

Volunteers serve tasty Christmas presents for Dartmouth's less fortunate
Federal government employees cook up Christmas cheer at a local food bank

By Bettyann Power

Sept. 7, 2006 – Dartmouth, N.S. – For hundreds of residents in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Christmas dinner is served compliments of dedicated federal government employees.

For the past 14 years, volunteers from the Fisheries and Oceans Canada's Bedford Institute of Oceanography (BIO) have unloaded food donations from trucks into warehouse fridges, sorted donations, and filled, wrapped and delivered boxes to recipients at a food bank, all in an annual effort to spread Christmas cheer. The project is undertaken in cooperation with Dartmouth's Parker Street Food Bank. Proceeds from the Government of Canada's Workplace Charitable Campaign (GCWCC), an annual fundraising event, help pay for the vans used to deliver the food. Christmas for the city's less fortunate likely would be bleak without the support of BIO's managers and employees.

"If the BIO volunteers were not there, the Christmas program would have a hard time operating," said Mel Boutilier, director of the Parker Street Food Bank.

BIO houses five federal departments: Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Environment Canada, National Defence and Public Works Government Services Canada. The volunteers' four-day operation serves over 700 hot and tasty Christmas dinners each year.

The Bedford Institute of Oceanography's Christmas dinner volunteering program is one example of Government of Canada employees making a difference in their communities. Along with their regular volunteering, thousands of public servants participate in the annual Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign (GCWCC), the largest workplace charitable project in Canada. In 2005, federal public servants contributed more than \$29.5 million to GCWCC in 113 communities nation-wide. GCWCC 2006 kicks off on September 7 and will run until November 22.

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