

Life is a gift

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Marklund home volunteer manager Cathy Nikrandt said she got tears in her eyes when she watched residents open Christmas presents.

Those presents wouldn't be there if it wasn't for the generosity of the community, especially during the Christmas season, Nikrandt said.

"It just warms my heart," she said.

This year, Christ Community Church in St. Charles and the Geneva Public Library are among those that donated gifts to the home for developmentally disabled adults.

One thousand people will donate gifts to the Geneva home and another home in Bloomingdale this year, Nikrandt said.

Lael Laning of the Geneva Public Library said the library's "giving tree" benefited the Marklund Home.

The library set up a tree with hanging cards bearing names. Library patrons could pick a card and bring back gifts for that person. Representatives then picked up the gifts for their residents to open on Christmas Eve.

"I think people are very generous and very willing to give," said Laning, assistant head of youth services. "All you need to do is let them know there is a need."

During the Christmas season, "people are looking for things to do as far as charitable events – more than any other time," she said.

Greg Parcell of Geneva makes his Christmas season about giving.

For the past few years, Parcell's home at 813 Cheever Ave. has served as a Toys For Tots donation drop-off point.

Along with an elaborate holiday display, including 50,000 lights synchronized to music, Parcell and his family collect toys for the national organization run by the U.S. Marine Corps.

About twice a week, and more often as Christmas approaches, the family drops delivers the toys to other collection sites.

"It just seems like the right thing to do at Christmas time," Parcell said. "Christmas really should be about giving and looking out for others."

Parcell said he's impressed by the generosity of those that stop by his house.

"Our display [and donating] is becoming a tradition for their family," he said. "We've collected hundreds of toys."

Others throughout the community give to others for Christmas by playing Santa.

Tim Ratliff, spokesman for the Northern Illinois District of the U.S. Postal Service, said volunteers answer letters to Santa by fulfilling gift requests from the children's lists.

"Organizations, or people, come in and answer [the letters]," Ratliff said, adding employees also participate.

At the district's location in Carol Stream, 3,000 to 5,000 letters to Santa arrive each year. The volunteers pick letters with return addresses to answer.

"It's a time of year when people want to give, and help families and children," Ratliff said.



Lael Laning, Assistant Head of Youth Services at the Geneva Library loads gifts collected from the Giving Tree onto a bus to be taken to Marklund Home in Geneva Thursday. (Bob Gerrard photo)

Nikrandt at the Marklund home said that sentiment in the community is passed on from generation to generation.

"It's a great teaching tool," she said.

COMMENTS

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