

# Knights annual toy drive thrives

Jan 10<sup>m</sup>  
2018

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The Monsignor Hugh MacPherson Council of the Knights of Columbus has wrapped up another successful Christmas toy drive.

"Everything went great,"

Clarence Deyoung, one of the toy drive organizers, said.

"This year, there seemed to be an even higher level of caring and sharing, if you will."

He added people contributed to the annual effort in "many, many ways."

There was an increase in the number of knitters and contributors of hats and mittens, which are always popular items.

"And, of course, there were also more toys," Deyoung noted.

The toy drive helped 149 families, which included 323 children, an increase from 2016, which saw 139 families and just more than

300 kids, in Antigonish town and county, receive assistance.

"It is such a bonus - it is beyond words," Deyoung said of what he described as the "invaluable contribution" made by donors - including local businesses and organizations.

This year, the number of volunteers who pitched in also increased.

"We [the Knights] are the link, if you will. It doesn't happen without those people," he added.

Deyoung said there are always a couple stories that "standout," including a local immigrant family which, without any refugee-related sponsorship, were "on their own."

"We were able to help them out and they were very appreciative," he noted.

Describing it as "still keeping me awake at night," Deyoung talked about two mothers, who

requested hot water bottles for their children, in anticipation of the winter ahead and the challenges they expect to face related to heating costs.

"It just blew my mind," he said, noting those wishes were filled as part of the package provided to those families.

Because of the generosity of donors, Deyoung said, the toy drive has also been able to help 10 families with winter heating costs.

With leftover monies - once the toy drive orders were filled - he explained, the drive committee put the names of the 149 families in a hat and then drew names. Each has received a \$200 voucher for the heating source they utilize.

Affectionately called the 'toy house' - the Antigonish Market Square headquarters for the drive - it was busy up until midday on Christmas Eve.

"Often, it is people who are

expecting money, but it doesn't come through," Deyoung explained of the last-minute requests.

As part of the initiative, he noted, drive organizers touch base with Saint Martha's Regional Hospital, offering toys for children who may have to spend Christmas at the healthcare facility.

Deyoung added the toy drive also continues to develop relationships with organizations such as the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Naomi Society, ones that deal with similar needs throughout the year.

"We are working together more than ever," he said.

Deyoung reiterated thanks for everyone that contributed to helping the Knights touch lives, once again, with the toy drive.

"It is all about the kids," he said.