Spread some festive cheer with an extra gift

PRESENTS have been pouring in for our annual gift appeal, but as Christmas approaches the Journal is urging readers to come forward and donate.

For more than 25 years the Journal has collected gifts from readers to be given to those who would otherwise go without. Many charities and organisations have handed out the presents in the past, including Salisbury Trust for the Homeless, the women’s refuge, Alabaré Christian Care and Morning Star, a charity that provides food and support for homeless people. A spokesman for homeless charity Alabaré said receiving a gift “is very emotional, and means so much” to residents, adding: “They realise they are not alone and that there are people in their local communities who are thinking of them.”

Other presents are distributed at Christmas lunches for the elderly and infirm, vulnerable people in supported living and the children’s unit at Salisbury District Hospital.

Marlon Powell organises a community lunch for elderly people living in Wilton as part of the Wilton Christian Fellowship, which is usually attended by about 40 people and has been running for more than 30 years. “Salisbury Journal has been very generous to us in Wilton in recent years in providing gifts for the guests,” Marlon said. “They are elderly people who would otherwise be on their own.”

The fellowship organises for someone to act as Father Christmas after lunch is served, and also delivers lunch and gifts to those who are housebound and cannot attend on the day. “A lot of them do live on their own, and I don’t think many of them have relatives or friends, so they really enjoy coming to the lunch,” Marlon said.

Before the Journal started the gift appeal, the guests used to be given packets of biscuits or a small pot plant, but Marlon said now they receive a much more personal gift.

“These gifts that we get from readers just add to the special feeling of Christmas, I suppose.”

Donations have already been handed to the Journal office, but more gifts mean more people will receive something special this Christmas. All it takes is for readers to choose an extra gift while Christmas shopping this year, wrap it and attach a label saying if it is for a girl, boy, man or woman and giving a rough age of the person it is meant for. Gifts can be brought to the Journal office in Rolleston Street.

Journal publisher Bill Browne said: “Our readers never cease to amaze me in their generosity.

“For some, this gift will be the only present they receive this Christmas and it lets them know that somebody cares enough to spread some festive happiness. Every present is handed straight to someone who is in need to help bring a smile to their face, and the people of Salisbury closer together at Christmas time.”
The Salisbury Journal Christmas Present Appeal gift handover in 2016. DC7958P2 Picture by Tom Gregory