

Sharing the warmth



Dec. 3, 2019

By Nate Smelle

The most precious moments in our lives are those we share together with our loved ones. In the grand scope of our individual existence these treasured fragments of our time add the most value and meaning.

As the holiday season peaks over the next few weeks there will be plenty of opportunities to create more of these moments. Still, despite the many gatherings of family, friends and community, not everyone will be able to eat, drink, and be merry this Christmas. As uplifting as the Christmas spirit can be, it can also have the opposite affect on people coping with the loss of a loved one; or, those struggling to make ends meet.

Whatever the reason might be ? death, distance, time, or finances ? losing the ability to celebrate the season with those we love most can make the holidays more painful than joyous. On the radio, television, online and in stores, throughout the month of December it seems as if from every direction there are songs, movies and advertisements pulling on our heartstrings, reminding us of what we value and what we have lost.

Reminiscing on such times has the rare power to make us laugh; or cause us to hang our heads and cry. Likewise, we can appreciate these cherished moments for how they have made our lives better; or, we can turn away from them and attempt to shut out the shiny, happy sentimentality of the Christmas season all together.

Although the latter option may seem like a quick fix, this is no easy task considering the pervasiveness of all things Christmas in pop culture and the commercial realm. More importantly, when we focus our attention on forgetting the joys of years past, we subsequently miss out on the potential opportunities to add value and meaning to our lives that exist in the present moment.

Feeling like a seasick crocodile when I walked into the SIRCH Thrift Warehouse in Bancroft on Nov. 22 for the winter coat giveaway, my Grinch-ish mood changed quickly after an unavoidable run-in with the Ghost of Christmas present. As I watched the steady flow of people coming into the store to pick up free winter clothing to keep themselves and their families warm, it occurred to me how vital this initiative is to our community. Experiencing how beneficial this event is firsthand as I watched people put on coats, hats, gloves and other clothing, and then leave the store warmer than when they entered, was proof enough for me that this annual giveaway is improving local people's quality of life. Sadly, it also painted a very telling picture of the astounding level of need in our community.

Speaking with SIRCH's Thrift Warehouse store lead Mary-Ellen Coghlan at the event, the worth of the Share the Warmth giveaway became even more obvious by the smile on her face when she expressed how grateful she was for having the opportunity to make other people's lives better this winter.

As with every year that comes to pass, during the next month we will be bombarded with opportunities to experience this same joy

of giving. It may be difficult for those of us earning less than a living wage in North Hastings to open our wallets to feel this joyous sensation, however, luckily there are other ways we can give back.

When I think back on the good times shared with lost loved ones, the most precious gifts we gave one another was time. This is a gift everyone of us can afford to give this Christmas season.