



*Did you know?*

# Santa has a workshop at OTOW

By John Koning

Even as a child, I was skeptical about Santa Claus. The logistics of Santa's job on Christmas Eve made me doubt his legitimacy. However, as a resident of On Top of the World, I'm beginning to understand how he does it.

Right here under our noses, in the East Activity Center, are two of the jolly man's satellite workshops.

The Toy Shop cranks out wooden toys by the dozen that, in turn, travel a few yards to Caring and Sharing to be painted and decorated.

For the Toy Shop elves and the ladies of Caring and Sharing, it is all about sharing their talent and resources with those who are in need.

Toy Shop Supervisor Dick Collins, who moved here because of the Toy Shop, says, "I work here because I want to. Not because I have to. It would be really nice to see the faces of the children who receive these toys."

Caring and Sharing President Pauline Corkum is quick to point out that the term "needy" does not necessarily mean poor. Needy comes in a variety of forms. There are those among us who are in need of companionship. Some of us need help with a handicap, a sickness or a terminal diagnosis. The most prevalent area of need is among very young mothers and fathers who need guidance and support as they learn how to provide love and care to their own young children.

The workshop produces roughly 25 "new parent care packages" annually. All are handmade with "love" knitted right in.

It doesn't take much time among these tireless workers to understand why they enjoy what they do. The efficient atmosphere of their workshop is peppered with chipper conversation,



In the front row are Sandy Bonefas, Pauline Corkum, Barb Kelly, Edie Sutton and Dick Collins. In the back are Ray Tabor, Virginia Noce, Steve Sutton, Jeanette Grant, Althea Stanfield, Tootsie Haskins and Doug Erickson

mutual affirmation and laughter. It's a lovely, lively place.

When I asked Santa's elves why they do what they do, I received a variety of answers, most of which can be summed up with the words of Pablo Casals, who said, "... the capacity to care is the thing which gives life its deepest significance."

Ironically, it is the act of giving that gives them the most in return.

It's important to mention that this whole feel-good program of helping others has a practical mandate. The care packages are not just handed out in a perfunctory manner. They are tools that are used to preserve life, to encourage better health and to promote good parenting. In order to qualify for

a package, recipients must meet with a medical doctor and attend classes to improve their parenting skills.

In order to keep their production line humming, these super-elves need supplies and lots of them. Paint for 600 toys doesn't bubble up from the ground like crude oil, and yarn for care packages doesn't hang from trees like Spanish moss. The wood doesn't grow on trees ... well, actually it does, but this wood is provided by the OTOW Fixers Fiddlers and Fumblers Club.

Caring and Sharing asks for donations from the recipient organizations and it's Jim Grant's job to scour newspaper flyers and the Internet to find the best deals possible and deliver the goods to the shop. His title of

"Gofer" is well earned.

Caring and Sharing also has benefactors who don't require anything in return. They are the Ladies of 18 Hole Golf League. Secretary Treasurer Jeanette Grant made it very clear how very much their generous donations mean to Caring and Sharing.

"Without them, the shop would not be able to impact the number of lives that it does," she said, with true gratitude in her eyes.

The Toy Shop and Caring and Sharing have been making Christmas magic on Santa's behalf since the early days of On Top of the World. It makes me proud to live in a place with such a giving legacy.

Who says Santa doesn't exist?