin style outseam finger-mitt made of sheep skin with heavy ThermoLite insulation and a 'Cozy Fingers' fleece lining. These are some of the best mitts we've seen, with cozy fingers inside.
\$ 55.00

woodsclthingstore.com

03 CLOUD PILLOW PET BED

Global Pet Foods
This orthopedic bed is perfect for growing pups, elderly pets and everyone in between! Featuring high-quality memory foam, it provides the best hip and joint support for your furry friend.
\$61.00

uxbridge.globalpetfoods.com

04 STAR-PRINTED FLANNEL PJ SET

Threads Boutique
Keep cozy this winter with these PJ Salvage flannel pajamas! This set combines comfort and fashion to give you the best sleeping experience.
\$110.00

threadsboutique.ca

05 FISHERMAN'S TOQUE

STNDRD Fare
With a double-knit rolled cuff, this Italian Merino Wool toque is the perfect companion for any occasion. With moisture wicking wool, and a classic, fitted silhouette with great shape retention, this will become an instant 4-season favourite.
\$50.00

stndrdfare.com

01 THE BRIDGE GRANOLA

The Bridge Social
We always try to have only one handful...but we always go back for more; it's just THAT good! The Bridge Granola is made fresh in store with just 10 simple ingredients. Give the gift of delicious!
500mL - \$10.00
1L - \$19.00

thebridgesocial.ca

02 CANADIAN LOBSTER OIL

Passionate Cook
You've heard of Truffle Oil, now you must try Lobster Oil. Experience a burst of flavor of Grilled Lobster with your favorite dishes and culinary creations!
\$25.00

thepassionatcook.ca

03 GRIZWOLD & CO. PREMIUM EGGNOG CANDLE

Lemonade Stand
This handmade soy candle is a festive delight that captures the essence of holiday merriment and cozy gatherings, with a side kick of The Griswolds to add to the holiday cheer.
10 oz - \$28.00

thelemonadestand.ca

04 MIXED SUCCULENT PLANTER

Keith's Flowers
A great low maintenance gift for the plant lovers in your life. This mixed succulent planter from Keith's Flowers will chase those winter blues away.
\$49.99

keithsflowershop.com

05 CARDINAL SCULPTURE

Preston Gallery
This metal cardinal sculpture by Daniella Boerhof is the perfect whimsical accent to any room. Its simple yet eye-catching design will add a hint of avian flair to any space! It's the perfect way to bring a bit of the outdoors inside. Chirp, chirp!
\$35 - \$45

prestongallery.ca

SWEETS & TREATS COLLECTION

01



05



04



03



02



01 CHOCOLATE ADVENT CALENDAR

DesBarres

Count down to the big day with the very best of DesBarres! Each box contains 24 drawers filled with delightful surprises. Included are 8 single origin dark chocolates, 11 flavoured dark chocolates, and 5 chocolate treats!

\$85.00

desbarreschocolate.com

02 POPCORN TO GO

The Roxy

Looking for a stocking stuffer for the cinephile (or popcorn lover) in your life? The Roxy has you covered with their premium popcorn to go!

\$17.50

roxytheatres.com

03 BELGIAN CHOCOLATE CHRISTMAS TREE BOX

Sugar FX

This Chocolate Christmas tree box comes with a selection of gourmet milk and dark chocolates. What could be better than a yummy gift where you eat the box!

\$25.00

sugarfx.ca

04 EGG NOG ICE CREAM

Kawartha Dairy

Inspired by our iconic Egg Nog, our rich and creamy egg nog ice cream is made with traditional spices. Perfect for sharing this holiday season.

\$9.00

kawarthadairy.com

05 MAPLE DRUNKEN APPLE FRITTER

Little Thief

A town favourite, these Maple Drunken Apple Fritters are made using organic flour, fresh cut local apples, lots of cinnamon, and dunked in a pure Canadian maple syrup bath.

\$5.25

littl thiefbakeryco.square.site

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01
A REINDEER'S DREAM

Presents
In A Reindeer's Dream, Mitzi shares her hopes of joining Santa's sleigh team. This story is about trying your best, helping your friends, persevering and finally taking flight. Paired with soft and cuddly 12" Mitzi, they make a perfect gift this holiday season.
Set \$62.90
presentspresentspresents.ca

02
ADVENT CALENDAR BOOK COLLECTION

Blue Heron
This luxury advent calendar contains a beautifully illustrated storybook behind each window. Count down the days to Christmas with magical tales of princes and princesses, elves and emperors and many more enchanting characters.
\$35.00
blueheronbooks.com

