



THE BEACON

of St. Clair Township



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Volunteer firefighters receive service awards



The St. Clair Township Fire Department currently boasts a compliment of 170 volunteer firefighters, as well as 18 auxiliary members. Several of these firefighters were recently honoured in acknowledgement of their years of service with the department.

Among the honourees were, rear left: Deputy Fire Chief Tom Boon (Coordinator of Fire Prevention and Public Education,) five years; Russel Struck, Brigden station, 40 years; Neale Cofell, Becher station, five years; Randy McDonald, Brigden station, 20 years; Neil MacDonald, Port Lambton station, 20 years; Deputy Fire Chief Steve Bicum (Coordinator of Training and Safety)

representing the department. Front left: Sue Taylor, Wilkesport station, five years; Fire Chief Roy Dewhirst, 35 years; Mayor Steve Arnold; Ken Taylor, Wilkesport station, five years. Absent from photo: Corunna station - Brian Devereaux and Kevin Smalls, 15 years; Brigden station - Bill O'Brien, 15 years, Ron Hayward, 35 years; Courtright station - Ron Wambaugh, Jr., five years; Doug Fairbairn, 25 years; Port Lambton station - Gary Bechard and Doug Brooks, five years, Jay Myers, 10 years, Pete Moran, 15 years; Becher station - Joe Krogman, five years, Wayne Vandendool, 10 years; Wilkesport station - Doug Lester, 10 years.

Photo by Bonni Stevenson

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TO CONTACT US

Individuals, schools or organizations that wish to publicize a non-profit event or suggest feature story subjects or topics can do so free of charge by e-mailing:

beacon@twp.stclair.on.ca

or writing to: The Beacon, c/o St. Clair Civic Centre,
1155 Emily Street, Mooretown, Ont., N0N 1M0.

**The deadline for submissions is the
third Monday of each month.**



COUNCIL NOTES

MPAC ruling a blow to tax base

A recent assessment ruling by MPAC has sparked a concerted effort to have the assessment reconsidered. The ruling was made based on the provincial government's stated intention to close the Lambton Generating Station in December, 2014. If the MPAC ruling is upheld, it will translate into a taxation loss of about \$730,000 in 2009 due to the assessment reduction.

Township staff and council have been engaged in a lobbying campaign to oppose the change to the facility's assessment. And working in conjunction with the County of Lambton and Municipal Tax Equity (MTE) Consultants, an effort is being made to appeal MPAC's decision to reduce Ontario Power Generation's assessment by \$23,800,000 for obsolescence.

"MPAC dropped the tax rate in half for 2009," said Mayor Steve Arnold. "The logic is that the provincial government intends to close the plant in 2014, so depreciation will begin next year. That translates into a 17 per cent drop in tax revenue in 2009." He added that the Ontario Power Generation facility currently comprises 28 per cent of the municipality's annual tax revenue.

Mayor Arnold says the lobbying effort is well underway. "Letters have been sent out to outline our position on what the impact will be to the township," he said. Meetings with provincial officials have also been slated to advance the township's position.

Physician Recruitment Taskforce reports

Representatives from the Samia-

Lambton Physician Recruitment Taskforce attended council to report on the group's on-going efforts to bring more family doctors to the area.

Chairman Mike Raes reported the group has recruited 11 family physicians to date. The group hopes to sign four more in early 2009.

Recruitment efforts have been expanded into the United States, where many Canadian students take their medical training. Raes noted that new government legislation will make it easier to recruit doctors, but the process is still very expensive. Raes informed council that Dr. Jason Hall is prepared to sign a letter of commitment to set up a family practice in conjunction with Dr. William O'Mahony in Corunna.

Council was advised that the Taskforce provides a financial incentive of \$30,000 to each physician entering into family practice in Samia-Lambton in return for a four-year work commitment.

The Taskforce has requested funding of \$20,000 from St. Clair Township. This request will be considered during the 2009 operating budget deliberations.

Broadband service being upgraded

High-speed Internet service is still not available to some St. Clair Township residents, but help may be on the way.

