

## Help Goodfellows with their Christmas Mission, No Child Goes Without

(Crystal A. Proxmire, photos: Larry Mills)



In Ferndale no child goes without a Christmas. That has been the motto of the Ferndale Goodfellows since the organization first began delivering food and clothes to needy children since it began as the Suburban Goodfellows in 1923, and branched off into the Ferndale Goodfellows in 1934. Since then City employees, particularly the Fire and Police Departments, have made sure that families are looked after. 

In 2010 the Goodfellows was able to raise \$6900.00 last year through donations and End of Prohibition Fundraiser. They were able to help 131 children and 117 adults. They also provided gifts to the 70 residents of Hilton Convalescent Home. "Santa arrived by fire truck with gifts and a sheet cake for staff and residents," said Fire Sergeant Ken Kronner, who has been a member of the Goodfellows for 24 years. He said the organization normally packs presents, but this year provided gift cards instead due to the reduction of staffing and lack of space at Fire Station due to renovations. In addition to the gift cards, they provided food certificates for needy seniors and smoke detectors and Christmas Trees to those who requested them.

The packages also included a gift certificate for Hambo's Coney Island, which owners Victor and Josephine donated.

Like many in the police and fire departments, Kronner enjoys being able to connect with the community members that he serves day to day in his job, especially when he can brighten someone's holiday. "My fondest memory is when we made a delivery to a home where two very young children came to the door with eyes as wide as could be and smiles to boot, while their mother was confined to a hospital bed in a full body

cast. Every year I recall their excitement and joy and think to myself that this is what it is all about," he said.

Police Chief Tim Collins has also been involved through his career, though he credits the Fire Department with organizing the event each year. He recalled how Lt. Joe Swiercz, who is now retired, got on the buses to peddle Goodfellows papers to the passengers. Here is a video about the Goodfellows, courtesy of the Goodfellows and the Ferndale Cable TV Department:

Former Police Chief Michael Kitchen was also involved in the program, and inspired by Lt. Swiercz's commitment to raising money for the needy in the community. "I spent many years standing out in cold selling Goodfellow's newspapers and then many more near the end of my career as sort of a support member. The people we encountered on those, sometimes nasty mornings were the friendliest, kindest and most generous folks you could find, even when approached by an officer in uniform, and we had no trouble selling all of our papers. My favorite story is of Lt. Joe Swiercz, who would literally board the SMART bus at 8 Mile and ride it South bound to the State Fair where he would then board the NB bus back to Ferndale, selling papers to the riders both ways! Terrific strategy and, once again, friendly and generous folks.....all for a super cause"

✘ The Goodfellows paper sale is an annual tradition that the group had to let go a couple of years ago due to reduced staff. Each year a local newspaper, typically the Detroit News, published a special edition with news about the local Goodfellows organization on the front page. The papers were then sold on the street corners by men and women in uniform, with extra donations going to the Goodfellows program. (The Oakland Press picked up the printing in the 90s when the Detroit News and Detroit Free Press were having union strikes).

This year The Ferndale 115 News is helping the Goodfellows

revive the tradition of a paper sale, with an online fund drive that will help both the locally-owned online community news site, and The Goodfellows to continue the services provided to Ferndale. From now through December 25, The Ferndale 115 News is collecting donations online for the group. 85% of the donations will go directly to the Goodfellows, and 15% will go to The Ferndale 115 News to help us continue our community coverage through the next year.

You can pay with credit card or with your Pay Pal account using the link below or any of the Pay Pal links on this page. You DO NOT need a PayPal account, any Visa, Mastercard, American Express or Discover credit or debit card should work.



To donate directly, please mail a check to Ferndale Goodfellows c/o Ferndale Fire Department, 1635 Livernois, Ferndale, MI 48220.

Another memory Chief Collins had, is one that he has seen every year. "The more general observation during paper sales is people in junky cars giving 5, 10 or 20 dollars to the cause and people in BMWs, Cadillacs, and other high end vehicles either giving you the "stare straight ahead-I don't want to talk to you" look, or [they] give a buck or ask for change."

Donations to Goodfellows go directly to help Ferndale and Pleasant Ridge families in need, and the organization relies on the charity and generosity of those in the community who can spare a little to help their neighbors. Goodfellows is also in need of volunteers next year to stuff baskets, collect and sort food donations, and shop for families. This year they will be giving gift cards, but next year plan on returning to the more personable gift-giving approach.

Goodfellows also benefits from a fun and generous fundraiser known as **The End of Prohibition Party**, that was started by

Larry and Monica Mills, who, like many in Ferndale, are happy that Franklin D. Roosevelt ushered in the end of alcohol prohibition. 

Last year the fundraiser netted \$4384.20 and took place at 8 venues through Downtown Ferndale. They began in 2007 as a “dress rehearsal” for a big bash to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of prohibition. This year planning is in the works for another End of Prohibition party which will take place at various venues, which will be announced in the coming weeks. **The party takes place on Saturday, Dec. 3, 2011. Attendees roam from bar to bar, typically in 1920s clothing – think flapper dresses and gangster clothes (pinstripe suits not colors), celebrating the fact that Americans have the freedom to drink, while helping others with the money raised. This year donations will be collected at: Tony’s, New Way Bar, Valentine Vodka, Howe’s Bayou, Danny’s and Sneakers. Look for the flappers, gangsters, newsboys and rum runners with the brown moonshine jugs to give your donation, and dress up yourself to really join in the fun! Here is the event on [Facebook](#).**

