

Bancroft Lions auction brings return to community programs



by Tony Pearson

On Saturday, the Bancroft Lions held their annual auction. Well over a hundred items were donated by area businesses ? all the way from hats and motor oil to bracelets and necklaces, and from tote bags and travel mugs to clocks, radios, and even a patio swing. There was food like boxes of steaks, and utensils to cook it with. There were tools and tool cases. There was ice cream and maple syrup, shampoos for both people and pets, and games from X-box programs to rounds of golf. And there were gift certificates galore ? for restaurant meals, car servicing, movie rentals, tanning sessions, and even (shudder!) tax preparations. Counting contributions to Lions project, over 150 local businesses donated to the auction. Even the auctioneer, Paul Switzer, who kept the action moving and the audience smiling and laughing, donated his services.

The purpose, of course, was fund-raising for Lions projects. A major project takes place Saturday, with the Lions Santa Claus parade. The club had just finished sprucing up Santa's House, where Santa will greet children and hear their wishes through the days leading up to Christmas (after the parade, then Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m., plus Saturdays and the final Monday, Dec. 22 from 10 a.m. to 2 a.m.). In fact, right after the auction was over, the Lions started in packaging Santa's treats. Other Lions projects revolve around vision. In the 1920s, famed blind activist Helen Keller, whose early life was dramatized in the award-winning play *The Miracle Worker*, challenged Lions to become "Knights for the Blind in the crusade against darkness," and they have been active in vision care programs ever since. Worldwide, Lions have funded programs and facilities which have improved eye care for hundreds of millions of people ?for example, establishing paediatric eye care centres that have helped over 100 million children worldwide, building over 300 eye-care hospitals, and training over half a million eye care professionals. Locally, the Bancroft Lions conduct vision and hearing programs at area elementary schools every spring. This year and next, they will contribute to the purchase of updated diagnostic equipment. The club is also a big supporter of Ontario Dog Guides, the Oakville canine training centre which produces dogs to help people with vision and hearing impairment, and now with epilepsy and diabetes alert dogs, and even dogs who can work with autistic children.

The whole Lions region is now trying to raise enough money to purchase a new transport van to get the dogs to where they're needed, as well as back and forth to their on-going training sessions. The Bancroft club also has a member who fosters puppies for a year, to get them ready for full dog guide training; he has trained over a dozen puppies. In addition, Lions run old eyeglass collections, so that eyewear no longer useful to their owner can be recycled to someone in a developing country who can use them. Current Lions president thanked all those who contributed items or donations, and to those who came out to purchase them. "The auction raised about \$5,000," Adams said, "and we can assure everyone that this money will be put to good use on programs which benefit our community."