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Grannies baking furiously for annual cookie walk

EMMA JACKSON / Ottawa This Week
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They're not quite cookie monsters, but they're certainly cookie machines.

Despite their demure title, Metcalfe's Grannies All About Kids group boasts 16 dough rolling, nut chopping, cookie cutting aficionados who will churn out more than 640 dozen cookies this week in preparation for their annual Cookie Walk for the Stephen Lewis Foundation.

That's nearly 8,000 cookies baked by a handful of women in the span of a week – a minimum of 40 dozen per "granny," or about six dozen a day for seven days straight for every person on the roster.

And they relish the challenge.

"It's fun for us and it's fun for the people who come to the cookie walk," said Bev McKibbon, one of the Grannies organizers in the Ottawa South area.

She said the fourth annual event's growing popularity has motivated some grannies to bake as many as 70 dozen cookies at one time. But it's never enough.

"Last year when we opened up the doors, we looked out and there was a huge line up. We were sold out in 45 minutes," she said.

The cookie walk is held in the Metcalfe Lion's Den on 8th Line Road, this year on Saturday, Dec. 10 at 1 p.m.

A huge, festive table is covered with all kinds of cookies, squares, truffles and candy – as many as 75 different kinds.

Metcalfe resident Kathleen Everett, who isn't even a grandmother yet, had already made chocolate cherry cookies, cinnamon sugar cookies, "buckeyes," Swedish cookies, chocolate mint cookies, nutty chocolate marshmallow puffs, peppermint cookie pops and melting snowmen cookie balls by Monday, Dec. 5 and she still had about 10 dozen to go. Her baking buddy Joanne Rowan, who has two grandchildren, had baked Skor bars, hello dollies, Christmas cupcakes and three types of shortbread before helping Everett with the melting snowmen.

Coming into the Lion's Den, visitors can buy a small box for \$10 or a large box for \$20. The size of these boxes is unclear, but McKibbon assures they are "a good size." Then the cookie customers are set loose in an orderly



Baking grannies. Metcalfe resident Kathleen Everett and Barrhaven resident Joanne Rowan will each make about 40 dozen cookies this December in preparation for the Metcalfe Grannies All About Kids Cookie Walk on Saturday, Dec. 10. Between the 16 "grandmothers" (who are not all true grandmothers) the group will bake about 8,000 cookies to be sold as a fundraiser for the Stephen Lewis Foundation.
Emma Jackson

fashion on the cookie-covered table.

"The only criteria is that customers need to be able to close the lid when they're done," McKibbon laughed.

Of course, this can lead to a certain kind of Christmas cookie crisis: regulars desperate to get to their favourites; newcomers trapped on the wrong side of the table from an especially inviting cookie; over-excited customers filling their box to the top only to find another favourite farther down the table.

But for the most part the event is a jolly one, full of Christmas cheer bolstered by the knowledge that not only do customers get a break on baking but they've also helped an important organization in the process.

Grannies All About Kids is the Metcalfe chapter of the Grandmothers to Grandmothers campaign, which raises funds for the Stephen Lewis Foundation supporting African grandmothers who are raising their grandchildren orphaned by the AIDS epidemic.

According to the group, about 15 million children have been orphaned by AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, and the number is rising rapidly. Grandmothers there have had to bury their own children and then at age 50, 60 or 70 begin to parent again while they raise their orphaned grandchildren. Between 40 and 60 per cent of all orphans in sub-Saharan Africa live in a household headed by their grandmother.

McKibbon said the Metcalfe group raised about \$1,500 last year, and this year they hope to raise \$2,000. The money is used to supply African grandmothers with food, school supplies and clothing for their grandchildren as well as counselling and support services for the entire family.

For more information about the Grandmothers to Grandmothers campaign visit www.grandmotherscampaign.org.

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