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Towns Band Together

Holiday joy brought to needy families

by Sue Maccia, special to The Times

NEW HOPE—One hundred and fifty families in the New Hope-Lambertville area will have a happy holiday this year because lots of people in both communities care about each other.

The Adopt-A-Child Program, which has been run from New Hope-Solebury High School for several years, was active again this week, collecting a cafeteria full of gifts for needy families.

New Hope High School Key Club adviser Terry Randol runs the program in conjunction with the nonprofit Lambertville social agency, Fisherman' Mark. The organization, located on Main Street in Lambertville, provides a full range of social services for needy families in Bucks, Hunterdon, Warren, Somerset and Mercer counties. Gifts collected last week were distributed to families in Bucks County and the Lambertville area, said Barbara Petty, Fisherman's Mark executive director.

“I can't say enough about Terry's efforts,” said Petty, who has been working with Randol each holiday season for several years. Petty said the generosity of the people of New Hope never ceases to amaze her.

“Every year the collection gets bigger and bigger,” she said. “These people are wonderful.”

Gifts brought to the school included everything from snow disks, soccer balls and art sets, to fresh wreaths, Monopoly and the latest fashions from Old Navy.

Donors included whose school classes, individual students and their families and local businesses and organizations. All gifts were

selected from “wish lists” provided by Fisherman's Mark.

“We ask our families to fill out anonymous forms,” Petty said. Each child can select five items not to exceed \$25 in cost. Participants in the New Hope program then select a family and provide the gifts.

Solebury resident Robin Elliott was not disappointed when she asked for three families and ended up with only one—with quadruplets. “It didn't matter to me,” Elliott laughed. “I just wanted to reach as many people as possible.”

Randol was busy trying to figure out what to do with the stacks of unwrapped presents. Her helpers, mostly teens, were “checkin' it twice—sorting out piles of gifts to make sure one child in a family didn't get more than the other.”

She added that the gifts are not just for those who celebrate Christmas. “It's just that people are more generous this time of year and it gives us a chance to share what we have with those who have less.

Volunteers Chris Beagle, president of Fighting AIDS Continuously Together, and Sandy Morrison, also of FACT, busily helped parents and their children, loaded down with packages, match up their family's number with those on the 20 or more tables waiting to receive them.

Beagle said he and Morrison came to help at the high school in return for its support for FACT's annual AIDS Walk.

“It's a community thing,” Beagle said. “In New Hope, we support each other.”