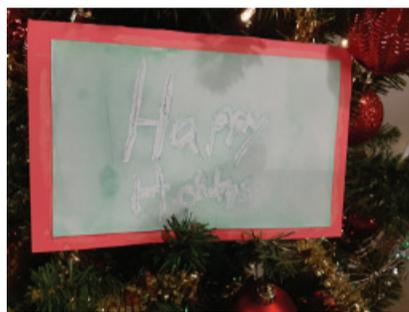


Ritchie Community League

Dear Friends and Neighbours of Ritchie,

Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and Happy New Year to all of you in the Ritchie community! This is our second newsletter from your neighbours at The Mustard Seed 24/7 Shelter.

Your support over the last two months has been overwhelming and we are so thankful to be in community with you all!



During the month of December we sheltered

5,642

people. This means that people were not out in the cold, not left to find shelter in the neighbourhood, and

found community and basic needs at the Southside Shelter.

Of these 5642, we helped two women leave domestic violent relationships and access a safer space.

Our wellness advocates referred 98 people to resources and they also had 127 visits and interactions with folks. There were also 11 employment referrals!

Our wellness advocates and housing workers were able to house four people!

We have fully incorporated our Medication program in the shelter. Mint Pharmacy comes in with daily drop offs of medications for people. This has been going extremely well, as people don't have to remember to get their meds or find their way to the pharmacy that holds their prescription. Consistent medication leads to better physical and mental health outcomes for all individuals.

Our activities inside the shelter have been limited by the Covid restrictions. Cards, chess and games are not allowed as these are considered high touch activities. We have been able to continue with our movie nights and also our art activities. If you are able to donate individually packed pencil crayons or charcoal or pencils along with coloring pages or books or sketching pads these would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you to all those who have been donating or inquiring on how to better support the shelter space.

HERE IS A LIST OF OUR CURRENT NEEDS:

- granola bars
- fruit cups
- juice boxes
- underwear (men's and women's sizes l-xxl)
- long johns
- coats
- boots
- sweatpants
- socks
- gloves
- toothpaste
- toothbrushes
- shampoo & conditioner
- combs/brushes
- packages with pencil crayons and adult colouring pages/books (running low)

Some people have been donating food hamper items, which have come in handy as we have some folks who are housed but experience food insecurity and come for meals. We have been able to hand out these non-perishable donations to them to take home and cook with.



The Shelter was truly in the Christmas spirit with the help from some Ritchie community members. Some ladies came in and decorated trees and put up wreaths in the office space to make the place feel more festive! Also, there was a **SNOW FUND** grant that was applied for and the elves quickly sprang into action and purchased lots of white lights, extension cords and zip ties and got to hanging the lights. Not only did they provide a festive atmosphere for Christmas, they will continue to provide soft light while participants sleep so that staff can watch over their safety without the overly-bright house lights.

Our Indigenous Staff and Chaplain began offering smudging at the shelter. The mornings are a time of quiet and reset each day after the hustle and bustle of wake up and breakfast. This allows for everyone to settle and reflect on the day ahead.

A few Ritchie community members popped in with goodies and hot chocolate from Tim Hortons to share with our folks! It was very much appreciated!

Many schools, including Mill Creek School, built and donated Mugs of Joy and backpacks, which contained basic needs and some treats and Christmas Morning all of our community woke up to one of these gifts!



CHRISTMAS DAY

Trinity Lutheran's Pastor Ingrid, spent time before Christmas speaking with community participants about their stay at the shelter and shared their thoughts in an Advent devotion.

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH](#)



On Christmas day, **Operation Holiday Hope surprised Shelter Staff as they donated over 100 giant wrapped Christmas gifts for participants.** Each gift included a blanket, sanitizer, masks, granola bar, toothpaste and brush, cards, chocolate bar, candy cane, female hygiene products, shampoo and conditioner, hand and foot warmers, gloves, scarf, neck warmers, socks..... Some contained gift cards and jackets.

Our volunteer cooks, Pat and Dave prepared a very special Christmas dessert to be enjoyed at dinner.

There were soooo many things and blessings and it's impossible to list them all here.

Suffice to say, we have been embraced and warmly welcomed by the community.

Thank you everyone, on behalf of The Mustard Seed and our Shelter Staff and Participants!