

The Christmas Spirit



On the Scene
Naj Wikoff

The Christmas Spirit is alive and well in Lake Placid. In the center is Denice Fredericks, treasurer and Andre Garso, chairman of the North Elba Christmas Fund, ably assisted by a small army of volunteers.

"We had 21 families already in this morning," said Denice referring to a first floor room of the North Elba Town Hall that was filled with long tables heaped with toys.

The amount was staggering and what I was seeing was diminished from the original pile as people had been coming by all the previous day — indeed 152 had already been through. The toys were organized by gender, age and item, with an additional table filled with blankets and still another filled with gift-wrapped toys that had arrived from the Place Theatre.

"We are a very generous community, but you do have to ask, and you have to be bold," said Denice. "If you don't ask, you can't expect to get as much donated. We get a lot of single moms who work. It's just a struggle for many people. It is not just a struggle for people who are out of work, and we have plenty of them, but rent, medicine and energy is high and wages don't keep up, especially when you are a single

parent.

"I've been doing this since 1985. I started it in April when my son Travis died. I knew I wasn't going to have a Christmas without him, so I started this as a way of having my Christmas by helping others. Along with the toys, we give blankets to families every year. One parent said to me this morning, "I wouldn't have had Christmas if you hadn't helped." It's not just me, a lot of people help. People go to the Palace and pick up a card that might say, boy age 12. The card has a number on it. They go and buy something for that boy and on this table is the gift they bought. It's anonymous, they don't know who they are giving it to, but a parent came in or called here, described the child, and we gave them a number. When they come in now, there is present that's for their child. Others just come with a list of children by age and sex, and can select what they want from the tables. A person came in the other day and said they were not going to have a Christmas tree. I went and got a tree and ornaments donated. She couldn't believe it."

"I've worked here for a couple years," said Britt Pickard. "It's fun. I love the feeling of giving back to the community and to these little kids who wouldn't have anything if we didn't help. One of the mothers this morning was crying she was so thankful."

That's just part one. Part two is the nearly 200 boxes of food that were delivered on

Saturday morning. The staging area was the North Elba Highway Department. Rows and rows of boxes were lined up on folding tables set end to end. Each box had been filled with a serious amount of food that included turkeys, bread, vegetables, fruit, pies, canned goods and a whole lot more. Added to that were rows of poinsettias and energy kits — more about them later.

"I'm pretty impressed," said Highway Superintendent Larry Straight. "This is my first time. The organization is unbelievable. We just provide the space. They worked most of Friday filling the boxes and were back here well before I arrived at 7 a.m."

"I've volunteered for the last ten years," said Jim Morganson, sporting a red Santa hat as he helped load boxes into the back of a SUV. "Denice has been doing it for over twenty years. I'm just an elf. She's the glue. It's one of the better things the town employees accomplish every year. The boxes go to Greenwood, to all over — to every section of the town. There are no barriers."

"Last count we had 180 boxes going out. The final count will be higher," said Denice.

"I've been doing its five or six years," said pharmacist extraordinaire Dick Cummings. "It's a good time. I enjoy working with Andre and helping out people."

"We are up to 185 food boxes, 33 fruit boxes and the poinsettias, which are being delivered to Uihlein by Bob Jones and his wife," said

Andre Garso. "They take the time to talk to everyone, to all the residents."

"I help coordinate the boxes and make sure the right ones to the right places," said Dick. "People appreciate it."

"We've got a well-oiled machine," said Andre. "I've been the chairman for 10 years. I get stuff donated. I do whatever I need to do. We used to organize the boxes at the elementary school but we outgrew the cafeteria. The town garage is the perfect place. Between the clothes, the blankets, the toys and the food we give away it takes a lot of volunteers. We probably have 25 working today alone loading and delivering. They do a great job."

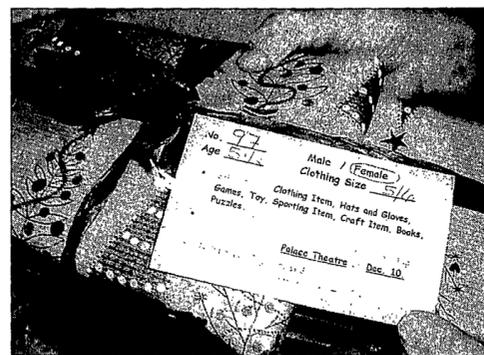
"New this year we are giving an energy kit to every household," said Mayor Jamie Rogers. "They include weather stripping, carking, energy efficient light bulbs and shrink film for the windows. We got the kits from the New York Power Authority."

"A lot of kids help," Denice said. "They get community service, credits and more importantly they get to see that many people need help and that you can make a difference."

