

# SagamoreVoice



## Christmas Connection

*Nordonia community provides toys to over 150 children during inaugural shopping event*



## Nordonia community brings holiday joy through toy drive

by Laura Bednar

Santa Claus had a lot of extra elves helping him this year, as the Nordonia community rallied to donate hundreds of toys to ensure less fortunate children get Christmas presents.

The Nordonia Hills Community Christmas Connection is an inaugural event in which parents/guardians shop for gifts for their children at a discounted rate. Pastor Josh Elliott of United Methodist Church of Macedonia held a similar event at a previous church he pastored and wanted to bring it to the area.

"We are looking to connect more with the community since COVID," he said.

He pitched the idea to the leaders at UMC of Macedonia and then the Nordonia Hills Ministerium, which is, according to its mission statement, a fellowship of spiritual leaders in the Nordonia Hills community who have formed an ecumenical alliance of Christian churches and faith-based community organizations committed to shared ministry interfaith relations and faith-based responses to community concerns.

They pitched the idea in February to any church, business or organization in the community that wanted to be involved in the planning and execution of the event.

Ten churches and various businesses and community organizations responded, including Faith Fellowship Church, Momentum Christian Church, Northfield Presbyterian Church, Oasis Family Worship Center, Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, St. Barnabas Catholic Parish, St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, Victory Baptist Church, American Legion Post 801, Nordonia Hills City School District, Northfield VFW Post 6768, Rotary Club of Nordonia Hills and Spennatos Restaurant.

Each location had a drop-off bin for toys, and churches also accepted gift cards in \$25 denominations. New, unwrapped toys were collected for kids from infant to



*The toy room had hundreds of toys organized by age group and value for parents to choose from. Photo by Laura Bednar.*



*Volunteers wrapped the chosen gifts for parents with holiday paper donated by American Greetings. Photo by Michael Rankin.*

age 17. Elliott said Spennatos restaurant had a special event where people could donate a toy and get a meal in return.

"It's an encouraging experience being part of the community coming together," he said.

The Nordonia School District identified 81 families in need and the children who would benefit from this type of event. On Dec. 6, parents were invited to the UMC of Macedonia to shop. Elliott said they estimated over 150 kids would be getting new toys from the community.

Families were given scheduled shopping times and volunteers guided them through the process and even offered to wrap the gifts on site. American Greetings donated wrapping paper from last year to the cause.

Elliott explained that each child gets five gifts, four smaller gifts (costing \$5-10), and one larger gift (\$11-25). Presents were arranged by value on tables in the church

hall. There were also several premium items, like bicycles, a Christmas tree and various baskets. The parents were given one raffle ticket per child for a chance to win one of the more expensive items.

Cycles for Christ, a ministry that collects, refurbishes and donates used bicycles to those in need, donated many bicycles for the event. According to one of the event volunteers, the organization said if a child doesn't get a bike after this event, to contact them in the spring to obtain one.

In another room were gently used toys, books and stuffed animals, free for the taking. As parents waited for their turn to shop, they were offered cookies and coffee. Two families toured the toy room every 15 minutes and gift tables were replenished as needed.

"We intend to continue doing this," said Elliott. "Hopefully the program grows and there will be an opportunity for more families to participate." ∞

*Email us photos of your family or friends at a Sagamore Hills event. They may be printed in the Sagamore Voice!*



*Email to news@scripotype.com and please include names.*