Bell Aliant, the company providing the service, recently carried out testing in several locations to determine where "dead spots" were located and found that the only one remaining was in the Port Lambton area. After bringing this testing project in under the estimated budget, Bell Aliant informed stakeholders it would commit to improve the gap in service areas using the balance of the uncommitted

budget.

Improvements will include the installation of fibre optic cable from Wallaceburg to the Bickford tower, which Bell is confident will improve the availability of service to the underserved area.

Enbridge Gas rep visits council

Jim Sanders, the new director of operations for the local Enbridge Gas storage facility, recently visited council to introduce himself and to report on current activities at the plant. He advised council of the completion of Phase 1 of the gas distribution system, part of a long-term project which will see improvements made at the compressor site on Burman Line.

Mr. Sanders also requested that council identify a few community projects of significance to which Enbridge could make a financial contribution.

Councillor Steve Miller receives service award

Councillor Steve Miller was recently recognized for 25 years of municipal service. Councillor Miller has served several terms on two councils, first in Sombra Township and currently in St. Clair Township.

St. Clair Township council holds regular meetings on the first and third Monday of each month at 7 p.m. Anyone wishing to address council should call the municipal office at 519-867-2021. The final council meeting of 2008 will take place on Monday, Dec. 15.

Budget report

Council tentatively approved the 2009 capital budget funding of \$2.2 million which is the same level of funding as 2008. There are 127 capital projects approved. Some of the projects include \$200,000 for a pool dehumidification system for the Moore Sports Complex and \$300,000 for a new fire truck and fire hall renovation, which includes a roof replacement.

The township is spending approximately \$1.2 million on roads and storm projects. Approximately \$900,000 is being spent on Vroom, Alfred and Paget streets and storm projects. The township will also spend \$300,000 on bridge rehabilitations and the replacement of the bridge on McCallum at Booth Creek. There is \$100,000 to spend on the road portion of drain assessment.

The St. Clair Township council will receive the operating budget toward the end of February, 2009, with final approval likely in March, 2009 for both the capital and operating budgets.

Charles Quenneville
Treasurer, St. Clair Township

No overnight parking!

The task of keeping your municipal streets clear of snow during the winter months is one the township's works department staff takes very seriously. All township residents and their visitors are asked to do their part by not parking on the streets from December 1 to April 1 between the hours of 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. **Vehicles found parked on public streets during this time will be ticketed.**

Hydrant flushing in progress

The St. Clair Township Public Works Department is in the process of flushing all fire hydrants connected to the township's water system. This will continue to occur between the hours of 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. on weekdays until Friday, Dec. 19. During this routine maintenance procedure, there may be some discoloration from sediment drawn into residential water. The discoloration will disappear by running the cold water tap for a few minutes. If discoloration of the water continues after 10-15 minutes of normal use, notify the Public Works Department at 519-867-2993.

TOWNSHIP OF ST. CLAIR HOLIDAY WASTE COLLECTION SCHEDULE 2008

The following schedule changes to curb side collection of household waste will be in effect over the Christmas holiday season.

GARBAGE COLLECTION

<u>Regular scheduled day</u>	<u>Holiday schedule</u>
Thursday, December 25	Friday, December 26
Friday, December 26	Saturday, December 27
Thursday, January 1	Friday, January 2
Friday, January 2	Saturday, January 3

BLUE BOX COLLECTION

<u>Regular scheduled day</u>	<u>Holiday schedule</u>
Thursday, December 25	Friday, December 26
Friday, December 26	Saturday, December 27
Thursday, January 1	Friday, January 2
Friday, January 2	Saturday, January 3

Remember that regular waste restrictions apply. Collection shall be limited to six items (containers, bags, boxes, Christmas trees, etc.) and each item shall not exceed the 50 pound limit. St. Clair Township encourages you to recycle whatever you can.

CHRISTMAS TREE COLLECTION

Christmas tree collection in the urban areas of St. Clair Township (areas which receive yard waste collection) will take place on **Friday, January 9, 2009.**

- * Trees must be placed at the curb by 7 a.m.
- * Trees must be free of all ornaments, stands, etc.
- * Trees must **not** be placed in plastic bags

For all other areas of the township, Christmas trees may be placed out with regular garbage.