03
MINI RIBCOR TRIGGER 8 PRO TOY STICK

Boyd's Sports
Bring the properties of top-shelf pro-level gear to your play sessions with this incredibly durable mini version of the RIBCOR Trigger 8 Pro stick. Lightweight and durable, it will allow you to bring your A-game to tiny games.
\$34.00
boydssports.ca

04
BARBIE® CUT, COLOUR & CURL DELUXE STYLING HEAD

Canadian Tire
Barbie has added tie-dye to her iconic look! Her thick hair with pink streaks is ideal for brushing and braiding into creative designs. Little stylists can take the included scrunchies and ribbon to the next level by using the spinner to create custom tie-dye styles!
\$50.00
canadiantire.ca

05
RECYCLED PLUSH COW DOG TOY

Pet Valu
JUMP! Recycled Plush Cow Dog Toy is packed with fun and recycled plastic bottles! The plush fabric and stuffing were created using recycled plastic, helping to divert approx. 8 plastic bottles from our oceans and landfills by transforming trash into a play-time treasure.
\$16.00
petvalu.ca

01
SPICE FACTORY WINTER WAMER

Second Wedge
A rich, warming, spicy strong ale that's been brewed specially to complement the flavours of the season. At 7.5% ABV, this is a heady marriage of rich specialty malts, ginger, nutmeg, cinnamon and allspice.
\$4.30
thesecondwedge.ca

02
BONFIRE CIDER

Banjo Cider
Fresh-pressed apple juice condensed in the maple syrup evaporator at Pefferlaw Creek Farms. Banjo Cider then fermented the concentrate and sweetened it with Pefferlaw Creek's maple syrup. The result is a locally made dessert cider, best served slightly warmed.
\$27.00
banjocider.ca

03
SNOWMAN JASMINE TEA

Manitea
Warm jasmine tea with a fun winter twist! The tea is perfect for the cold days and features pleasant floral aroma. On top is a marshmallow snowman melting into a thick layer of cheese milk foam, which tastes like liquid cheesecake.
\$7.00
@manitea_uxbridge

04
FOUNDER'S DRY CIDER

Slabtown Cider
Made from 100% Ontario apples, our original dry cider recipe has a clean, crisp and refreshing apple character. Subtle notes of blossom round out the flavour, giving it a simple yet lingering flavour of fresh apples picked off the tree.
\$15.00
slabtowncider.com

05
BOOST HERBAL TEA

Foggy River Farms
Sip your way to warmth and wellness with this immune supportive herbal tea. Featuring Uxbridge-grown echinacea, mint, rosehips, hibiscus and calendula flowers.
\$12.00
www.foggyriverfarm.com



A Cause For Paws

THE HEARTWARMING JOURNEY OF THE UXBRIDGE SCUGOG PET FOOD BANK

Written by Kyle Tuttle

YOU ARE HERE X A CAUSE FOR PAWS

In the heart of Uxbridge and Scugog, amidst the challenges brought by the pandemic, one remarkable woman emerged as a beacon of hope for both the furry companions and their owners. Meet Mel Diebel, the compassionate soul behind the local Uxbridge Scugog Pet Food Bank, a vital lifeline for countless pets and their families.

With a heart deeply rooted in rescue work, Mel embarked on this noble journey long before the world was gripped by the clutches of COVID-19. When the pandemic struck, she found herself at the front lines, tirelessly assisting various charities, shelters, and rescue organizations. But it was during these challenging times that a new need surfaced - pet owners, facing financial hardships, were unable to provide food for their beloved animals. There had to be another option than just giving their pets away to a shelter. The pleas for help grew louder as people, overwhelmed by the burdens of unemployment, struggled to feed their pets.

From this moment of need, the Uxbridge Scugog Pet Food Bank was born, starting on a modest scale in Uxbridge and Scugog. Initially, Mel parked outside the Uxbridge Town Hall, distributing dog food to anyone who required it. The outreach soon quickly expanded, collaborating with food banks and other community organizations throughout Uxbridge, Scugog and Brock, ensuring that pet owners facing financial struggles could access the support they needed. This initiative became a light in the darkness, helping over 800 pets per month remain in their homes and providing essential supplies to rescues in their time of need.

One of the notable successes of the Pet Food Bank lies in its Christmas initiative. What started with 170 bags in its inaugural year grew to an astounding 400 bags this year. Each bag includes toys, treats, pet food, a Christmas card, coupons and other supplies. The out-pouring of support from the community allowed the initiative to thrive, ensuring that the 'invisible need' was met.

