

Christmas Friends 'wrap' session is Saturday

Christmas Friends volunteers are in high gear, and could use some help.

This is the 31st year for the community-based program that brings together those who want to make Christmas brighter for hundreds of local needy children, and elderly or disabled adults.

Only one additional gift wrapper is needed for this Saturday, December 3, from 9 a.m.-noon at the Sentinel office.

One may volunteer to wrap presents or deliver them by contacting Geanie Longest at the Southside Sentinel at 758-2328 or email her at glongest@ssentinel.com.

Other wrapping sessions will be on Saturday, December 10, and, if needed, on Sunday, December 11.

Drivers, with vans or covered trucks, and helpers are needed to deliver gifts on Saturday, December 17.

More than 100 shoppers are buying gifts on the wish lists of those being served.

Boxes, bags and money

The fund-raising goal for Christmas Friends this year is \$27,000. Last year, Christmas

Friends spent \$30,040 on gifts for 297 people. "Now, before the Christmas rush, is a good time to make a donation," said Christmas Friends president Fred Gaskins. Checks can be sent to: Christmas Friends, P.O. Box 549, Urbanna, VA 23175.

Christmas Friends always needs gift boxes, which can be left at the back door of the Sentinel.

Also needed are heavy duty (3 mil) plastic bags in the 42 gallon size. The Husky brand is sold as "contractor clean-up bags." Each year Christmas Friends uses more than 300 of these bags.

Partnership

Since its creation in 1986, a key to the success of Christmas Friends Inc. has been its partnership with the Middlesex County Department of Social Services, which carefully screens all applicants for eligibility.

The fund-raising goal for Christmas Friends this year is \$27,000. Last year, Christmas Friends spent \$30,040 on gifts for 297 people. "We anticipate about the same number of clients this year," said Gaskins,

"and we will be able to spend a bit more on each child and adult because of the generous donations last year."

In 2015, the community donated \$29,226.70 and Christmas Friends helped 207 children and 90 elderly or disabled adults, said Christmas Friends secretary and shopping director Bettie Lee Gaskins.

Delivery vans and drivers will soon be assigned. If you have a truck or van and are willing to remove its back seats and be the driver for one of 12 delivery teams on Saturday, December 17, please call 758-2328.

For more information, call Geanie Longest at the Southside Sentinel at 758-2328 or email her at glongest@ssentinel.com.

Total volunteer effort

All funds donated to Christmas Friends go directly to help needy children and disabled or low-income elderly of Middlesex. All workers are volunteers and there are no administrative fees. Supplies such as boxes, wrapping paper and delivery bags are all donated. Volunteers supply storage space, vans and fuel to assist with the big delivery job.

Contributors will be recognized as Christmas Friends and their donations will be listed in

the Sentinel. Contributors who wish to remain anonymous should request that their donations be listed as such. Memorial contributions also will be acknowledged.

This week, \$3,200 in donations were received. Total donations received through November 29 total \$4,755. Recent donations include:

Russ and Pat Russell, \$100. In memory of Jan Winston by Dean Winston, \$200.

In memory of William H. Milby, Louise M. Milby and Arthur Shaver, \$100.

Anonymous, \$100.

In memory of Jason Haley by Rob and Shannon, \$100.

In memory of Joe and Hyacinth Major from Mary E. Shaheen and family, \$100.

Joseph and Tracy Pausic, \$50.

In memory of my husband Charlie given by Sally Gayle and family, \$100.

Forest Chapel United Methodist Church, \$100.

Thomas and Thelma Phillips, \$250.

Trinity Lutheran Church, \$1,500.

Brotherhood of Christ Church, \$500.

Previous total: \$1,555.

Total this week: \$3,200.

Total to date: \$4,755.