Please note that Christmas trees will be considered one item of the six-item limit.

For further information, call the St. Clair Township Public Works Department at 519-867-2125.

COUNCIL DIARY

The author of this month's Council Diary is Councillor Darrell Randell. Watch this column every month for insights directly from your municipal council.

As chairman of the township's drainage committee, I thought that I would write about the interesting and largely unappreciated aspects of municipal drains. Drainage is fundamental to our society in this part of the world because you cannot build or accomplish anything without it. We are extremely fortunate to have the Ontario Drainage Act and the supporting Acts that collectively are the only pieces of legislation written specifically for the betterment of farming in the province.

But the side of drainage that I want to write about is the cultural and historic side of drains. For example, did you know that both Sombra and Moore Townships began to see vast areas of land opened to development through Canada Public Works drainage projects in the 1880s? It was the beginning of improving land for agriculture that had been described as the "impenetrable swamp." Without the routine maintenance of our extensive drainage networks, our township would quickly revert to that swamp. Those original

drains are still known as Government Drains.

After the discovery of oil in central Lambton, much of the still-wild land in Lambton County was purchased for very little by oil speculators. These people were content to own the land and not make improvements. Without improvements it was difficult for the new municipalities to grow and develop. The drainage works were able to assess fair costs onto the benefiting landowners and to pressure the speculators to either farm or sell the property.

In 1906, the Supreme Court of Canada settled a long standing drainage dispute along the southern boundary of our municipality. The decision of the court established the Whitebread Drain and more importantly, the Whitebread Tap Drain, and ceased the threat of hostility between the Chatham Gore farmers who faced frequent flooding as a result of the drainage improvements implemented in Sombra Township. This low lying area of Chatham Gore is now drained through an extensive pumping scheme.

Also of historical interest are the names of the drains. Usually they were named after the pioneer

who originally petitioned to create the drain. Most drainage meetings begin with the history of the municipal drain and cite the outstanding features or peculiarities. Frequently, the drains were given surnames that are still recognizable in the township. And some of these families still own the same property on the drain after several generations. Other drains are named after residents that have long since vanished the township.

Culturally, I think municipal drainage meetings are probably the best example of practicing participatory democracy that can be witnessed. It can be very stirring to see a group of landowners facing some large costs and going over drainage reports on a line by line basis to make certain that the charges to them are correct and fair. I have witnessed dramatic shifts in points of view regarding what is done, or who pays, or how soon it gets done, because of discussions at drain meetings. There can be elements of emotion, tradition, practicality, ancestry, and worthiness brought into play. I always hope for consensus among the ratepayers, but failing that we proceed on the principle of practical land improvement and fairness.

Drainage crucial to rural progress

Christmas donations needed in south St. Clair Township

Several organizations in south St. Clair Township are currently working hard to create a brighter Christmas for the less fortunate families in the area.

Donations of non-perishable food items and new toys are being sought to fill hampers that will be distributed at Christmas time. This is a joint effort of the St. Vincent de Paul, the Optimist Club of Sombra, the Knights of Columbus, the Sacred Heart youth group, and the Boy

Scouts of Canada.

A door-to-door collection has already taken place, but donations are still being sought. Anyone who wishes to make a donation can call George Moran at 519-677-5773.

Your donation will shine a light into the lives of those in need.



St. Clair Township Council and Staff wish everyone a joyful holiday and the very best in 2009!

The Mayor's Greeting

Another year has come and gone. It is good to know that our St. Clair Township staff, volunteers and contractors are just wrapping up many more projects that are so beneficial to this municipality. I am thankful that we have done so much work without major incident. It is hard to know who to thank individually, as there are so many of you that have made this year a success. Thank you all!

I would like to mention, though, that I am especially proud of and grateful to the men and women, as well as their families, that volunteer their time as firefighters for our community. Their untiring spirit is an inspiration for all of us.

So, thank you once again. And on behalf of the council and staff of St. Clair Township, I wish each and every one of you a very Merry Christmas and a safe, prosperous and Happy New Year.

