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News Toronto & GTA

Volunteers helping to feed bodies and souls

By **SHARON LEM**, SUN MEDIA

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Santa's elves were busy assembling and delivering Christmas food baskets filled with turkey, ham and all the trimmings to Toronto's underprivileged yesterday.

Councillor Michael Thompson along with Toronto Police officers from 41 Division, EMS paramedics, businesses, organizations and 90 volunteers donated food items and their time to put together and hand out Christmas baskets for 100 families yesterday.

"A year ago my office started a program to provide holiday food baskets in Toronto and my ward. It came as a result of a need and people asking for help to buy basic food staple items we all take for granted," Thompson said.

"We have the ability to give and use my office to connect with those who do not have, with those who have ... this event demonstrates the community's involvement to help those in need."

HELPS THE NEEDY

This is the second annual basket drive organized by Project Engagement, an organization Thomson spearheaded to help the needy get back on their feet when they're struggling.

The 100 families are chosen as a result of contacts with Thompson's office, Toronto Police and other organizations in the community.

"We do see families at their most challenging times and it's nice to be able to do something nice for people," Toronto Police Staff-Sgt. Paul Martin said.

A police van was used to help deliver baskets.

Another registered charity, Humanity First International, will be handing out hot pizza slices to the homeless near Yonge and Dundas Sts.

"On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, we're going to buy enough pizzas to feed 200 homeless people," said Dr. Aslam Daud, chairman of Humanity First.

"Last year we served soup, bread and fruit, but people complained that the food gets cold, so this year we have those warm packs for the pizza to remain warm until they get served," Daud said.