



Mike Crupi/Catholic Courier

Eleven-year-old Scott MacLeod of York reaches for a toy car while shopping at Wal-Mart in Geneseo Dec. 9 with fellow Boy Scouts from Troop 76. For more than 20 years, the troop has purchased Christmas gifts for needy families.

Scouts spread Christmas cheer

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

GENESEO — For the most part on Dec. 9, early evening shoppers at the Route 20A Wal-Mart were alone or with one or two companions. So it was quite a scene when a small army — mostly adolescent boys, no less — burst through the doors.

Soon thereafter, a shopping cart was rapidly filling up with items to be given to a small boy: model cars, a 2004 calendar, clothing, candy. In addition, cosmetic products and a sweat jacket were set aside for the boy's mother.

The eight young men from Boy Scout Troop 76, and the adults who



accompanied them, amassed a pile of gifts but were still done in a mere 45 minutes. Of course, it's quite possible that speediness might have been tied to the fact it was 7 p.m. and dinner at a Chinese restaurant still awaited.

This annual Christmas shopping trip goes back more than 20 years for Troop 76 in the town of York, Livingston County. Names of needy families, along with their wish lists, are provided by the York Central School District to Troop 76 and other



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Seventeen-year-old Andrew Dachille (left) evaluates a gift idea from 12-year-old Shane Quackenbush (right) as Dillon Decker (center) looks on.

community groups. The troop adopted one family this year and has taken on multiple families in the past. Families, who remain anonymous, all have children who attend York schools.

Seventeen-year-old Andrew Dachille is a veteran leader of this effort. His mother, Mary, who also played an organizing role in the Dec. 9 shopping excursion, said Andrew is among the many troop members who generously kick in their own cash to ensure nice gifts.

Andrew has a simple reason for his generosity.

"I would hate not to get anything (on Christmas), and I know all the other Scouts would," he remarked. Other Scouts who took part in this year's service effort were Joe Showers, 17; Brad Bagg, 14; Dillon Decker, 12; Tim Burns, 12; Shane Quackenbush, 12; Matt Bartlett, 11; and Scott MacLeod, 11.

For Andrew, a parishioner of St. Columba/St. Patrick in Caledonia, the Christmas project is just one of many goodwill initiatives he's performed during his young life. More often than not, he takes a leadership role and enlists the help of his friends. The following are some of the projects in which Andrew — and, many times, Troop 76, as well — has been involved:

- For years Andrew has led the annual Scouting for Food campaign. On two weekends in November, Troop 76 went door-to-door collecting food for the area poor. This year the Scouts amassed more than 2,000 items to be put into Christmas baskets distrib-

uted through York United Presbyterian Church. "We didn't do the whole town, but we did quite a bit of it," Andrew said.

- He takes charge of an annual Halloween party at the York Town Hall. This year Troop 76 delighted more than 50 youngsters by designing all the scenery — including a volcano complete with lava — while Andrew dressed up as a mad scientist.

- After his great-aunt was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in early 2003, Andrew arranged for his troop to take part in an MS Walk in early April. The troop ended up collecting more than \$1,500.

- Following the Sept. 11, 2001, tragedy, Andrew put together a fundraiser so that work gloves and boots could be purchased for workers cleaning up at Ground Zero in New York City.

- Andrew also helps maintain a portion of the Greenway Trail, which runs along the Genesee River beginning in Rochester and heading south almost to the Pennsylvania border.

Andrew, a senior at York Central High School, plans to attend college next year to become a systems analyst. He has been involved in Scouting for more than 10 years and was a recipient of the diocesan Hands of Christ Award this fall for outstanding service.

Yet Andrew remains humble about his volunteerism. "I've been doing it since I was 6, so it becomes a habit," he explained.

Stated his mom: "His goodness doesn't always show through, but he has a great heart."

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