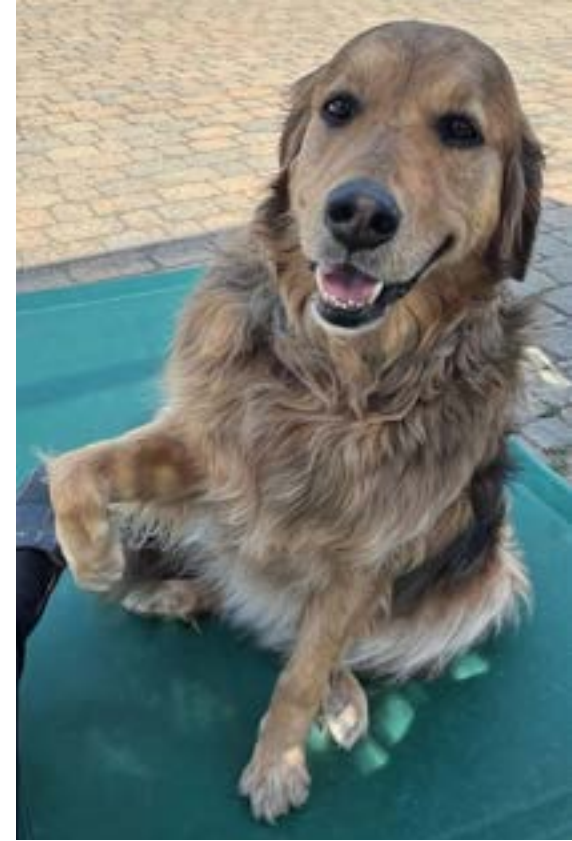
Apart from food distribution, the Pet Food Bank played a pivotal role in sourcing much-needed pet supplies. From harnesses, collars and leashes to pet sweaters and coats to kitty litter and cat/dog toys, these often overlooked items brought immense joy to families and their pets. The outreach didn't stop there - the Pet Food Bank collaborated with local businesses like Trail Capital Pharmacy and Pharmasave Uxbridge (downtown location), enabling direct donations to the Uxbridge Loaves and Fishes Food Bank and facilitating drop-offs for much-needed supplies.

In a bid to address long-term storage challenges, the Pet Food Bank invested in a shipping container, ensuring the safe storage of food supplies. Their commitment to sustainability was reflected in their fundraising efforts, including community BBQs and online auctions, which not only raised funds but also created a sense of community.

What makes the Pet Food Bank truly special is the collaborative spirit of the community. Individuals and businesses rallied together, exemplifying the spirit of togetherness. From the Uxbridge Helping Hands Facebook Group to 100 Women Who Care Uxbridge to local businesses and not-for-profit organizations, the community stood as one, acknowledging the 'invisible need' and working tirelessly to meet it.

This initiative became a light in the darkness, helping over 800 pets per month remain in their homes and providing essential supplies to rescues in their time of need.

As Mel continues her mission, she leaves behind a trail of wagging tails and grateful hearts. The Pet Food Bank stands not just as a testament to her unwavering dedication but as a reminder of the extraordinary power of community, compassion, and the indomitable spirit of a small town with a big heart.



Looking for a helping hand?

If you, a friend, or a family member have a cat or dog in need of assistance from the Pet Food Bank, there are several convenient methods available for accessing its services.



istock.com/GooseFrol



UXBRIDGE LOAVES AND FISHES FOOD BANK

Clients of Uxbridge Loaves & Fishes Food Bank are able to collect pet food during normal distributions on Wednesdays from 1pm to 4pm.



OPERATION SCUGOG FOODBANK

Clients of Operation Scugog Foodbank are able to collect pet food during normal distributions on Wednesdays from 12pm to 4pm.



BROCK COMMUNITY FOODBANK

Clients of Brock Community Food Bank are able to collect pet food during normal distributions on Fridays from 10am to 1pm at either the Beaverton or the Sunderland location.



NOURISH AND DEVELOP FOUNDATION

Clients of the Nourish & Develop Foundation are able to collect pet food during normal distributions at the Cannington location. See the website for up-to-date information on their opening times for booking appointments. <https://www.tndf.ca/food-bank/>



OTHER COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Community Living Durham North, North House, Sunrise Pregnancy and Family Support Services and local animal rescues, Uxbridge Cat Rescue and Barn Cat Co-op.



EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

In emergency situations where persons in North Durham need help and cannot use the above resources, please PM them on Facebook or reach out via email at UxScPetFoodBank@gmail.com



RESCUES, REHABS and SANCTUARIES

They do not always have extra food, but are happy to share it with other organizations working in animal welfare when it's in stock. If you run such an organization and need help with food please email them at UxScPetFoodBank@gmail.com

Illustrations: revised from istock.com — SpicyTruffel / Aleksei_Derin / Irina Yevtushenko



Give the gift of Christmas

This year the Uxbridge Scugog Pet Food Bank is collecting these much needed items to be handed out in their cat and dog goodie bags during the Christmas season. (These Christmas bags will be available to all food bank patrons and registered users of their other community partners).



- Dog and cat treats
- Dry dog food & cat food
- Wet dog food
- Cat toys (wand type)
- Dog toys (especially PetSmart stuffies for the larger dogs and smaller toys for small dogs)
- Small containers of wet dog food
- Dog and cat food samples
- Coupons for pet food or supplies
- Other dog or cat supplies
- Funds to buy any items they are short on and to buy gift cards for the Uxbridge Cares families that they support

Residents wishing to drop off smaller donations of pet food or supplies can utilize the two Uxbridge collection centres during normal business hours:

- Trail Capital IDA Pharmacy Uxbridge
- Pharmasave Uxbridge Medical Pharmacy

You can also contact them to arrange direct drop off or pick up of larger donations, dog and cat supplies such as kitty litter, pet toys, collars, etc. and fundraising items.

A huge thank you to their sponsors and supporters: Uxbridge Helping Hands Facebook Group, 100 Women Who Care Uxbridge, Miss Dixies Foundation, Coveted Canines and Creatures Rescue, Toronto Humane Society, Rescue Chow Pet Food Bank, Small Town Apparel, Penny & Pooch Palace, Pat & Canadian Tire Uxbridge, Peavey Mart Uxbridge, Pet Valu Uxbridge, First Choice for Pets (Ballantrae).

An extra special shout out to Mars Petcare Canada and Purina Canada - major ongoing donors of cat and dog food to the food bank. Without their support this much needed program could not exist.

Learn more & get involved!

Follow the Uxbridge Scugog Pet Food Bank on Facebook to keep in the loop and learn how you can help out!

Have a question?

They can also be reached via email at uxscpetfoodbank@gmail.com.

The Uxbridge Scugog Pet Food Bank is A Registered Charity -#72547 7137 RR0001. Tax donation receipts are available and provided upon request.

Photo Credit: Submitted by Mel Diebel



Enjoy
HOLIDAY SHOPPING
AND FESTIVITIES!

Live bands will be playing at local restaurants on Friday and Saturday night.

December
8TH, 9TH, 10TH
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Estate5145
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Estate5146
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Estate5123
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Estate5085
\$299.00

Estate5022
\$2,999.00

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Source: revised from
istock.com/Elenalakovleva



Uxbridge Optimist Fantasy of Lights

A SHINING LIGHT OF COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Written by Gerald Mouland

The Uxbridge Optimist Fantasy of Lights has become a beloved holiday tradition here in our town. Now in its 16th year, businesses, families, churches and service groups throughout Uxbridge unite to craft enchanting light displays in Elgin Park, transforming it into a wonderland that draws visitors from across the Greater Toronto Area.

From December 2nd to January 6th, between 6 pm and 9:30 pm, including Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, the park is open to all. The event is one of the biggest exhibits of Christmas lights in Canada. The Fantasy of Lights has even been listed on readersdigest.ca in their *Most Magical Drive-Through Christmas Light Displays Across Canada* article.



While the Uxbridge Optimist Fantasy of Lights is renowned as a drive-through event, this year marks the return of the Fantasy Trail, allowing visitors to take a stroll through the displays along a guided footpath.



Behind the Lights

The event wouldn't be possible without the Wilson Family – Jan, John, Randy and Skye, as well as a few other senior members of the Optimist Club. Guidance for displays is offered by John and Jan while Randy and Skye help provide lighting expertise. What started with just a dozen small displays has continued to grow each year. Last year, the Fantasy of Lights featured an astonishing 97 light displays! Organizers are proud of this growth, emphasizing that while they can only accommodate a certain amount of displays within the park, due to space and electrical output, there's always room for more creativity!

Jan says the event got its roots as a gift to the community. It was an ambitious effort to light up Uxbridge and bring joy to its residents. What motivates these dedicated individuals to continue year after year? According to John, the most rewarding aspect is witnessing the joy in the faces of

children as they peer out of car windows, their eyes filled with awe and wonder. The kind words and gratitude from the community keep the spirit of giving alive. Their aim was to give something special to their town, and the rest is history!

