

## Food/Toy Drive Seeing a Lean Year

VILLAS- Lower Township Kids Christmas Program is seeking donations of food, cash and toys to bring a merrier Christmas to families struggling through hard times.

The program annually brightens Christmas for an average of 200 families including 500 children in Lower Township. This year the program is far behind its goal, according to Dottie Crawford, co-coordinator of the program.

“It’s really running slow this year,” she said. “This time last year I had \$16,000, I’m only at \$5,000 this year.”

Crawford said each child receives three toys, a hat, gloves, toothpaste, a toothbrush, body wash and shampoo. Each recipient family receives a basket of food.

James Dietterich, behavior management administrator for Lower Township Schools, coordinates the food portion of the Lower Township Kids Christmas program. Students in the school district donate much of the non-perishable food, he said.

Both Crawford and Dietterich retired from the Lower Township Police Department where the Lower Township Kids Christmas Program was started 36 years ago.

“We were known in those days as the last minute Christmas program,” said Dietterich. “We would sit in the police department with the police explorers and wait for people to call on Christmas Eve.”

The police department had packages ready for those who were forgotten at Christmas.

Donations of toys and canned goods may be dropped off at Lower Township Hall, 2600 Bayshore Road, Villas or Lower Township Police Department headquarters at the county airport in Erma.

Unwrapped new toys are needed but clean, used toys in very good condition will also be accepted.

For those who wish to make a cash donation, checks should be made payable to Lower Township Kids Christmas. Checks can be dropped off at township hall or police headquarters.

On Dec. 21, volunteers from Lower Township Police Department and four fire companies will deliver the items to families.

“Donations have been down the last couple of years because everybody has been affected by the economy,” said Dietterich. “We’re just appealing to people to help us out if they are able to, so that we can continue to help children and families of our township.”