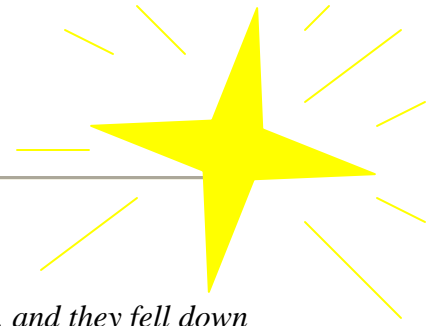

December Networking Newsletter

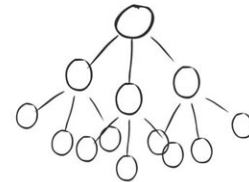


“They entered the house where the child and his mother, Mary, were, and they fell down before him and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts...” Matthew 2:11 NLT



At this time of year most of society seems to be granted a spirit of generosity. Belief in Jesus isn't often the stated reason for the food drives or charity events; rather the time of the year seems to present a way for society to “pay it forward” to those in our communities that are less fortunate.

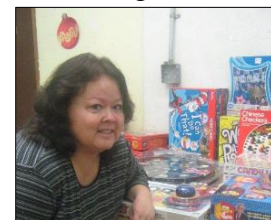
PAY IT FORWARD



There is much more room for long lasting effects of such events when Jesus Christ is at the center. This week I had the pleasure of meeting with Lori Nordstrom in Barrhead. Her husband Clayton and her 3 boys have been serving at the Barrhead Alliance Church for the past four years. Over the last four years, Lori has run Santa's Toy Box for the County of Barrhead. Maybe your communities have similar programs. In the Edmonton area, the program is called Santa's Anonymous. Lori works with the local Family and Children's Services in order to offer brand new toys to families in need. Each November Lori begins the process of finding a place to set up a temporary “toy store”. She canvasses local businesses for



donations, sets up bins in the stores so the community can contribute and handles the phone calls to accept volunteers who help to bring the clients into the store so they can “shop” for their families. The Toy Store supplies items for children ages 0 to 17.

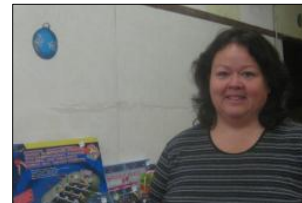


If the clients are unable to come to the store, Lori is able to select gifts for them.

Lori just loves this role! She is one of those people with a heart filled with love and mercy. Lori says: "We need to wear Jesus on the outside of us!" After spending a few moments with her, I could simply tell that God had appointed her to be "Mrs. Santa Claus" for the community of Barrhead. Christ simply shines through her. She remarked that it's a bit funny to be seen as "the Santa lady" in and about town.

The Nordstrom's are community-minded people. Their boys all enjoy baseball, so shortly after they arrived in town, Clayton began to coach a team. Soon, the parents remarked that they appreciated the ways Clayton's team conducted themselves. There was a difference in the tone of the games, and the boys learned how to build each other up and be positive with each other. Once after a game, a parent told Clayton: "You know, I know you are a minister...if I ever have a problem, I'll come and see you." Lori tells me that around 2 dozen kids meet her every morning at the flag pole in front of the Junior and Senior High School. She gathers there with the kids to pray for their school day. People are curious about this regular gathering of kids and often ask questions about what they pray for and why they meet together.

Santa's Toy shop is currently a busy spot. This week 15 boys from a local hockey team in grades 6 and 7 came and volunteered their time to decorate the warehouse before clients come to select their gifts for their children. Each volunteer and each client is receiving a more long lasting gift through the ministry happening at Santa's Toy Shop. They are receiving Jesus through Lori. Opportunities present themselves over and over again for Lori to "wear Jesus on the outside." Lori talks with people about her own life and faith. She witnesses grace and mercy to the clients that come to shop. Recently a woman drove all the way from Fernie, B.C. to donate a substantial number of toys (she had once received gifts for her family through a Santa's toy shop there). Would you join me in praying for Lori and the Nordstrom family at this time? I will remember her phrase "wear Jesus on the outside" long past this Christmas Season. Even in the middle of all the special church events on our calendars, it's easy to miss the essential thing. That is Jesus! Thank you, Lori for reminding us all that Jesus is why society celebrates each year. Merry Christmas to each of you!



Sincerely

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