

Farmington Hills resident John Smith with his three daughters: Jennifer (left), 6, Jacquelyn (right), 4, and Jessica, 2.



BOB SKLAR



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Helping serve the Thanksgiving eve dinner were volunteer workers (from left) Gaven LaKritz, 12, a Warner Middle School sixth grader; Ray Corridor of Birmingham; Irving

LaKritz of West Bloomfield; and Bernie Schlesinger of Southfield.

Gifts of few provide warmth for many

By Bob Sklar
staff writer

It was chilly outside on Thanksgiving eve. But inside the Knights of Columbus St. Francis Council Hall in Farmington Hills, warmth radiated. Some 80 people who otherwise might not have enjoyed such bounty sat down to a full-course dinner. The feast, co-sponsored by the Farmington Hills Salvation Army Community Center, was the brainchild of Liz and Bill LaKritz of Farmington Hills. "We'd talked about doing something like this for a couple of years," said Liz, in between kitchen duty and the arrival of guests last Wednesday night. "We wanted to give something

The feast, co-sponsored by the Farmington Hills Salvation Army Community Center, was the brainchild of Liz and Bill LaKritz of Farmington Hills.

back to the community. This is the time of the year to do something especially nice. It's much easier to donate a check than to "take the time and go the extra step," Liz said. "You can make time if you want

to do something bad enough. It's the greatest feeling to know you've helped somebody else."

THE LAKRITZ children — Gaven, 12, a Warner Middle School sixth grader, and Elyse, 9, a Forest Elementary fourth grader — were among the volunteers who served up turkey, ham and all the trimmings in a buffet style meal.

Fulfilling her mom's wish, Elyse said the opportunity taught her "about doing nice things for people." Lt. Jonathan Rich of the Salvation Army, which mailed some 200 invitations, said the dinner — if the LaKritzes are willing — will become an annual event.

"We easily could have doubled the number," he said. "But we wanted to keep it to a size we knew we could

manage. Next year, it'll grow. We'll get the word out. There's certainly the need for it."

"There's something about being around other people on a holiday," he said. "Getting together like this creates a joy that a lot of people might not have if they just got together with their own family. Family stress and burdens can be enormous."

THE LAKRITZES aren't prepared to commit to an annual dinner — yet. But the dinner is a definite go for next year.

"It turned out great," Liz said. "Want a wonderful feeling."

Many of those invited to the dinner are people the Salvation Army helps year round. Others were people whose names have been given to the Salvation Army. Many are

Farmington-area residents.

Leading up to Thanksgiving, the Salvation Army handed out 150 food baskets to local families.

"There's so much need in this area," Rich said.

Contributions covered the cost of the baskets.

People think of the Farmington area as affluent.

"But not everyone here is," Rich said.

The LaKritzes recruited relatives and friends to provide the labor and do the cooking for the dinner. Danny Knopper of Danny's Markets donated much of the food. Jim and Sid Hiller of Shopping Center Markets donated paper goods and apple juice.

The Salvation Army donated after-dinner gifts for the youngsters.



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"We wanted to give something back to the community. This is the time of the year to do something especially nice," said dinner co-organizer Liz LaKritz.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Tying red ribbons on Farmington Department of Public Safety patrol cars are Farmington High Students Against Drunk members (seated) Brian Biddle (left), Julie Bewernitz, Sue Gilert and (standing) Jeff Thomas (left), Megan Smith and Chris Gale. Next to Jeff Thomas is Farmington officer Terry Purves.

All tied up Ribbons promoting safe driving

By Joanne Mallisewski
staff writer

Go ahead, tie one on — a red ribbon that is. "We will be using red ribbons throughout the holidays. With the use of the ribbons we hope to get a visual effect. It may remind people about drinking and driving," Farmington Public Safety Director Frank Lauff said. Representatives of the Farmington High School Students Against Drunk Driving chapter participated in the red ribbon program's kickoff, spending about an hour tying ribbons on public safety and fire vehicles. Farmington's participation in the program dubbed "Tie One On" is a part of the Mothers Against Drunk Driving annual month-long program designed to remind drivers that drunk driving is life-threatening and illegal. The ribbons, tied to the drivers' side mirror or car antenna, are expected remind everyone during the

Alcohol continues to be involved in nearly one-half of all fatal traffic accidents in Michigan.

holidays that drinking and driving don't mix. Ribbons also will appear on all Michigan State Police and county sheriff's cars. "We haven't seen any drop in underage drinking," Lauff said. "It's still a major offense officers are seeing — open intoxicants and minors in possession."

BUT FARMINGTON High SADD chapter president Chris Gale said she believes teens are listening to message discouraging drinking and driving. There have been no drinking-related traffic deaths involving Farmington High students since the creation of the 450-member SADD chapter in 1984.

"My main belief is that I believe in the cause (discouraging drinking and driving)," Gale said. Alcohol continues to be involved in nearly one-half of all fatal traffic accidents in Michigan. Last year, more than 800 people were killed in alcohol-related crashes, according to MADD statistics.

"Public awareness efforts like 'Tie One On' are gaining support from people all over the country on behalf of sober driving during the holiday season. Hopefully, the presence of all these red ribbons on police vehicles will help create a more peaceful, less violent holiday season," MADD executive director Bethany Goodman said.

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