



COMMERCIAL-NEWS | ROBERT TOMLINSON

St. Joseph County Area Marine Corps League Commandant Rodney Bolte (center) gives a bag of toys to a local family during the Three Rivers Lions Club's food and toy distribution event Saturday. The toys were donated through the MCL's Toys for Tots campaign, and the Three Rivers High School girls' basketball team helped the MCL gather and distribute the toys.



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Three Rivers Lions Club members Jim Oestrike (left) and Karl Ritchie (right) help place food in the car trunk of a local family in need during the Lions Club's food and toy distribution event Saturday at the Lions Club hall. Over 100 families were helped out by the club's efforts, which have been going on for the last 55 years.

Serving the community

TR Lions Club holds annual food and toy distribution

By Robert Tomlinson
 Staff Writer

THREE RIVERS — The Three Rivers Lions Club helped make the Christmas season special for over 100 families in need in St. Joseph County by providing food and toys during their annual food and toy distribution event at the Lions Club Hall Saturday morning.

Doug Gross, the co-chair for the project, said the local Lions Club has been doing this distribution for over 55 years, and is the largest project the club has in terms of giving back to the community.

"Our motto is, 'We Serve,' and we figure this is a way of serving the community," Gross said. "It's not only Three Rivers, we serve Mendon, Colon, White Pigeon, Constantine, the whole county."

Over 20 volunteers, which included Lions Club members, the St. Joseph County Area Marine Corps League (MCL), and members of the Three Rivers High School girls' basketball team, helped with the effort.

Members of the Lions Club loaded boxes of donated canned and dry food items, as well as separate bags of cereal, ham, turkey, potatoes and apples, into the vehicles of those who were eligible through the Michigan Department of

Health and Human Services and stopped by. Meanwhile, the MCL and the basketball team teamed up to help distribute toys, which were provided by the MCL through their Toys for Tots campaign.

"We have 150 food boxes out there, and we have 150 bags of apples, 150 10-pound bags of potatoes, and each family gets two bags of cereal, and a ham or a turkey," Gross said, adding that any leftover food from Saturday's distribution were donated to the Three Rivers Food Site. MCL Paymaster and Adjutant Steven Gary said any leftover toys will be donated to the local domestic violence center and the Three Rivers Fire Department.

Jason Bingaman, head coach for the TRHS girls' basketball team, said the team has helped out with the toy distribution for the last 11 years, and is something the team looks forward to every year.

"It's a way we as a program can help give back to the people in our community," Bingaman said. "The Lions Club has a great setup for it, and we're just appreciative we can help out with it."

MCL Commandant Rodney Bolte said it's a great thing to help out the families in the community with their efforts.

"It's very enjoyable and pleasing. It does us a lot of good and makes us real happy to see these folks are going to have a decent Christmas for their kids," Bolte said. "That's what we're here to do, just helping out those who need it and just brighten up their day."

In addition to the over 100 families that

stopped by, the Lions Club also delivered food to five families that couldn't make it to Saturday's event. Gross thanked the St. Joseph County Transportation Authority for their assistance with this part of the project.

Along with the SJCTA, Armstrong International, International Paper, the Twin County Community Probation Center, Three Rivers Community Schools, and many stores in the community assisted the club's efforts.

Gross said the club gets a lot of positive feedback for their efforts. He gave the example of a Christmas card the club received from a family thanking them for their efforts, which stated they didn't know how they would make it through the rest of the year otherwise.

"We get a lot of these," Gross said. "The feedback is always very positive. Always."

Gross said the turnout for this year's distribution was very good compared to previous years for the almost four-hour timeframe. When the distribution started at 8 a.m., there were cars lined up from the club's hall on Sixth Avenue all the way down Jefferson Avenue and M-60 to Bandeen Orthodontics.

"There are a lot of needy people in this county, more so than people, I think, want to admit," Gross said. "This is one way to make the holiday a much more pleasant time for them."

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McLeod Chiropractic holds annual food drive

By Robert Tomlinson
 Staff Writer

THREE RIVERS — McLeod Chiropractic Center of Three Rivers held its 36th annual food drive Friday.

Considered to be one of the biggest food drive in the city, outside of the United States Postal Service's annual Stamp Out Hunger food drive, patients who made a donation of food or cash during the chiropractic center's business hours received a free adjustment.

In total, the office raised \$680 and collected more than 1,600 food items, all of which went to the Three Rivers Food Site in downtown Three Rivers, and had 180 patients get free adjustments.

While Dr. Gary McLeod, the owner of the center, said they received fewer donations this year than in previous years, it was still a great thing to have so many donations to the Food Site.

"It's good; it's nice to be able to contribute and help people out," McLeod said. "We look forward to it every year. It's a rewarding thing to do and our patients like doing it."

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McLeod Chiropractic Center of Three Rivers donated a check for \$680 to the Three Rivers Food Site Friday, collected as part of their annual food drive. Pictured from left to right are David Sykes from the Food Site, Dara McLeod, Dr. Gary McLeod, and Callan McLeod.

Women, Physical Fitness and Empowerment—A Global Perspective: Part II

This is the second part of a Question and Answer interview with Dr. Mariam Konaté, Associate Professor of Gender and Women Studies at Western Michigan University, as part of the Women on the Go series by local journalist and writer William Allen Baltz. Konaté discusses how physical fitness and athletics are helping empower women around the world.

William Allen Baltz: Why do you think an increasing number of women are making fitness a priority?

Mariam Konaté: I cannot really speak for all women as we all have different reasons based on our lived experiences. However, for the women at my gym that I have talked to, a big reason, I think, is because women are realizing that physical fitness can not only enhance their overall physical and mental health, but can also offer invaluable ways of dealing with the stress that comes with having increasingly busy and demanding private and professional lives.

WAB: There is a burst of activity in America and around the world with women assuming more prominent roles in Politics,

Business, Law, the Media, and making their voices heard on issues ranging from the environment to social justice. How do you explain this?

MK: The concept of women's empowerment and advocacy are intertwined. It emphasizes not only the idea that women should be the ones advocating for their own rights, but also the ability to be the decision-making agents in matters that relate to both their private and public lives. Recent legislative challenges of Roe v. Wade 1973 U.S. Supreme Court landmark decision, as well as restrictions on Planned Parenthood clinics throughout the country are a constant reminder of the attacks on women's reproductive freedoms. More importantly though, they also constitute a bitter realization that women—even in one of the most developed countries in the world—do not have a say in what happens to their bodies. Once women become aware of the socio-cultural, economic and political roots of their oppression, they can advocate for their rights and engage in activism to end gender discrimination and positively change their lived experiences.

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