

Sick kids send letters off to Santa

By CAROL JOHNSTONE

Letter carrier Tony Rogers isn't worried about competition from the Internet as Santa's preferred messenger.

"I don't think Santa's on the Internet," he said. "Santa's a traditionalist. I think he still uses a quill pen."

Mr. Rogers was at the Izaak Walton Killam Children's Hospital on Thursday along with a number of his fellow elves to help about 15 sick children write letters to Santa.

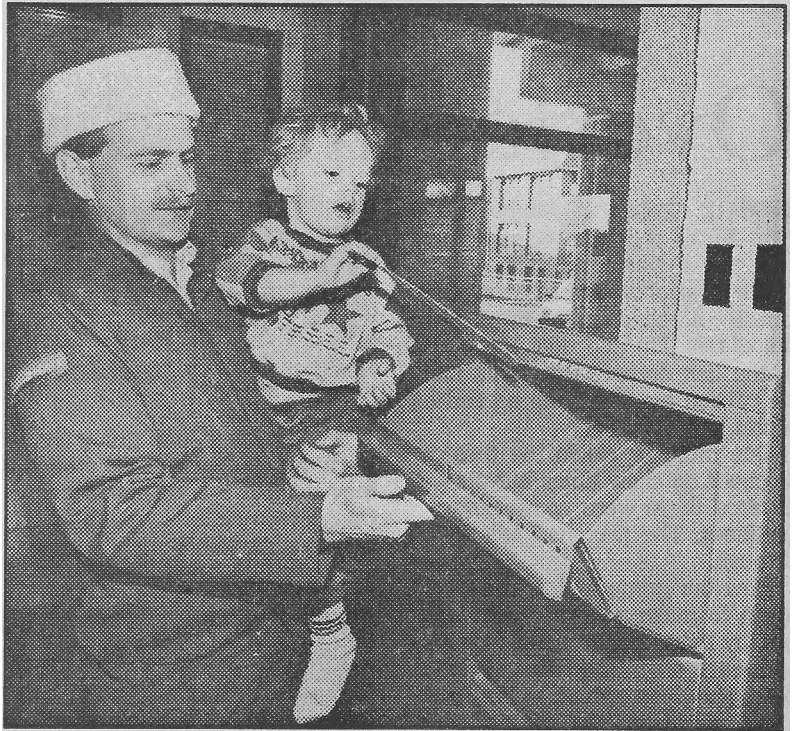
"Do you want a Power Ranger?" asked letter carrier Tommy Hurst, pen in hand.

Christopher Wallace, 7, nodded his head. "And a great big tow truck," he added.

The young patient had to hurry because he had an appointment with the EEG machine.

"What about an ambulance?" his mom asked. Christopher nodded and Mr. Hurst wrote it down and sealed the letter. He addressed it to Santa, North Pole. Canada HOH OHO. Christopher put it in Mr. Hurst's big blue bag with MAIL POSTE on it.

As they took Christopher away for his appointment — he was already dressed in peach and white striped pajamas — Mr. Hurst said



Darren Pittman/Clark Photographic

Letter carrier Mike Paul helps Dylan Allen, 2, of Bridgewater mail his letter to Santa.

he likes coming to help the children write letters.

"This is my seventh year."

Mr. Hurst remembered the letter he received last year from a little Ari with no return address and no last name who said all she wanted for Christmas was the chance to see her daddy more often, and that she wished her mommy and daddy would stop fighting over her.

"I know you'll help me Santa. I believe in you," Mr. Hurst quoted the letter as saying.

"It puts Christmas in perspective and reminds me why I come," Mr. Hurst said.

It's important for children to remember to put their names and return addresses on their letters and get them in by Dec. 15 if they want a reply before Christmas. Letters written by classes need to be in before Dec. 9.

Canda Post spokeswoman Valerie Wilson said that last year their centre received 102,000 letters from children in Atlantic Canada.

Nationally, letter carrier volunteer elves wrote and sent over a million individual letters to children all over the world in 20 languages, including braille.