

# The Excalibur Report



December 2014  
EDITION

MERRY CHRISTMAS



This year we asked our Excalibur team to tell us about their Christmas traditions and in the spirit of the upcoming holidays thought they would be fun to share. From our family to yours, Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!



"As kids, one of the things in our Christmas stockings was a tangerine. Although my sister and I always took it out of the stocking

and put it back in the fruit bowl. The reason for the tangerine is that this was in my mum's stocking as a little girl and it meant that it was her very own. She didn't have to share with any of her siblings. I too put tangerines in my kids' stockings at Christmas, but they also put it back in the fruit bowl."

- HEATHER ASHCROFT

"Our new holiday tradition is on December 1st our Elf on the Shelf, Snowball, returns. Every morning until Christmas day my boys are excited to find Snowball to see what he was up to the night before. Snowball also hears and sees everything, relaying this back to Santa. So the boys know to be on their best behaviour. Too bad Snowball wouldn't stick around the whole year!"

- LAURA GEOFFREY



"My daughter Jordyn and I always decorate the tree together and drink egg nog. We always have sausage rolls, clementines and eggs benedict on Christmas morning and we always donate a gift to the Angel Tree. We also like to go for a family walk on Christmas Day."

- LEIGH CRAWFORD



"When I was a child we brought a White Gift to church for a child our age. My grandmother said we had done this since her grandmother's time. All my children did it, and I just took my granddaughter shopping for her gift. The only difference is now it is the Salvation Army candle tree. Our family voted to change Boxing Day to a theme day. We choose a country and prepare that type of food in advance, we have different entrees throughout the day while we spend time together playing cards or board games."

- CAROL BAILEY



"Christmas family traditions are a must in our household. One of my favourite traditions is with my extended family, all 50 of us. Grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins all gather in the living room, my uncle plays the piano and we sing Christmas carols together. As our family continues to grow, we still manage to find a place to sit in the living room so we are all together.

After singing a carol, someone yells out the next song we want to sing and my uncle begins to play the tune for us."

- KELSEY BENNEWIES



"It is a Dutch tradition to get a chocolate letter (first letter of your first name) at Christmas. It has been a tradition since the early 1900s."

- JUSTIN DAMSMA



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# Our Holiday Traditions



"One of our oldest and favourite traditions is to bake "Grandma Missere's" cookies. They are a

simple roll-out cookie that we cut into Christmas shapes and top with coloured icing and decorate. Since this recipe came from my great-grandmother, my children are at least the fifth generation to make them and I'm quite sure they will someday make them with their children."

- BRENDA ERTEL

"In recent years, my favourite part of Christmas is filling a shoebox for Samaritan's Purse to send to a child that might not receive any other Christmas presents. These boxes go to children in third world countries, and with the box of gifts, goes the message of the best Gift of all, Jesus, Who came that first Christmas night. In a society where we have so much, it is a wonderful privilege to give to those who have so little."



- CATHI CULLEN

"At our house we always go to Church for the Christmas Eve service and then we have birthday cake for Jesus."



- KIM HEROUX-ROBINSON

"My favourite Christmas tradition is on Christmas Eve. Each year we have a big family dinner and spend the evening at the Christmas Eve children's mass. I try each year to express and teach our kids that the magic of Christmas comes from the joy of giving to people you care about. Every year we make a Christmas craft that they can give to their aunts, uncles, and grandparents. It's homemade and they are always so proud of what they have created and taken time to make."



- JENNIFER KRAMER

"A week before Christmas we make some squares and the kids' favourite 'bits and bites' (they called them 'kibbles and bits' and still do). As children we grew up around a lot of family and every Christmas Eve went to midnight mass and then home, open one gift and off to bed after writing our letter to Santa. Our stockings were hung and Santa would bring one gift and fill our stockings with chocolate and fruit.

Now as a Mom I have continued the tradition of Stockings from Santa filled with chocolate, a



toothbrush and all the small items you need. Christmas Eve we have one gift to open and it is always new pj's. A new tradition is the lighting of our street 'Santa's Runway' with all the neighbours, and then all friends and family are welcome to come in and join us for some Christmas cheer and friendship.

I truly believe in the Spirit of Christmas and the Birth of our Savior Jesus! This is a time of year I wish we could celebrate every day - family, love, friends, health and being together. The most important thing is doing something kind for someone who does not have what we have."

- UNA ROY



## 9-YEAR-OLD COLLECTS FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY



Giving back has become a hobby for Gunner Robinson. The 9-year-old from Wilmington, North Carolina, has collected 401 pounds of non-perishable food items for those in need, his mother, Kristi, told The Huffington Post. Wanting to help families put food on the table for Thanksgiving, Gunner began collecting the items in mid-October.

Gunner amassed the donations by reaching out to friends and family, Kristi's work colleagues and the family's church community. All of the food has been donated to a soup kitchen and food banks.

Kristi said her son simply wants everyone to have what he has. "He says his favourite part of the holiday season is when all of his family gets together for the big meal," she wrote on a Facebook page garnering donations from people wanting to help her son's mission. "He hopes other families now will get that same opportunity."

The Facebook group, Gunner's Runners, launched this summer, when Gunner asked others to donate shoes for kids who may need them instead of receiving birthday gifts. He collected more than 400 pairs of shoes.

For Christmas, Kristi told HuffPost that Gunner plans to "adopt an angel" by choosing a child in need to provide presents to for the holiday.

# COMING TOGETHER

At Christmastime, donating to local food banks is a social tradition undertaken by many schools, church organizations and individuals who want to help ensure everyone has a good meal for the holidays.

Gunner's story (left) inspired us here at Excalibur to do a little research to understand more about this opportunity to help locally. What we found is that hunger is on the rise in Canada and there are many families who face this struggle year-round.

If you're inspired to help your local Food Bank, you can get more information at:

<http://www.foodbankscanada.ca/utility-pages/find-a-food-bank.aspx>



# FOOD BANK FACTOIDS

**110,000**



Canadians in rural communities rely on a food bank.

**x15** **14 MILLION VISITS**

will be made to Canadian food banks in 2014 - the equivalent of 15 times the population of Nova Scotia.

**x17** **841,191 CANADIANS**



use a food bank each month - you could fill the Roger's Centre 17 times.

**x6200**



**310,461 CHILDREN**

are helped each month - that is the equivalent of 6,200 full school buses.

**62 PERCENT**



of food distributed by Canadian food banks is non-perishable (eg. pasta sauce, cereal, rice, shelf-stable juice and canned soup, fruit and vegetables).



**47%**

of Nunavut children don't know where their next meal is coming from.

# Shout OUTS!



Carol Bailey from our Wingham office makes a poppy donation to the local Cadets.



Excalibur was proud to sponsor Kerry Parker this summer as the Catcher of the Marlin's Competitive fastball team out of Palmerston.



November's iPad Winner  
**JEFF VANWYK**  
(PICTURED IS JEFF'S SON KYLE)