

Karate kids unleash a flurry of generosity

Generator anyone? Firefighter seeks help



**BY SCOTT
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At Your Service

A St. Albert firefighter hopes to find a generator under his tree this year so he can re-gift it for a worthy cause.

Victor Fernandez is well known for his philanthropy through Canadian Aid for Fire Services Abroad (CAFSA), which acquires decommissioned fire trucks to give to developing countries in Central and South America, but frequently he receives other requests for help.

Fernandez recently proved instrumental in collecting more than \$200,000 worth of medical supplies, including wheelchairs, as part of an aid effort to help El Salvador recover from Hurricane Ida, which caused mudslides and flooding resulting in more than 120 deaths in November.

Now Fernandez hopes to find an industrial generator for a different country that's experiencing its own natural disaster.

"Ecuador right now is in the middle of the summer and they have forest fires everywhere — rivers are dry, and they got no electricity. They called me to see if I can get a generator that the local hospital doesn't have."

Fernandez said the location of the 100-bed hospital is Azogues, the capital of Cañar province with a population of almost 30,000.

He knows of some surplus, unused or abandoned generators in different buildings across the city, but just as with fire trucks, he would really like just one good functional one to bring a little light and hope to the struggling health practitioners in Azogues.

"We need all the help that we can get."

If you have a generator to donate or have informa-

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VICTOR FERNANDEZ
Firefighter; philanthropist

tion on where one can be acquired, please contact Fernandez through his website at www.cafsa.net.

Donations with a kick

The 400 students of the Desa School of Karate last week proved their hearts are akin to tenth-degree black belts. On Friday they gave a roundhouse of Christmas cheer as representatives from the school's three locations spread \$2,000 in

equal donations to four separate local charities. It was the culmination of the school's 10th annual fundraiser that also helps subsidize the costs of bringing in guest instructors from around the world.

Sensei Manuel deSa explained the amount raised this year surpassed all others.

"This is the biggest amount that we've ever had," he said, adding that last year he actually bumped up the figure with a personal donation so that the school could become a sponsor of the Special Olympics.

The fundraiser works with sponsors providing pledges for each student's participation in deSa's karate challenge with various activities around the dojo. This year, donation beneficiaries include the St. Albert Food Bank, Morinville Food Bank, Youth Emergency Shelter Society and St. Albert Stop Abuse in Families (SAIF).

"It's our way of giving back and sharing with the community that makes us successful."

SAIF president Pam Smyth was very appreciative of the contribution, noting the non-profit organization survives through the generosity of community-minded citizens and groups and like the Desa School.

"To see the spirit in these kids is really wonderful. They're fabulous. The money that they gave us is going to go straight into our counselling, providing up to 10 hours of free counselling for people in the community that need it so desperately."

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