-Mayor Steve Arnold

Poor Boy lunch benefits Operation Christmas Tree

The annual Operation Christmas Tree (OCT) program is now underway in north St. Clair Township. The official kickoff took place on Nov. 20 with the Poor Boy lunch, held at the Royal Canadian Legion Corunna branch hall. Food for the event was donated and prepared by members of the Legion's ladies auxiliary.

O.C.T. President Ron Skreptak says the event went well but donations received during the luncheon were down about 50 per cent from last year - just shy of \$1,700. However, this total could change for the better since a few of the corporate donors were not at the event.

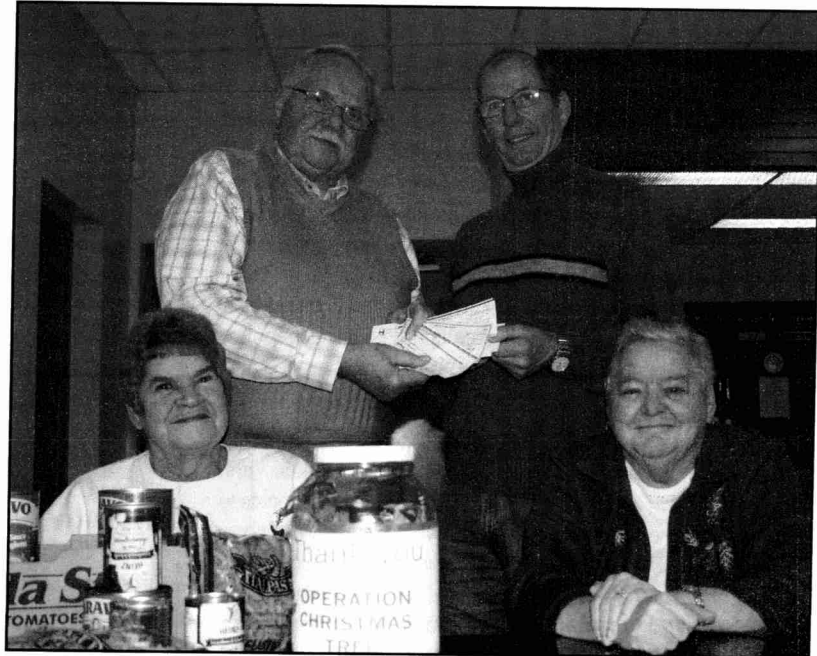
As the economy continues to struggle, the need for this important program increases. Skreptak notes there will be an increase in the number of hampers required to provide food and toys for the area's less fortunate families. During the past three years there has been a steady increase in hampers distributed during the holiday season. In 2007, 116 hampers were created making the season brighter for 328 local residents.

Over the past 10 years, over \$188,000 has been raised and 132,910 kilograms (214,371 pounds) of food collected to operate the OCT program. This may sound like a lot, yet each year, the task of collecting money and food for the program seems to present

a bigger challenge.

Operation Christmas Tree organizers hope the public will show their holiday spirit by donating so that everyone will have a Merry Christmas.

Donations can be dropped off at the EGA building (former Murray Street Public School) in Corunna Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information go online to www.operationchristmastree.ca.



Displaying some of the generous donations collected at the annual Poor Boy lunch to benefit Operation Christmas Tree are, clockwise from rear left: Ron Skreptak, president of Operation Christmas Tree; Gord Dawson, secretary-treasurer of Operation Christmas Tree; and volunteers Shirley Campbell and Wanda Langis, members of the Royal Canadian Legion Corunna branch ladies auxiliary.

Photo by Bonni Stevenson

COMMUNITY
POLICING

Insurance Bureau warns of phone fraud scam

The Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC) is warning consumers to avoid disclosing financial information over the phone after several consumers received calls from fraudsters pretending to be insurance industry representatives. The caller claims to be from the policyholder's insurance company and demands the immediate payment, by credit card, of an outstanding amount on the client's premium. The caller threatens to cancel the policy if payment is not received. The calls have taken place across Canada, indicating an organized crime ring may be at work.

