

A buck a week helps bring holiday cheer to local kids

By Alyson Iott
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A traditional Lyon Township employee fund-raiser will help local deputies and firefighters brighten up this holiday season for local children in need.

Lyon Township Treasurer Patricia Carcone said that, for the past seven or eight years, the office has collected money for charitable causes. On casual Fridays, any employee of the township who wants to wear jeans simply donates a dollar to the money jar.

Some, including Township Clerk Pam Johnson, make their donations in a lump sum at the end of the year. With these donations, plus a steady \$5 or \$10 a week, the office is able to give at least \$500 a year.

According to secretary Rose Case, the fund-raiser began when the office decided to raise money for an "adopted" local family at Christmastime. Over the years, the money has gone to help seniors, families with sick children and victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Hurricane Katrina and the tsunami in southern Asia.

This year, office employees decided to donate their "casual day" funds to Shop with a Cop" (more formally known as "Shop with a Deputy/Firefighter"). The program, now in its fifth year, raises money to send children shopping for Christmas gifts at Wal-Mart in New Hudson.

Each child gets to shop with a Lyon Township firefighter or an OCSO deputy — in uniform, of course.

"It's just a great day for them and for the kids," Case said.

Deputy Tom Bisio of the OCSO Lyon substation is organizing the event for his second year. Last year, the program was able to send 33 kids shopping with \$125 gift cards. After shopping, the children enjoyed lunch from Subway while Wal-Mart volunteers wrapped the gifts.

Area schools, the sheriff's office and South Lyon Youth Assistance help find eligible children for the program.

"A lot of kids' families told me that they weren't going to get anything for Christmas because of the economy," Bisio said. "And the looks on their faces (while shopping) ... every kid should be able to experience opening something on Christmas."

Children typically do more shopping for their parents, siblings and grandparents than for themselves, he said. Last year, one 10-year-old boy wanted to donate his trip to a friend. With donations from township office staff and developer Bob Harris, Bisio was able to raise enough money to send both children shopping for Christmas.

After every Shop with a Cop program, Carcone said, deputies share stories about shopping with the kids.

She recalled hearing about one boy who spent all of his shopping money on a bicycle for his sister.

"He said, 'That's what she always wanted, that's what I'm getting,'" Carcone said.

Support from the township and community has helped add more children to the program, Bisio said. The more support the program receives; the more children can take part.

"Wal-Mart's not going to run out of toys, and I'll find more deputies and firefighters," he said. "Money's the hard part."

The program is sponsored by the Oakland County Sheriff's Office, the Lyon Township Fire Department and Wal-Mart. Last year's donors also included Parkside Cleaners, Remember Me/Quicksilver Printing, Hines Park Ford, Liberty Chevrolet, South Lyon Schools, and Continental Aluminum.