The Fantasy of Lights is a free event but donations graciously are accepted. The proceeds go towards supporting an array of local youth initiatives. These include scholarships, the Uxbridge Youth Centre, accessibility projects, playgrounds, and much more. The Optimist Club of Uxbridge works diligently to ensure that the funds raised make a meaningful difference in the lives of the town's youth. Through their efforts, the club has raised approximately \$300,000 in the past 5 years, all of which was reinvested into the Uxbridge community.

A Community Effort

Set-up for the Fantasy of Lights begins at the end of September in the park but the work continues throughout the year. This includes constructing displays in backyards and garages and the administrative preparations which are always ongoing within the club.

The success of the event wouldn't be possible without the support of the entire Uxbridge community. The town provides hydro, as well as barricades and pylons for the event volunteers. The nearby neighbours bring cheers, warm drinks and treats, as well as maintain a neighbourhood watch on the park. It truly is a collective effort that brings the Fantasy of Lights to life. If you're looking to join in the fun behind the scenes, the Optimist Club is



always looking for more members and volunteers to participate. And remember, you don't have to be a part of the club to join in the fun! The event runs nightly for almost the entirety of December and into January. This requires many helping hands – often 8-10 individuals per night. The more the merrier!

Over the years, the team has faced a variety of challenges, from unpredictable weather to navigating the technical intricacies of lighting displays. Yet, their commitment to the cause has kept it going strong. During the pandemic when many events were scaled back, the Fantasy of Lights became even bigger.

Looking ahead, they hope to see more young people getting involved to help keep the tradition alive.

A Bright Future

As the event continues to evolve and grow, it has become a staple within the community of Uxbridge. The peak traffic times are typically during weekends and over the holidays, but the organizers assure, though lineups can be long, wait times are typically minimal.

This year's registration deadline was on November 4th. If you're looking to have a display for next year, head to the website and start dreaming up your display now!

For more information, updates, and ways to support this wonderful initiative, visit uxbridgeoptimist.com/fantasy-of-lights. Or find them on Instagram or Facebook!

Make the drive-through at Fantasy of Lights a part of your family traditions during this holiday season! Please enter the light display from the Elgin Park Drive entrance, exiting on Water Street.

Photo Credit: Submitted by Randy Wilson

The Fantasy of Lights is a free event but donations are graciously accepted.



Adopting Christmas Magic

BRINGING HOLIDAY CHEER TO UXBRIDGE SENIORS

Written by Hannah Moore

When the pandemic began in 2020, feelings of loneliness, boredom and isolation were common among the community, even more so during the holiday season. This was especially hard for our seniors, many of whom were in retirement or nursing homes.

Unable to have regular visits from their friends and family, the holidays weren't feeling very festive. Uxbridge resident Lori Venhola noticed - and she was determined to bring that magic back, founding the Adopt a Senior program.

The program pairs community members with a participating senior, providing a gift for them to open Christmas morning. A donation covers the cost of a standard gift bag, and from there participants can add other special touches. Growing each year, last year's program brought gifts to 350-400 seniors across town!

Let's Pack a Gift!

For a \$30 donation, you can provide a gift to a local senior on Christmas. Each 'adopted' senior will receive a standard gift bag, filled with essentials, treats, activities and more. Last year's hamper included: A toothbrush, toothpaste, hand cream, shampoo, body wash, glasses strings, large print crossword puzzles, treats, socks, lip chap, hand sanitizer, and a small potted plant. These items are donated or purchased from local businesses - keeping your gift entirely in

the community, with any extra items donated to the local food bank. There are plenty more ways to make your senior's Christmas special. There may be an additional requested item you can purchase to add to their gift, or create a special homemade card to add a personal touch. Each basket is hand-packed with care, then delivered for Christmas by volunteer elves.

Get Involved

There are several different ways to take part in the program. To donate, join, or ask a question, message Lori Venhola or the Uxbridge Helping Hands page on Facebook.

Residents

Want to adopt a senior this holiday season? Bring the gift of holiday cheer to our local community by joining the program. For those looking to nominate a local senior to be a part of the program, the application form is available now on the Uxbridge Helping Hands Facebook page.

Businesses

The Adopt a Senior program is always looking for donations from local businesses. If you have a product you would like to donate for the gift bags, get in touch. It is encouraged to select products that can be used on a day to day basis, but snacks and treats are always welcome too.

A big thank you to all of last year's amazing businesses and sponsors that helped make the program a reality.

In no particular order, many thanks to Rutledge Jewellers, Rusnell Auto Repair, Colleen Andreassen, Shannon Wagler & friends, Pharmasave Uxbridge Medical Pharmacy, The Bridge Social, Blue Heron Books, Uxbridge Canadian Tire, Lenz and



Trenz, Artistic Hair Stop, SugarFX, Uxbridge Dentistry, North Durham Warriors & North Durham Blades, Tindall Farm & Market, Foraged, Creekside Wellness, Low's Furniture, Today's Natural Solutions, Woods Clothing, and Maureen Gilleece & Angela Wood of Chestnut Park Real Estate. As well, thank you to all the amazing community members who adopted a senior and helped make the holidays special!

Photo Credit: Submitted by Lori Venhola

These items are donated or purchased from local businesses - keeping your gift entirely in the community, with any extra items donated to the local food bank.





Discover the Sparkle of the Season

WITH RUTLEDGE JEWELLERS' CHRISTMAS DISPLAY

Written by Caitlin Christoff Taillon

On February 1st 2022, it was a dark wintery night but if you drove down Brock Street West past Rutledge Jewellers, it was colourful and bright. The store was outlined in red lights and out front was an arbour consisting of several large pink and red hearts in anticipation of Valentine's Day.

During a time when we were still in the grips of the pandemic and the general outlook was not very uplifting, this large outdoor installation provided a way to bring a little joy to an otherwise dreary time. Passersby could walk up to stand inside the arbour - day or night - and snap a photo with their loved ones.

For Scott Rutledge, owner of Rutledge Jewellers, while the themes may evolve year over year, his commitment to going 'BIC' with his displays remains constant.

Christmas-themed displays were nothing new for Rutledge Jewellers where a transformation always begins the day after Remembrance Day. Strands of garland, lights - and one year there was a train attached to the ceiling - are hung inside of the store while elaborate urns are assembled to greet you as you approach the front door. This portion of the sidewalk extends into the street to accommodate the Rutledge Jewellers' outdoor clock, and Scott saw this as an opportunity to create a larger seasonal display.

It takes a dedicated team working over two days to get the store transformed for Christmas. Every year Scott and his staff begin brainstorming in the spring for the following December. Large custom display pieces are sketched out with local craftspeople and urn designs are prepped with growers at Otter Greenhouses.



In 2021, Rutledge Jewellers became one of the central attractions of The Holiday Trail - a series of weekends organized by Discover Uxbridge (Uxbridge Tourism) to entice shoppers into embracing local businesses during the bustling holiday shopping season. The Holiday Trail returns this December for its third year and businesses up and down Brock Street (including Rutledge Jewellers) will be involved.

Past displays have included a sleigh - perfect for family photo ops, oversized presents adorned with giant ribbons, Christmas trees, life size nutcrackers, and

lots and lots of lights. This year's display outside the store will once again have a fun interactive theme but with a nod to classic Christmas traditions we all know and love. New garlands were recently purchased to upgrade the interior decorations and Scott says a Hallmark-movie feeling is central to the theme inside and out.

When asked what drives him to create these elaborate scenes each year, Scott says that it's the special moments he witnesses that make it worthwhile - a family snapping a photo together, kids excitedly running up to the larger-than-life pieces, and the joy of holiday shoppers getting to experience something fun. Instead of just creating a display that people view, he aims to create an environment they can interact with.

When speaking with a few of the store's customers, many know of the famous Christmas displays and always make a point of dropping by to see it each holiday season. They also ask Scott what they can expect to see in the display this year. Giving nothing away, he just references the idea of a classic Christmas theme and that it will be even more fun than in years past. By the time this article goes to print, the display will be ready to welcome visitors for another year so make sure to drop by 82 Brock St. W. to check it out and don't forget to shop local this holiday season.

Instead of just creating a display that people view, he aims to create an environment they can interact with.



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The Toy Drive demonstrates the power of community, caring and collective effort – reminding us of how even the smallest contributions can make a big difference to those who are facing difficult times in their lives.

For over 25 years, the Uxbridge Toy Drive has been an essential part of the holiday season here in our town, making a significant impact on the lives of children and families in need. Each year community members begin to donate new, unwrapped toys for children of all ages.

Gifts are then sorted and distributed throughout the community, just in time for Christmas. At the heart of the Uxbridge Toy Drive are its dedicated volunteers, like Pat Higgins and Andy Luukkonen, many of whom have given their time for years.

Pat Higgins, owner of Canadian Tire Uxbridge, has been involved with the Toy Drive since the initiative officially began in 1998 but says it's rooted in a long history of community support for those facing hard times. Various groups in Uxbridge, going back further than 1998, have always existed, contributing in one way or another to the cause – but it was in that year, a joint effort was made to amplify the impact. "We joined forces and increased the exposure and advertising, which helped us collect more and more toys over the years to the popularity that it now has today," says Pat.

Andy Luukkonen, owner of Body Fit and long-time organizer, has been involved for

about 18 years now. Andy says getting involved was a very easy decision. Being a member of the local Masonic Hall was a major contributor to his decision to get involved, due to the shared core values and a commitment to charity.

The Toy Drive demonstrates the power of community, caring and collective effort – reminding us of how even the smallest contributions can make a big difference to those who are facing difficult times. The Uxbridge Toy Drive typically kicks off within a week following Remembrance Day, marking the beginning of the annual effort to bring joy to those in need.

Making a Real Difference

The Toy Drives' effect on the Uxbridge community cannot be overstated. Organizers Pat and Andy emphasize the importance of the efforts put forth by so many and how the support of the community has been instrumental in helping them achieve their goals. The most

rewarding aspect, according to Pat, is simply knowing that they've made an impact in their community and partnered with many other groups to help as many in need as possible. This outlook is further echoed by Andy – "Giving back to the community – I really enjoy working with other local businesses and I have seen the difference the Toy Drive makes in the lives of those kids and families at Christmas."

Every toy donation made goes directly to an Uxbridge family.

Unsung Heroes

The Uxbridge Toy Drive has faced its fair share of challenges through the years. One of the most significant has been logistical – finding suitable locations for toy storage and distribution. The Town has played a pivotal role in helping overcome this challenge. Pat says, "Finding a good venue to store and sort the toys is key." Andy adds that not only is finding a location a challenge but finding a partner to help

Community, Compassion & Toys

CELEBRATING A LEGACY OF GIVING WITH THE ANNUAL UXBRIDGE TOY DRIVE

Written by Gerald Mouland



distribute through the year as well. It doesn't just end at Christmas, items that are donated get distributed during important times of the year, whether that's to children in hospitals or kids that need birthday gifts.

Distributing toys in a timely manner before Christmas is critical and each volunteer has their role to play. The Toy Drive has partners within the community ranging from Social Service Groups and Churches that will distribute the toys directly to the families, anonymously. The Toy Drive only distributes to those organizations, of whom handle this process with the utmost respect. Andy's role for example is maintaining the website, the collection of toys and picking up donations from various distribution groups. He's not involved in bringing the donations to families. Each year, since the beginning, Williamson Uxbridge has donated a vehicle for collection.

The program has evolved beyond just toys. The Toy Drive assists not only children but many teenagers as well. Gift cards and cash are also accepted and have become a very important component. Andy says, "The forgotten ages are always teens. The focus gets put on small children when there's so many teenagers that have needs too." Ideal gifts change each year. They are provided with lists from local organizations based on genders, age and their various needs. This is why cash is a good donation – that way organizers can buy the items missing from individualized lists.

Getting Involved

For those who wish to contribute to this remarkable cause, there are several ways you can get involved. You can make donations, either in the form of new, unwrapped toys or cash and gift cards.

Early donations are crucial, ensuring that toys can be distributed well before Christmas. Andy recommends you make any final donations at least 10 days prior.

Local businesses can also play their part by organizing collections and media partners can help by spreading the word. You can drop off your items at the official collection sites listed below.

If you're looking to volunteer, keep an eye out for volunteer calls, especially when help is needed with sorting and distributing toys.



Official Drop Off Locations:



Bodyfit



Canadian Tire
Uxbridge



McDonald's
Uxbridge



Zehrs
Uxbridge



The Uxbridge Arena
during Uxbridge Bruins
home games



A full wish list is posted
on uxbridgetoydrive.com

"I really enjoy working with other local businesses and I have seen the difference the Toy Drive makes in the lives of those kids and families at Christmas."

A Special Thanks From Andy Luukkonen

We've had so many volunteers over the years and I couldn't possibly name them all but we are truly grateful for their help.

We couldn't do this without the help of Williamson Uxbridge. They have donated a vehicle for us to do the collections for every year since the beginning.

Lorna Waters of the Ryan Waters Memorial Foundation has been instrumental at the sorting location. We are very grateful for her involvement.

Sue Gilbert heads up the hamper program which is the largest distribution partner that we work with. She is absolutely integral to our program.

The Uxbridge community that makes this initiative possible.

My family, my wife Melanie and my boys Charlie, Reggie and Raymond. When I first got involved with the Toy Drive, Reggie wasn't even born yet. However, they have all helped during every year they could. Reggie has been my co-pilot in the Toy Drive Van for over 10 years.

Finally, Pat Higgins. I know readers are aware of how much he does in this community but I have been very fortunate to work side by side with him for 18 years with the Toy Drive. Without Pat and his leadership, the Toy Drive wouldn't be what it is today.

Thank you Pat!



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Christmas Morning Miracles

GIVING THE GIFT OF GIFTS

Written by Hannah Moore

YOU ARE HERE X CHRISTMAS MORNING MIRACLES

Each holiday season, kids everywhere count down the days until Christmas morning. But what happens when families can't afford to put anything under the tree?

The holidays already bring many expenses, but with inflation and the rise in living costs and basic necessities, many families are struggling to stay afloat. Knowing you can't afford to get your child anything for Christmas is a painful realization for parents struggling to keep up financially. Coordinated by Bev Northeast, the Uxbridge Salvation Army runs an amazing Christmas Hamper program to help bring Christmas to those families.

Bev got her start with the program when she was asked during a Foster Memorial meeting to join. What was supposed to be a temporary role never ended. Today she still dedicates her time to our community as a part of the Salvation Army and Foster Memorial Committee.

Get Your Wings

Become an Angel and help give the gift of Christmas to local families in need. The Salvation Army and their programs, including the Christmas Hamper program, are 100% volunteer run. The program does not receive any grants or government funding, so they rely on the amazing donations and support of our community.

When you choose to become an 'Angel' and sponsor a family, you help by purchasing items such as clothing and gift cards. Sponsors won't receive the names of the family to keep it anonymous, but will get info such as clothing sizes and the children's favourite characters. While you shop for the kids, gifts for the parents are always welcome as well. The program receives many amazing donations of toys

and food that are added in when the hampers are packed, so they don't need to be purchased.

After all the sponsor purchases are complete, Bev compiles the gifts with toy and food donations to create the hampers. She then hand packs each individual hamper herself to make sure everything is perfect. The parents of the sponsored families will receive the hamper before the holiday, so they can make Christmas morning special.

Looking to volunteer your time?

In addition to the Christmas Hamper Program, the Uxbridge Salvation Army has the annual Kettle Campaign - with donation locations outside both Zehrs and the LCBO. They are always looking for volunteers to run these stations during the short couple of weeks the program runs during the holiday season.

Need a Hand?

Bev and the Salvation Army offer assistance throughout the year in the form of regular programs that include teaching skills such as budgeting.

If you have a question or would like to help, you can contact:

Salvation Army — 905-852-0090

Bev Northeast — 905-640-3966
beverlynortheast@gmail.com



Bev would like to give a huge thank you to everyone who donates and supports the Christmas Hamper program!

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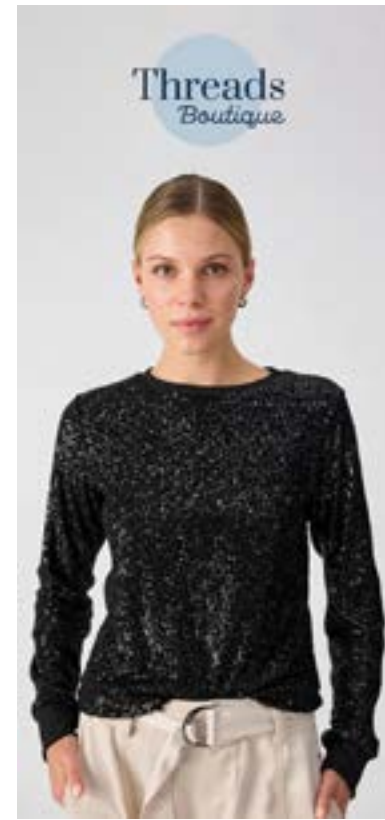


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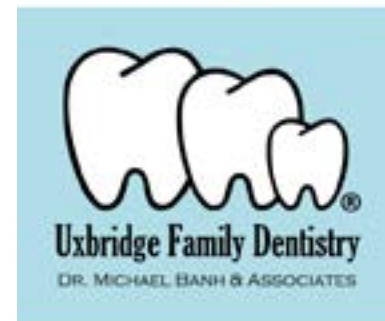
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As the year comes to a close, I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude for allowing me to be a part of your real estate journey.

The holiday season is a time for togetherness, and I'm here to help you find the perfect place to call home. Whether you dream of cozying up by the fireplace or hosting festive gatherings in a spacious kitchen, I'm dedicated to making your real estate dreams a reality.

Wishing you and your loved ones a joyous holiday season filled with warmth, laughter, and the promise of a new year in a home that reflects your heart's desires.

*Happy
holidays*

from my family to yours.

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