The public is warned never to divulge financial information during a phone call that has not been initiated by the policyholder, no matter how convincing the caller might be. Any consumer who thinks they may have been targeted for this form of fraud is asked to write down as much information as possible, including the originating phone number (if you have caller ID), and then **call the IBC Tips Line at 1-877-IBC-TIPS**.

This information was distributed by the Lambton OPP for general release. NEVER give out personal information over the phone, no matter who the caller claims to represent. A legitimate business or institution will never ask for information in this way. And be sure to report any suspicious contacts you may receive to the police.

Some people still not locking up

The coming of Christmas puts most people in a good mood and the spirit of giving is one way they express this. But for some people, Christmas is a time for taking. They like to take things from unlocked vehicles and unlocked homes.

OPP Sgt. Paul Futers says, "We need people to lock their vehicles," even when leaving it unattended for just a minute or two. Opportunistic thieves work very fast. Also, put valuables out of sight and take the vehicle keys with you after you lock up.

And if you are the victim of a theft, inform police immediately. Sgt. Futers says many thefts go unreported because people don't want to "bother" the police and this hampers police efforts to find the thieves responsible. "We want them to call," he said.

Be weather-wise!

Old man Winter has already made his presence known in the area this year and the Lambton OPP are urging motorists to be weather-wise this season. During severe weather, use common sense and slow down. Leave more space between your vehicle and the one in front of you, and when you have to arrive at a destination on time, leave earlier than you normally

would. Also, make sure that your vehicle is winterized. Have it checked to see that it is mechanically fit. Make sure your tires have ample tread to handle snowy and icy roads, and that all lights are working properly. Check all fluid levels and make sure your wiper blades are functioning well. Check your vehicle's battery to make sure it is properly charged. Never allow the gas gauge to fall below 1/4 tank during the winter, as this will protect against fuel line freeze-up.

After a snowfall, clear your vehicle of excessive snow, including the roof, hood and trunk. Before setting out on a long-distance journey, check the road conditions by calling for provincial road condition information at 1-800-268-4686. **DO NOT call the Ontario Provincial Police.** Phone lines to the OPP must be kept open for emergency situations only. Carry a cell phone and charger for emergencies. In an emergency, call 911, but for non-emergency matters, call *677 (*OPP.) If you are involved in a collision during severe weather, stay in your vehicle! Being outside will place you in danger of being struck by other vehicles. The Lambton OPP reports that, during recent heavy snowfalls, officers were called on to respond to many needless emergency situations. About 70 per cent of the calls they received were from drivers who were not prepared for the conditions or did not winterize their driving habits.

OPP contact numbers

Corunna office: 519-481-0161

Petrolia detachment: 519-882-1011

OPP dispatch: 1-888-310-1122

Emergency: 911

To report information regarding a crime, call Crime Stoppers: 1-800-222-8477. All calls are anonymous.

Public assistance sought

The recent assault of a 51-year-old woman in the parking lot of the Corunna IGA has inspired outrage in the community. OPP Sgt. Paul Futers says the on-going investigation is proceeding and the assistance of the public would help to hasten the arrest of the parties responsible for this cowardly attack.

The incident took place on Nov. 9 at about 7:45 p.m. It is alleged that four male teens were involved in the assault. They were said to be wearing black hoodies and loose-fitting jeans. One was wearing a hat with a white emblem on the front and another was wearing white runners with black stripes. Three are described as thin and about 120 pounds, and all were between five-foot-five and five-foot-ten in height.

Anyone who witnessed this attack or who has information regarding it is encouraged to call police at one of the contact numbers in the *Community Policing* column above.

