

Scout members continue to help Santa Claus Fund effort

Published on Wednesday December 05, 2012

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Staff Reporter

Anyone who has come into contact with the Scouting movement knows community service is an integral part of its mission.

When the first Scout troop delivered Santa Claus Fund boxes 27 years ago, they had several hundred to distribute.

This year, about 2,000 Scouting members will deliver 23,000 gift boxes — more than half of the 45,000 total that will be given out as part of the 2012 campaign.

Although youth make up the majority of the delivery people, parents and leaders carry out important roles as well.

Beth Baskin is the group commissioner for the 403rd Toronto Scout Group.

She's been involved with the Santa Claus Fund for about eight years, delivering boxes at first and gradually becoming more involved. This is her second year as a co-ordinator at a St. James Town depot.



A scout puts stickers on gift boxes as members of two Toronto scout groups deliver Santa Claus Fund boxes.

NICK KOZAK/FOR THE TORONTO STAR

Many of the children who will distribute boxes from that depot live in the area. In some cases, they deliver to their neighbours or are greeted at the door by their classmates.

"They take great pride in delivering to buildings they live in and acknowledging the fact that we're a mixed community and some folks need a bit more help than others," Baskin said.

Michael Wenzel has been a Scout leader for 15 years and has been helping with the Santa Claus Fund for about 10.

This is Wenzel's first year as a depot co-ordinator and he put in 20 hours of work at his location in the Don Mills-Finch area — before deliveries even began.

Having helped out with the deliveries in the past, he has watched the children discover neighbourhoods they don't usually visit and seen their confusion when they find themselves in front of buildings that look nicer than their own homes.

"You try to explain to them that looks are deceiving, you don't know the situation of these individuals, and there's a reason they're getting a gift box," he said.

In his 10 years of giving back, as he calls it, there is no one memory that stands out for him.

"I just like it when you get to the door and deliver the gift boxes and the beaming smile you get back from most of these kinds who clearly appreciate receiving one of these gift boxes," he said.

Star Santa Claus Fund

Est. 1906

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