

Holiday spirit kicks in

Weekend events around Sanford – Page 2



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Herald photo by Tommy Vincent

Each year Harvest Time International, located at 225 N. Kennel Rd., provides gifts to more than 4,000 children.

New comp show succ UCF Incuba

By Gary Roberts
Herald Staff

Steve Edmonds has a great idea—one that addresses the world's pollution problem, the nation's dependence on the state's agricultural economy, as well as his own business goals. And he is about to take the next step in realizing all of it.

Edmonds started up Pristine BioDiesel with a goal in mind: to convert vegetable oil into a clean-burning diesel fuel. A Central Florida graduate needs help to get started.

He needs more research to be done by biologists and agricultural experts. He requires new manufacturing plants. He needs to develop a market for his product and more collection points for used cooking oil. "In any matter and 'yellow grease,' typically from restaurants, he needs to make community connections to get the product.

That's why Edmonds joined the UCF Business Incubator in Sanford, established just over a year ago, and start-up companies with office space and support services. Now with nine companies, plus one that has just graduated, the UCF Incubator has a track record that it hopes will repeat with Pristine BioDiesel.

Although Edmonds is new to the UCF Business Incubator, his business is about to take off. In January he expects to open a plant in Vero Beach. The 7,000-square-foot facility, employing 30 to 45 people, will initially provide waste-management trucks. Eventually, he

Helping the needy is Love's Creation

By Gary Roberts
Herald Staff

The shelves of Love's Creation are aligned with an incredible variety of gifts, many with equally incredible stories.

Colorful crafts and paintings reflect the imagination of local artisans, but most of the inventory originates from far-flung places around the world.

There are jewelry beads from

Uganda, strung together by women who then don't have to work in the rock quarries. Similarly, women in Nepal support their families by casting jewelry accessories made of metal, stone and precious gems.

The aptly named company Mr. Ellie Pooh, based in Sri Lanka, turns elephant dung into recycled paper for greeting cards and stationery. The proceeds from tablecloths actually go back to the Pakistanis who wove them.

And the hugely successful TOMS Shoes, founded on the premise that, for every pair purchased, TOMS will give a pair of shoes to a needy child worldwide. As of September, TOMS has given away more than 1 million pairs of new shoes to impoverished children through giving partners around the world.

Simply put, these are products with a purpose.

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Christmas Bag of Joy

Every year Harvest Time International provides free Christmas gifts to more than 4,000 local children whose parents are not able to provide presents for them Christmas morning. The holiday season can be especially difficult for families struggling on a daily basis to make ends meet.

Christmas Bag of Joy, Harvest Time International's annual Christmas assistance outreach to 1,500 local families, allows registered parents to pick free toys for their children in a specially set up "toy store."

People can help by donating toys, or in other ways.

- Decorate an ordinary paper leaf bag (provided by HTI). Be creative – make it look like Christmas with colors, decorations and uplifting greetings. This can be a great project for families with children, school classes, Sunday schools, corporations, etc.

- Fill the bag with joy. Toys for children aged 1-15 years old, Christmas dinner food items (nonperishable), gift cards for toys or groceries, or a \$10 financial donation to sponsor a child.

- Return it to Harvest Time International this week, but donations will be accepted until Christmas Eve. Any combination of these opportunities also is fine. While some only might be able to decorate a bag, others can donate a toy or give a financial donation toward the event.

For more information or to volunteer, contact 407-474-0441 or volunteer@harvest-time.org, or visit harvesttime.org/Christmas.

HARVEST

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"Initially, people are looking for sales and are reluctant to buy, but once they find out what's involved, they are compelled to support the cause behind the product," said Franky Caleb, store manager.

For Ashley Higham, who last week came all the way from Tampa to do some Christmas shopping at Seminole Towne Center, it was her first time in the store.

"I didn't know this was here," she said. "I think it's a really good idea. I like these quirky, little vintage items."

Actually, with last month's opening of a second Love's Creation at the mall, shoppers now have twice the opportunity to play a more active role in this season of giving. And in doing so, also support Harvest Time International, the faith-based group that helps families and children in need.

In addition, this is the second year the Christian organization is operating a holiday gift-wrapping service at Seminole Towne Center, with proceeds benefiting local families.

In conjunction with its annual Christmas Bag of Joy program, established in 1999, HTI provides food and other assistance for 1,200 local families and Christmas presents for 4,000 children during the holiday sea-

son. Parents who qualify for the Christmas outreach program are able to select free toys for their children in a specially created "toy store."

"Instead of having a stranger pick out a toy, parents know better what their child wants," said Andre Smolinsky, HTI chief operating officer. "We want parents to have the joy of choosing a toy for their child."

On this day, Smolinsky is sharing the joy of Christmas with his family. His wife, Lena, who is outreach and communications director for HTI, and 6-week-old Aurelia join him for a festive stroll through the mall.

"She comes to work already," Smolinsky said of their newborn.

This dedication to family is the philosophy behind the Harvest Time International Healing and Worship Center, located at 225 N. Kennel Road, in Sanford.

HTI is a hunger and disaster relief organization meeting the needs of families in the U.S. and worldwide. The target populations are low-income or financially distressed families, elderly and disabled on low or fixed income, and homeless or unemployed families—people who are struggling to meet their basic needs.

They achieve their goal both globally and locally. Each day HTI assists more 500 families in Central Florida.

Lena Smolinsky said more families than ever are coming to Harvest Time

International for emergency assistance. And HTI is trying to expand services to keep pace with growing demand.

Operating out of a 100,000-square-foot facility, HTI serves local families directly through its Community Hope Center. Early next year, HTI will be offering yet another service, opening a Medical Care Center for families without medical insurance.

The slumping economy has hit HTI as well, with financial contributions dropping. But Smolinsky understands the pressures people are under.

"Right now, so many people are hurting and have had to cut back on their donations," she said.

But that doesn't mean they still aren't reaching out others.

Last year, HTI was the recipient of 41,000 volunteer hours from community members. Already this year, the organization has welcomed more than 61,000 hours of volunteer service.

However, last year, with the crisis created by the earthquake in Haiti, financial contributions flowed in at unprecedented levels.

"People were very generous. We were overwhelmed," Smolinsky said. "It was great."

To help with the Christmas assistance program, volunteers are needed through Dec. 24. Contact 407-474-0441 or volunteer@harvest-time.org.