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THOUGHT FOR THE NEW YEAR
Success is the mindset of the
willing. - Scott Janssens

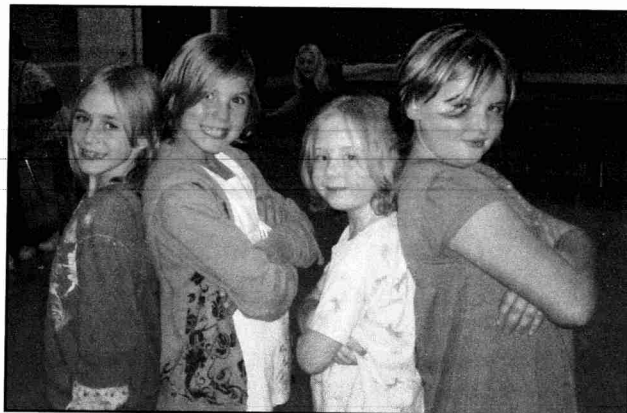
JOOI Club showing Christmas spirit

Members of the Friendship JOOI Club are really getting into the spirit of Christmas. In November, they began by making Christmas cards for Operation Christmas Cheer. The cards will be sent overseas to Afghanistan to thank some of the men and women in the Canadian armed forces who must be away from their families at Christmas time.

The club also decorated a float and rode it in the Corunna Santa Claus parade, handing out candy along the way. The kids enjoyed being part of Santa's entourage as he made an early appearance in St. Clair Township.

Upcoming plans for the club include a Christmas party at the Courtright Community Hall on Friday, Dec. 12 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Santa will be visiting and there will be refreshments and activities for party-goers to enjoy. The cost of admission will be \$5 per child and parents are welcome to attend at no charge. The JOOI Club is hoping local families will come out and enjoy this festive evening.

The Friendship JOOI Club is affiliated with the Optimist Club of Moore.



The recently elected 2009 executive of the Friendship JOOI Club includes, from the left: Secretary, Paige; President, Courtney; Treasurer, Emily; and Second Vice-President Sydney. Absent from photo: First Vice-President Kassie. *Photo submitted*

The Friendship JOOI Club would like to wish
everyone a happy and
healthy Christmas holiday.

Holiday fun can be found at the Moore Sports Complex

If you're looking for some great family fun this holiday season, look no further than the Moore Sports Complex in Mooretown.

Several free skates, sponsored by Tim Horton's, will be held over Christmas week as follows: Monday, Dec. 22 from 11 a.m. to noon; Tuesday, Dec. 23 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.; Monday, Dec. 29 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.; and Tuesday, Dec. 30 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

December ice and pool rentals are also available. Call the Moore Sports Complex at 519-867-2651 to book.

Lifesaving skills taught

The Moore Sports Complex Lifesaving Society swim program is a complete learn-to-swim program for all ages, from parent to tot to leadership courses. Call 519-867-2651 to register for the winter swim session and learn to swim for life!

The staff of the Moore Sports Complex
wishes everyone a Merry Christmas and

IODE events successful

The Hon. Bryan L. Cathcart Chapter IODE recently hosted a successful fashion show in Corunna. Organizers expressed appreciation to those who attended and to the businesses that supplied fashions for the event. The chapter also participated with the Samia-Lambton Municipal IODE to mount its second annual Christmas Home Tour in mid-November. Cathcart members Gillian Ewing and Lee Hayes were part of the organizing committee for this event, and Kay's Petals and Plants of Corunna provided seasonal decorations for one of the heritage homes in downtown Samia.

The Cathcart chapter welcomes new members. Women who are interested in attending one of the monthly meetings or inquiring about the work of the IODE can contact Marilyn at 519-862-1769.

It's Silver Stick time again!

Hockey fans will be happy to hear that it's Silver Stick time again. The Moore Sports Complex will be the scene of the 36th annual Mooretown Juvenile International Silver Stick Finals Tournament from Thursday, Jan. 8 to Jan. 11, 2009. The action starts Thursday at 3 p.m., Friday at 9 a.m., and Saturday and Sunday at 8 a.m.

Teams will play in four classifications: juvenile AAA, A, B, and C.

AROUND THE TOWNSHIP

Christmas Tea and Bake Sale

Christ Anglican Church in Corunna will host a Christmas Tea and Bake Sale on Saturday, Dec. 13 from 10 a.m. to noon. Admission is \$2 per person which includes tea, coffee and dessert. Baked goods including small turkey, beef and fruit pies will be available for purchase and there will be a raffle. Everyone is welcome.

