

Once again, the annual Christmas for Kids drive brought special joy to area families. Nearly 50 children, gently identified through teachers and school staff, received a cache of individualized presents that included at the least an article of clothing, pajamas, a game or toy, a book and a special large gift that the child was hoping for, chosen from information that was quietly ferreted out by school staff. The brainchild of Susie Ralph, it's sponsored by the Verona Community Association, and managed with great love and joy by Susie and a bevy of committed volunteers – including Joyce Casement, Chad & Nicki Van Camp, John Steele and Prince Charles' secretary Karen Snider. They plan a major fundraiser each year (this year it was a Gala Benefit evening) and accept donations from community members – from the coins and bills in local collection jars to substantial donations from individuals and local organizations. The evening of gift wrapping has become such a popular pre-Christmas activity that volunteers register beforehand! As Susie says, "There's something about Christmas and children that really rings true to people." The program often serves families whose parents are working hard just to keep food on the table, and it provides gifts not only for children in Prince Charles, but their infant and older siblings as well. Susie says that over the years, families have been in the program and then later been able to say they were ready to handle Christmas on their own. Bravo to everyone who spent literally months to make this magic happen.

This may be the winter blah time, but you'd never know from the community activity at Trinity United Church. They've organized a couple of terrific programs to keep the winter blues at bay. On Saturday mornings you can head over for a Winter Weekend Wakeup breakfast. Conceived as a balm for those suffering withdrawal symptoms from the weekly Farmers Market gathering, the Trinity breakfast serves bacon, eggs, fried potatoes, and drinks for \$5. Or if you're not that hungry, get a muffin, toast or bagel with drink for \$1. The food is yummy, the folks are friendly, and the hall is conducive to the kind of socializing with lots of people that is hard to do in a restaurant setting. It's a fine way keep in touch with your community. Saturdays from 9 – 11 at the Trinity Hall.

At the other end of the week Trinity offers a community Family Fun Night. In conjunction with Central Frontenac Community Services, they're providing a kid friendly dinner (chicken, chili deserts) and children's film night for anyone who wants to partake. A perfect place to head with the kids or grandkids – or to just be with kids and their families. Maybe you know a family that could use a bit of fun. Why not invite them out? It only costs \$5 per family! The first one is Jan. 18 at 6:00. Please reserve by calling Rural Visions 376-6477 so the folks know how much food to prepare.

Doris Ritchie phoned with a couple of items of note. Bell Rock Euchres are cancelled for the winter. It's hard to keep the hall area plowed out, and attendance dips way down in these blustery months, but Doris assures us "As soon as old man winter is gone, the games will be back."

She also reminds people that Rock Lake Seniors will meet at the Verona Free Methodist Church Hall until the renovations at the Lions Hall are complete. They meet the second Wednesday of each month at noon.