

Community dinner captures spirit



On Thursday, Dec. 24 the Community Christmas Dinner was held at the Bancroft Legion. This event in its 21st year was once again a huge success. From the moment the doors opened till they closed, the Legion was packed with lots of laughter, great food and thankful people. Meals were delivered to residences in the Bancroft area by OPP for those who were not able to make it to the Legion. The Town of Bancroft presented a bouquet of flowers to Marie Tenthorey for her work every year. Photo by Melissa Armstrong

By Sarah Vance

Hundreds of enthusiastic families congregated at the Legion Branch 181, in Bancroft, on Dec. 24, for the annual Christmas dinner. The steady stream of diners arrived to find a welcoming buffet of turkey, ham and mashed potatoes with all the fixings. Salads and baskets of fresh rolls were served with butter donated by Kawartha Dairy and just about every type of seasonal sweet could be found at the dessert tables.

In its 21st year, the well established event bustles with traditions that are upheld by a team volunteers and which are beneficial to the community at large.

‘Some of the volunteers have been with us for more than 10 years,’ said Marie Tenthorey, who organizes the annual celebration. ‘It is about coming together as a community.’

And it is also about a great Christmas dinner.

A team of 18 volunteers were needed just to serve the many entrees, while others provided table service, bringing fresh glasses of juice and coffee to the seated guests.

More than 30 donated turkeys were cooked by local restaurants including the Granite and the Bancroft Pub.

‘It took about four hours to cook the turkeys, which we deboned beforehand so they would cook even and stay moist,’ said Brendon Clarke, chef at the Granite.

On the stage, a group of musicians provided a folk performance, with Kim Crawford on keyboard; Dale Dredge on guitar; John Foreman on fiddle; and Kirk Bates on lead vocal. Seasonal carols and popular songs were sung.

Twenty long tables, each seating 18 people, were continuously filled, by an incoming line of eager diners.

Scott McArthur, who operates Highland Haven Wood Products helped young children fill their plates, dressed as a friendly elf, while an animated Santa Claus entertained the crowd.

The people in attendance at the Legion on Thursday night, however, are only one part of the community that benefits from the annual event.

Long before diners arrived, OPP auxiliary and uniformed officers had begun delivering meals to the homes of more than 200 people through out the detachment area.

This gesture which sees cruisers packed with turkey dinner take-aways, enhances the existing community mobilization model practised by Bancroft’s OPP officers.

‘Some long term friendships are found,’ said Tenthorey recounting stories of police officers who have been known to continue friendly check-ins with residents in the days after the dinner and during the holiday season.

‘Mobility is an issue for many community members who are unable to attend,’ said Deborah Jeffrey, an event volunteer. ‘And tonight is about reaching out.’

And the results have been measurable.

Everything is donated, even the space at the Legion," said Tenthorey.

"And we don't even solicit, as the materials we need, just always become available, each year."

Staff from the Town of Bancroft were also on hand to deliver meals, as well as local church groups who showed up to support the event as attendees and volunteers.

"The impact of the dinner and Marie's organizational work is significant," said Bill Kilpatrick, a councillor for the town of Bancroft, while addressing the crowd of diners from the Legion stage and handing Tenthorey a bouquet of fresh cut roses.

"It is a great social occasion and a chance to get to know people while sitting down for a meal," said Tenthorey. "Over the years I've seen people accept job offers and have informal interviews during the dinner, it is always inspiring."