Christmas open house at Moore Museum

The Moore Museum on Moore Line in Mooretown will host a Christmas open house on Sunday, Dec. 14 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Enjoy refreshments and music in the St. Clair Trinity Chapel. The children will enjoy seeing the Courtney cabin decorated for the holidays in the pioneer tradition as well as doing hands-on holiday activities. Admission is by freewill donation. Don't miss this opportunity to share an afternoon of great family fun.

Dinner and concert slated

The LaSalle Road Community of Christ choir will sponsor a dinner and Christmas concert on Saturday, Dec. 20 beginning with dinner at 5:30 p.m. followed by the concert at 7 p.m. The church is located at 2390 LaSalle Line at the corner of Brigden Road and LaSalle Line. Tickets are \$5 and are available by calling Carol at 519-864-1898, Kelly at 519-882-8741, or Vonda at 519-862-3189.

Operation Christmas Tree schedule

Operation Christmas Tree is in full swing. Don't forget to make a donation so that less fortunate families in north St. Clair Township will be able to enjoy the holidays, too. The need has never been greater.

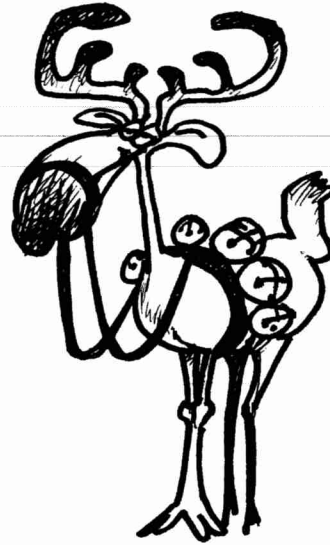
On **Thursday, Dec. 11**, officers from the Corunna Lambton OPP station and volunteer firefighters from the St. Clair Township Fire Department Corunna and Brigden fire stations will pick up donated non-perishable food items and toys collected by local schools.

The third annual Corunna OPP officers and Corunna Community Policing Committee Operation Christmas Tree donation drive-thru will take place on **Saturday, Dec. 13** from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The drive-thru will take place in the parking lot of the Corunna OPP station at the south end of Lyndoch Street and Santa will be in attendance.

For more information see page 4 or go online to www.operationchristmastree.ca.

Special worship services

The Corunna United Church will be the scene of two special worship services over the Christmas season. White Gift Sunday will take place on Dec. 14 and special music will be provided by the choir. And on Dec. 24, a Christmas Eve service is planned. Children from the church's Sunday school will present a Christ-



Don't forget to hitch up the family sleigh and head out to enjoy some holiday fun in St. Clair Township!

mas carol at each service.

Church pies now available

The Corunna United Church is now taking orders for nine-inch fruit pies in apple, cherry or blueberry for \$8 each. Also, individual fruit pies, turkey pies or quiche will be available for \$2.50 each, and cabbage rolls will sell for \$18 per dozen. To place orders call Sylvia Knight at 519-862-1040 or Anne Gilliland at 519-862-3534.

Trivia night in Brigden

The Brigden fairgrounds will host Trivia Night on Saturday, Jan. 17 beginning at 8 p.m. Teams of six will be competing and the cost will be \$5 per person. An open bar will be available. Don't miss this night of fun and laughter. It's a great evening to share with friends! For more information call 519-864-1197.

Cribbage played weekly

Cribbage is played every Tuesday morning at 9:30 a.m. at the Corunna United Church. It's just 25 cents for coffee, cookies and a whole lot of fun!

Youth horticulture meetings

The youth division (ages six to 16) of the Brigden Horticultural Society holds regular meetings at the Brigden library. Registration is \$6 per year. For more meeting information call Jackie at 519-864-4654 or Kathi at 519-864-1323.

Knights of Columbus breakfasts

The Knights of Columbus breakfasts at the St. Joseph's Parish Centre in Corunna are back and more popular than ever! Here is the 2008/09 schedule: Sundays, Dec. 7, Jan. 11, Feb. 8, March 1, March 29, and May 3 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.