

SFU Press Releases Collection

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Where there is a WIL there is Christmas spirit

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Many people are preoccupied with being home for the holidays at Christmas. But at Simon Fraser University several undergraduates and staff are putting many hours into helping needy families acquire life's basics, such as healthy meals and toiletries, and enjoy some Christmas cheer. Gathering an unprecedented number of donations for the SFU Food Bank and helping needy families are among the activities keeping SFU staff and students busy. John Grant, marketing and communications coordinator at SFU's Work Integrated Learning (WIL) unit, notes its staff are demonstrating a heightened spirit of giving this year compared to previous years.

'Our efforts to give back to the community are really benefiting from our recent integration of career and employer services, co-op training, as well as volunteer and community-based outreach under one unit called WIL,' says Grant. 'We're now 70 people strong.

' He adds, 'We've also noticed that many of our students working in industry are largely leading community-minded holiday-giving campaigns within the organizations for which they are working.

' Grant also observes that undergrads aged 19 to 23, known as Generation Y, 'seem to be much more community-minded and to be thinking of the world more than previous generations their age.

' The bulk of students in co-op are Generation Y.

Backgrounder: Where there is a WIL there is Christmas spiritHere are some examples of how students and staff in WIL are finding a way to give this Christmas.

- Unprecedented food-bank donations:A competition to see who among 70 career advisors and educators at WIL could come up with the most donations generated one of the largest collections from a single department for the SFU Food bank. WIL contributed more than 600 items, many of them the items most needed at the food bank, including baby diapers, baby formula, coffee, shampoo and canned meat and stews. 'The fact that they chose to tailor their donations to the needs of our food-bank clients really demonstrates their desire to give effectively,' says Michelle Demers, SFU Student Life Coordinator.

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- Giving over grades:When it comes to deciding whether she should study harder for an English exam or invest more time matching up victims of family violence with generous sponsors over Christmas, Nicole Skuce decides easily. 'Knowing that I've helped single moms attain peace of mind and children gain some normalcy of life despite their trauma means more to me than hitting the books harder for an English exam,' says Skuce. The Burnaby resident and SFU co-op student was studying for her last exam while working at the Marguerite Dixon Transition House Society, a non-profit society that provides support, shelter and advocacy for victims of family violence. Skuce, who has added a certificate with arts and social sciences co-op to her BA in English and History, has helped the transition house find sponsors for 18 families this Christmas. The sponsors buy gifts for families adopted by them over the holiday season.

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- Choosing community over professional work:SFU students Jessica Mak, a third year economics major and psychology minor, and Magdalene Chan, a fourth year business and communications major, are getting their feet wet in co-op through community work this

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Christmas.

The fledgling co-op students made a conscious decision to choose community over professional work. They are both helping needy families obtain toys to give their children and distributing \$30 food certificates to each family this Christmas through the Burnaby Christmas Bureau. 'It's great to be in a job where you can see you're making a daily difference,' says Chan, a Vancouver west-side resident. 'It's really giving me a good sense of who is needy in our communities and who are the people who help.

' Mak, a Burnaby resident, adds that the job has really helped her grow as a person. She explains, 'I've met so many people from different backgrounds and when they tell me their stories, it just makes me want to help them even more.

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