If you want to help make a difference, make a donation to the North Elba Christmas Fund and mail it to or drop it off with Denice Fredericks at the town hall. They are already working on next year. And then next December, volunteer. You'll be glad you did.



Denice Fredericks and Shannon Porter



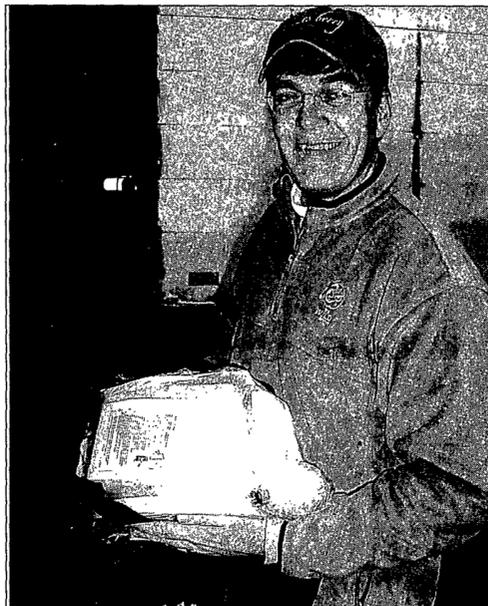
Example of a shopper's card



Britt Pickard



Dick Cummings



Mayor Jamie Rogers with Energy Kits



Greg Hayes loading an SUV

From the Mirror Lake Watershed Association: The Year 2008 in Review

It's that time of year when we update you on our activities, invite you to join us at our monthly meetings, our educational outreach activities, and ask for your donations and support.

We've had an extremely dynamic year. The focus of our past activities has been to protect Mirror Lake and surrounding water bodies from the #1 threat to biodiversity, an invasive plant species, and our continued awareness-raising efforts pertaining to water quality. And in a recent report, we found a slight increase in phosphorus in the lake. We are now researching the cause, which could be fertilizer.

Year In Review

•The MLWA celebrated its

10th year of organized existence this past June with a celebration at Peacock Park. Marion Klauck organized an excellent program with a picnic and exhibits. This was in conjunction with Lake Appreciation Month, which occurs in July across the U.S.

•Jim Grant was awarded the fifth Annual "Frog Award" for his continued effort to clean up the lake bottom and its shoreline. This was a cooperative effort with High Peaks Cyclery and the MLWA. The award this year was a spectacular photo donated by Larry Master.

•Informational newspaper articles were used to raise awareness about impacts to Mirror Lake. Recently the Association's local journalist relocated and we are seeking

another writer to assist us in our awareness-raising articles.

•Distribution of the "Don't Feed the Wildlife" brochure continued.

•Volunteers took part in ongoing water testing in conjunction with the Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program sponsored by the D.E.C. The results are consistent with a recreational lake, but with a spike in the level of phosphorus.

•An Earth Day "Poop Scoop" cleaned up the shoreline and walkway after winter snows. Doggie bags are available at many locations for your use.

•Harvesting of purple loosestrife took place to eradicate the invasive species. This was our fourth year and less infestation was noted this

year. Storm drain filters are continually monitored around the lake to check on their effectiveness in eliminating the unwanted contaminants of the storm water. This was done in conjunction with the Village of Lake Placid.

Looking ahead: Goals for 2009

In the coming year the MLWA has goals to explore:

- Continuing to inventory and harvest purple loosestrife plants.
- Placement of an informational kiosk at one or more village parks to raise awareness of the impacts on our lake.
- Monitoring the additional storm drain filters that will capture sediment, oil and

impurities that are in storm water runoff.

•Expanding our focus to include the branches of the Ausable and Chubb rivers and helping to implement a watershed management plan for them.

•Researching more "lake friendly" products, such as non-phosphate lawn fertilizers, that are available locally.

•Possibly acquiring a Lake Steward from the Paul Smith's College Adirondack Stewardship Program, similar to the ones who are in place at the public boat launch on Placid Lake.

•Continue the ongoing effort to clean up Mirror Lake's undersurface garbage and surrounding areas.

Congratulations to David

Ackerman, elected to the Lake Placid Hall of fame! David is a founding member of the MLWA.

This is in addition to our regular activities, which include storm drain stenciling, shoreline cleanup, placement of posters and informational articles in the Lake Placid News to increase awareness. Please check out our Web site.

2008 has been a busy year, and next year we would like to top last year's activities. If you have an interest in the well-being of our precious Mirror Lake, please join our team. We meet the second Monday of every month at the Peacock Park Beach House, at 5 p.m., or you may contact MLWA Chairman Bill Bijlman at 523-8925.

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