

Angel Gifts Program 2020 – the pandemic version

As we all know, 2020 was a different kind of year with many challenges. Some challenges can seem overwhelming, while others are opportunities to learn and to work for good, though different from “normal”, outcomes. The latter was the case with 2020’s Angel Gift Program.

When it became clear that the COVID19 pandemic was going to be with us for an extended period of time, it began to look as if there would be no possibility for Our Place to consider giving out Angel Gifts this year. There were so many fears, risks and unknowns — yet it also was obvious that the need was greater than ever. We were determined to make the program happen somehow, even if it had to be much smaller in its extent than in past years. Our Place designated two of its management staff members to work with its Outreach team and the Angel Gifts Coordinator to revamp the process so that all of the individual churches would feel able to participate safely. We began in September — asking questions, listening to people’s concerns and ideas, and discussing what seemed workable. From the thoughtful comments we received it quickly became apparent that Angel Gifts is a well-loved project for many churches, organizations and individual donors.

The outcome of all this planning resulted in Plan A — purchased and wrapped gifts, as in the past, and Plan B — monetary donations in the approximate value of a gift, but with volunteers doing the shopping and wrapping. We thought that the combination of these two plans might result in 200-300 gifts. Collection of recipients’ names was done in small increments, to ensure that “our reach did not exceed our grasp”. It was *very* exciting when more and more requests for additional names kept coming from so many participants! The final outcome was that we gave out 509 names. FirstMet’s combined Plan A and Plan B gift total was 54. In addition, there were extra gifts that also were donated and would be used to make sure that any latecomers also could receive gifts.

There are so many people to thank for their hard work to achieve this outstanding result! Here at FirstMet, thanks go to the office and custodial stall, and the Communications team, for ongoing advice and assistance about how we could make Angel Gifts happen at FirstMet in 2020. Thanks to the Welcome Attendant team who helped to collect your gifts at the door. Thank you to Andrea Hofmeyr and Shelagh MacKinnon for transportation of our gifts to their final sorting place and to Micia Kanstrup for her help at the final sorting. And *special thanks* to Shelagh for her ongoing support and enthusiasm for the Angel Gifts program!

In addition to all of these FirstMet people, many thanks also are due to Dawn, Julianne, Alicia, and Jordan and the Outreach team at Our Place, as well as very special thanks to the group of intrepid volunteers who did the shopping and wrapping of the Plan B gifts.

Finally, thank you so much to all FirstMet gift donors for your caring and faith that the Angel Gift Program can flourish even in the midst of a pandemic! You have helped to bring some of the warmth and love of this season to many members of the Our Place Family.

Some photos are included to show how things looked at the end of the process.

Blessings to all,

Penny Bond
Our Place Angel Gifts Coordinator,
FirstMet Angel Gifts Coordinator

Plan B gifts in quarantine at Our Place Therapeutic Recovery Community site in View Royal:



Plan A gifts after final sorting at Broad View United Church:



All gifts, ready for distribution at Our Place:

