

COVID cancels Christmas event

OXFORD COUNTY – The coronavirus is playing the Grinch with Operation Sharing's Christmas Day Event.

"Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, we have already accepted the fact that our Christmas Day Event will need to be cancelled this year, as over 400 individuals are usually in attendance, and thus adhering to proper protocols would not be possible," said Stephen Giuliano, Operation Sharing chaplain/executive director. The event had run in College Avenue United Church's Memorial Hall in Woodstock.

"We usually provide lots of food and donated gifts at this event which will not be happening ... this will be very sad for sure, as often times Christmas Day can be a very lonely time for individuals, and the gifts/large buffet of food will not be available," Giuliano said.

The coronavirus is also impacting other upcoming Operation Sharing programs. As for the Coats for



A past Christmas Day Event.

Kids and Adults program, it will be running differently this year due to the virus. In recent years, coats were placed on scaffolding in the hall, with a few days of people coming in to choose winter wear. This year, it will run by appointment through the winter and starting now. Appointments will be available Mondays and Fridays from 10 a.m.-4 p.m., and Tuesdays to Thursdays from 10-11:30 a.m. and 1-4 p.m.

"If you have any families that need winter apparel – we can assist with this, free of charge.

"All requests must be submitted by phone to the program coordinators no later than Nov. 30," a release said. You can phone Kathy Stephenson at 519-535-4872 (cell) or 519-533-5394 (home) or Marilyn Schmiedl at 226-228-1022 (cell). Pickup of winter coats, snowpants, boots, hats and mittens will take place in the hall (Peel Street hall door) at a pre-registered date and time.

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Call 519-539-3361 for information about any of our programs.

COVID impacts programs

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“If there are emergencies throughout the winter ... we will attempt to meet your family’s needs,” the release said.

And for the first time in its close to 40-year history, Operation Sharing’s Christmas Place will not be collecting toys due to COVID-19.

Instead, the program will be collecting monetary donations to finance gift cards to give to families to shop at local stores for gifts or food, said coordinator Kathy Gardiner. The program will be collecting gift cards as well.

In the past, the Christmas Place collected new gifts that clients could buy at reduced prices on certain shopping days.

The gifts were laid out on tables, most recently at the church, and that format allowed shoppers the

ability to choose gifts for their own families.

However, that gift-buying format was deemed hazardous during COVID-19, leading to the new format of gift cards. Clients can drop off registration forms at the church in the mailbox.

“We plan to be open for gift card pickup on Dec. 7 to 11 and clients will be contacted for pickup,” Gardiner said.

Christmas Place volunteers will be on hand at the church from Nov. 23 to Dec. 11 to receive monetary or gift card donations. Monetary donations can also be mailed directly to Operation Sharing at P.O. Box 20081, Woodstock, Ontario, N4S 8X8. The program continues to run in partnership with the Power of Hope and the Children’s Aid Society of Oxford County to help people in need in Oxford.

Heading up the Woodstock Food for Friends program

Bonnie Cannell-Eby has become the face of Operation Sharing’s Food for Friends program in Woodstock.

In addition to being the Food for Friends coordinator operating out of College Avenue United Church, she is the organization’s office administrator in Woodstock. She took on the dual role on June 1, replacing Vanessa Page.

“I’m enjoying it ... meeting a lot of friends,” said Cannell-Eby,

who previously was the office administrator with the Woodstock Salvation Army.

She runs Food for Friends in Woodstock on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9 a.m.-noon. She also runs the program at Ingersoll’s Trinity United Church on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m.-noon.

With food prices going up, Food for Friends will be more important than ever in the future, she said.



Bonnie Cannell-Eby

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My love of bears

The first time I saw a wild black bear was in Temagami. I was sure that I had locked my dog Jake in the shed for the night, but as I was getting ready for bed, I saw him running in the field.

“Get your butt back here,” I yelled through the window. Up popped two little black heads. It wasn’t Jake at all, it was a momma bear with two cubs.

Once on our daily walk in the bush, Jake got tangled up with a porcupine: “Oh no, I will have more quills to remove.” As I yelled for him to come back, about 15 heads raised up. I forgot all about Jake and kept watching the bears. They paid no attention to me.

Soon, Jake came out of the bush, I laughed and we headed for the barn. I heard a noise and stopped to listen. Jake stopped as well and then started running towards me at full speed.

When he passed me, I turned and saw the momma bear. Oh no, I had come between her and the babies. I started running towards the barn and I saw Jake running circles around the momma bear. When I reached the barn, I called for Jake. It saved my life that day.

From the hayloft, I watched as the mother bear pampered her cubs. She lay on her back and the cubs suckled her for a half hour. As dangerous as the incident was, I saw the bear family nearly every day and enjoyed watching the cubs grow.

Even now that I live back down south, I return to Temagami every year. The cubs have moved on but the mother bear is still there. I think she remembers me, especially when I bring her favourite food: applies.

— *True story by Brenda Hunter, Writers’ Café/
Expressive Arts participant*

Love

The sound of your voice is music to my ears
So soft, so sweet and clear
The kiss from your lips
Words cannot explain it
Takes away my worries and my pain

He cares about you

— *Poem by Tara Myers, Writers’ Café/
Expressive Arts participant*

Bullwinkle's

WOODSTOCK – Running temporarily out of College Avenue United Church, takeout lunches are available on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays (from noon to 1 p.m.) at the Bullwinkle’s Eatery.

People are asked to donate a

minimum of \$1 on Tuesdays and Thursdays. On Wednesdays, lunches are free.

Food for Friends

OXFORD COUNTY – Please remember to give your 25 cents each time you shop at supporting grocery stores in Woodstock and Ingersoll through the year.

The Inn

OXFORD COUNTY – The Inn homeless shelter, which serves all of Oxford County, is at Old St. Paul’s Anglican Church in Woodstock.

It’s for those 16 and up. It operates nightly from 7:30 p.m. to 7:30 a.m.

Call 519-539-3361 for information about any of our programs.



Was life on Mars hunky dory
for me?

RATTY ONE

In law dramas I'm always the ratty one.

Ian's A.P.S.A.C.M.



Can you calculate this figure within 30 seconds?



Name the Charles Dickens novel featuring the Gradgrinds.

Backgammon originated in the Middle East.



The space between your eyebrows is called a glabella.

FACT

By Ian Robinson of the Writers' Café/Expressive Arts

Home from the war

I pray this side of the door of panels
That what I seek can lay my doubts.
Thoughts, disquietude, constantly quarrel
With zeal of clashed importune routes.

Life before bathed in rapture's clout,
Books of knowledge, the classics gnaw
Wisdom within volumes fails to stout,
Feelings of irrelevance in dejected applause.

Solace gone in surroundings of the past

Literature's emotions swell yet lack the task.
Quotations meaningful, influential are cast,
Plaque on pedestal, despairs are steadfast.

Please incline your bountiful binders to enfold
Give comfort, profound toward my reason.
Understand God's seeming indifference cold,
To allow the conquering of winter's season.

— Poem by Reginald E. Graves, Writers' Café/
Expressive Arts participant

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