Many needy families in county

Helping hand may be perfect

By Marybeth Bianchi Feature Editor

There are more than 550 Brunswick County families who need a helping hand this holiday season, yet not even 100 have been adopted by more fortunate residents.

"It would be so nice -- I guess it's a pipe dream -- if everybody in Brunswick County would pull together," said Angie Fisher, Volunteer and Information Center executive assistant who has been busy for days putting together Christmas food baskets and gifts donated through the Tree of Hope.

"A little from everybody becomes a whole lot," she said.

The program helps low-income families with children age 17 and under and senior citizens. Those families with extra burdens, like a terminal illness, are often adopted as a whole by individuals or groups, Fisher said.

"I suspect we reach a substantial portion of the county, but there are many, many people who fall through the cracks," VIC director 13. Pete Barnette said, pointing out that the newly organized chapter of Habitat for Humanity recently determined there are nearly 1,500 families living in substandard homes throughout the county.

All families who meet specific income guidelines will receive a Christmas basket filled with food for the holiday. Barnette said he expects to spend \$3,500 purchasing certificates from local grocery stores for turkeys or baking hens to complete the baskets. Several groups, like the Council on the Status of Women, hold food drives to collect nonperishable items for the baskets.

"What we need now is money," Barnette said. "It would be awfully nice to have an influx of money."

There's a long list of people who need help this holiday season, Fisher pointed out.

There are numerous single mothers with two or more children who are struggling to support their families while attending school in the hope of getting better jobs.

There's a family of five where the four and 11. father, in his mid-40s, has been out of work since October and is awaiting open heart surgery.

There's a woman who lost her home in July, her job in October and is raising four children ages four to

There's a grandmother caring for her daughter who has cancer and her two children, ages seven and eight. There's a woman whose husband

is in prison and she is left to care for five children between the ages of

'It's hard to see those children and know they're not going to get anything for Christmas because they don't get their names off the Tree of Hope

Angie Fisher VIC assistant

These people are really in need at Christmas," Fisher said. Families who live on a tight budget the rest of the year paying for electricity, food and a place to stay, can barely afford gifts for their children during the holiday season. When some children talk about the video games Santa will bring them, these children hope for a pair of new shoes, socks or jeans, Fisher said.

"If you're on a budget there's no way you can afford to do Christmas," she said.

"It's hard to see those children and know they're not going to get anything for Christmas because they don't get their names off the Tree of Hope because they're beyond that cute little age." Fisher said it's often the pre-teen and teenage children who are forgotten during the holi-

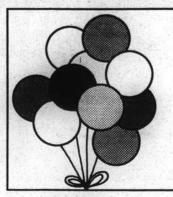
Churches, businesses and school groups take individual tags from the Tree of Hope and purchase gifts and clothing for children. North Brunswick High School's DECA chapter has been a staunch supporter of the program for several years.

"Most people will buy the children one big thing, or if it's not a whole lot they'll buy everything," Fisher

"All the children from every (lowincome) family, their names are on the Tree of Hope. You can only hope someone with buy them a present," Fisher said.

The Christmas baskets and gifts will be distributed at Southport and Supply on Monday and Tuesday. Food, clothing, gifts and money can still be contributed this week at the VIC office at Supply or at the former Schaeffer Buick building on N. C. 211 near Western Sizzlin'. More information can be obtained by calling 754-4766.

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In America, there are more people with hearing impairments than any other handicap. Some people are born with hearing defects, others sustain hearing damage, and many suffer hearing loss with age. Of the five senses, hearing is the most easily damaged. Loud music, noise in the workplace and high volume sounds can

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instruments, and work with you to help you adjust to your new hearing device. They also offer repair, batteries

Brunswick County Farm Bureau Sam Kezian, Agent

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