

Community Comment 12/23/2013

By Jon Sapper

Christmas Thoughts

Christmas is in two days. Are you frantically hustling and bustling about, hurriedly trying to take care of all your last minute details, completing the gift buying and wrapping the presents, shopping and preparing the Christmas dinner, cleaning the house for out-of-town guests and essentially running yourself ragged? Or, are you taking time to relax and reflect, not becoming overly stressed by watching others corkscrew themselves into the ground?

When I was a child, I liked the corkscrew approach. I was a fat corkscrew, but that didn't stop me. Christmas was insanely magical and the excitement from seeing gifts under the tree and shaking them trying to figure out what's inside, was almost too much to bear. I have to admit, though, when I did figure out what was inside, I was somewhat disappointed when I opened it. I think it had something to do with the exhilaration of being surprised. When I got older, I stopped shaking the packages, it was more fun not to guess; a few years after that I stopped looking at the packages altogether, waiting instead for Christmas Eve when we opened our gifts. I also stopped counting them. But in full disclosure, I enjoyed getting gifts much more than giving them when I was a kid. That may not be the politically correct thing to say nowadays, but that's ok. I was a kid.

I also couldn't wait to have Christmas dinner. The amount of food was far beyond what we needed, but as I already noted, I was a fat corkscrew so additional spinning only increased my appetite and I was usually the last person to leave the table.....even at the age of 8. That recollection is somewhat distressing, but those were different days.

Today, we have people who are truly hungry. We have children who don't shake presents, because there are no presents to shake. We have parents who are living in their old beaten-up car with their child, because they have no money and nowhere to go. I talked to one of them the other day, a longtime member in our community who fell on hard times and they cried in front of me because they were not able to celebrate Christmas. They are not slackers or drug addicts. They just fell on hard times. Helping them is a good thing to do.

Speaking of helping others, I am humbled by the work that Paulette Gilliam and Socks for Soldiers has done over the last 11 years. Sending Christmas goodies in boxes to our men and women in the armed forces was the idea and passion of Paulette's. She personally raised over a quarter of a million dollars for this effort and shipped more than 34,000 boxes overseas with the help of many local volunteers. Letters of thanks and appreciation from local elementary students were included. One person can make a difference.

What difference are you going to make in 2014. Time to start thinking about it now. Merry Christmas and best wishes for the New Year.

This has been Jon Sapper for Community Comment.