

The Governor General's Caring Canadian Award



Daniel Ouellet

Québec, Quebec

Originally a butcher and now assistant warehouse director for Costco, in Québec, Daniel Ouellet has become a model of caring for his community.



Eight years ago, Daniel Ouellet was inspired by a colleague who had been helping families during the holidays and felt compelled to reach out himself to families in need. Every November, he contacts the principal of a school in Saint-Sauveur, in Québec's lower town, to identify struggling families trying to get ahead.

Once the families have been identified, Mr. Ouellet phones them, visits them and works with them to identify their specific needs. He then posts a list of needs for each family in his office staffroom. Little by little, the donation boxes begin to fill up with items: products for the home, toys, clothing and money.

When the items have been collected, Mr. Ouellet goes through them. His colleagues help with putting packages together and gift wrapping them rather than distributing them in warehouse boxes. With the money collected, they put together a huge grocery hamper and divide up the goods so that each family will have enough to last for several months.

On the morning of December 24, Mr. Ouellet, his children, his colleagues and their children set out in a large truck to distribute the packages to the families of Saint-Sauveur. The streets quickly fill as the truck and the cars arrive at their destination. Mr. Ouellet dresses as Santa Claus and starts a long human chain to pass the boxes from the truck straight into the living rooms.

As the gifts are being handed out, there is a lot of emotion in the air: parents are moved by the outpouring of generosity, while the children are excited, their eyes wide and lit up with joy. Over the years, the number of families helped has grown, but so has the number of smiles, with hope taking root in the sometimes difficult lives of the families receiving support from people like Daniel Ouellet.

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The Caring Canadian Award was presented to Daniel Ouellet on April 17, 2012, at Rideau Hall. Sgt Ronald Duchesne 2012 © Rideau Hall