

More than 100 seniors share the love with inner-city charities

October 25, 2019

This year's Great Knitting Giveaway to benefit eight local charities



Some of the knitted items from the 2018 Great Knitting Giveaway for the Terra Centre

Warmth.

It's often in short supply for some of Edmonton's least fortunate in the winter months, but a group of seniors is helping to change that.

The Great Knitting Giveaway, now in its 12th year, features the creations of more than 100 seniors from [GEF Seniors Housing communities](#) who knit all year long to donate thousands of toques, scarves, mitts, socks and other knitted items to local charities.

This year's Great Knitting Giveaway also celebrates GEF Seniors Housing's 60th anniversary of operations.

“From 35 knitters in the early years to more than 120 today, the Great Knitting Giveaway has grown exponentially in the number of knitters, the items they make and the charities we can help. I love this event – it is really more for the knitters than it is for the charities. This is our opportunity to thank them for all the hard work they do all year. When you see what they’ve knit, and their happiness in giving, it’s so worthwhile.”

Terry Kellington, GEF Recreation Coordinator

“I want to donate. It’s so important to give back to my community. That’s what I think this program is all about. The love that people put into their work – I just about had tears in my eyes. It’s amazing. I’ve always been a crafter but ... now I’m consumed by the knitting end of things. My slogan is create and donate.”

Sandi Jackson, knitter and GEF Seniors Housing resident

Operation Friendship Seniors Society (OFSS) works with inner-city seniors, and the society has been receiving knitted items from the Giveaway for the past 12 years.

“A lot of our seniors are under-dressed, and not ready for the cold winter months ahead. Having our clothing basement at our drop-in centre full is important, so if someone needs gloves or toques or blankets, we are ready to help. When you give our seniors a knitted item, they know someone has spent time knitting the items and cares about them.”

Jimmy Morrison, Community Relations Supervisor, OFSS

“The GEF knitters provide an incredible source of comfort and home for families with sick children. The parents of these kids are so grateful for the people who took so much time and love to prepare these beautiful and warm keepsakes that are treasured for many, many years. We hope the knitters know their generosity has a tremendous impact on families.”

Suzanne Pescod, Director of Communications, RMHC Alberta.

The 2017 Great Knitting Giveaway [is featured on the GEF Seniors Housing website.](#)

About GEF

GEF Seniors Housing is a not-for-profit, registered charity and the largest provider of subsidized seniors’ housing in Alberta. GEF Seniors Housing is friendly, affordable and secure, and the organization operates and manages 31 apartment buildings, 11 lodges and two duplex communities in Edmonton. Close to 3,600 seniors call a GEF community home.

Media inquiries

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Quick facts

- Each year, the Giveaway benefits several local charities.
- Charities this year include:
 - Crystal Kids Youth Centre
 - Edmonton Emergency Relief Services Society
 - Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers
 - Mustard Seed
 - Operation Friendship Seniors Society
 - Ronald McDonald House Charities Alberta
 - SNUG
 - Terra Centre
- The Giveaway started in 2007, with about 35 knitters at Montgomery Place, a GEF Seniors Housing community.
- This year's Giveaway features the work of 131 different knitters from 21 different GEF communities.
- More than 7,000 hand-knitted items have been created over the past year and are being given out today.
- Knitted items this year include toques, scarves, mitts, socks, blankets and squares.
- Generous Edmontonians have donated thousands of skeins of yarn over the past year. GEF knitters will use this yarn to create next year's knitted items.

About the participating charities

[Crystal Kids Youth Centre](#)

A community-based provider of free programs, including intervention and prevention services, working with some of the most disadvantaged children and youth in Edmonton's inner city. In operation for close to 27 years, Crystal Kids helps protect kids from hunger, abuse and neglect, and divert them from criminal activity and addiction.

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[Edmonton Emergency Relief Services Society](#)

The Edmonton Emergency Relief Services Society (EERSS) serves the homeless, newcomers and seniors as well as survivors of fire and disaster by providing free basic needs like toiletries, pillows, blankets, clothing, furniture and small appliances. EERSS also operates an ultra-low-cost thrift store geared toward low-income individuals and families.

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[Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers](#)

The Centre (EMCN) has been supporting newcomers to Edmonton since 1981, and each year serves more than 17,000 people from around the world. With five locations in the city and a 6th coming to the downtown area this fall, EMCN offers employment, settlement, language and community supports. EMCN supports all newcomers to Edmonton, offering welcoming spaces to learn and connect with people, services and resources they need to integrate and thrive in the community.

Suzanne Gross | sgross@emcn.ab.ca | 780-423-9682 | 780-700-4667

[Mustard Seed](#)

For more than 35 years, the Mustard Seed has offered a safe and supportive place for those experiencing poverty and homelessness. The Mustard Seed supports the whole person through delivering basic services, housing, wellness services, as well as employment programs, and partners with the community to address the root causes of poverty.

Amy Schuring | AmyS@theseed.ca | 780-442-3567 | 780-999-6878

[Operation Friendship Seniors Society](#)

Celebrating 50 years of serving Edmonton's inner-city seniors since 1969, Operation Friendship offers services to improve the quality of life for seniors in need who are over 55 years of age. The Society also offers support to low-income seniors who need safe and affordable housing options and follow-up support.

Jimmy Morrison | jimmym@ofss.org | 780-408-2958

[Ronald McDonald House Charities Alberta](#)

Ronald McDonald House Charities® Alberta (RMHC Alberta) provides a home-away-from-home for families with children receiving vital medical treatment in [Calgary](#), [Edmonton](#), and [Red Deer](#). Their warm, compassionate, and affordable accommodations help ease the heavy financial and emotional burdens placed on the hundreds of families who come through their doors each year. In 2018 alone, RMHC Alberta welcomed 1,220 families from 198 different communities across Alberta. With the help of supporters and donors in our community, RMHC Alberta are able to help families when they are experiencing one of life's most difficult times and offer them one of the most important gifts of all – the gift of togetherness.

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[SNUG](#)

SNUG works from a harm reduction approach to assist women, men and transgendered people to get out of the sex trade. SNUG workers approach all individuals with a non-judgmental attitude to build trust, rapport, and relationships. SNUG workers understand that all individuals are at different points in their journey and work with each individual on a one-on-one basis to identify and meet their goals. SNUG offers ongoing support, food, clothing, basic needs assistance, informal counseling, advocacy, addictions guidance, safety planning and community referrals to some of Edmonton's most vulnerable citizens.

Kari Thomason | 780-264-8437

[Terra Centre](#)

Terra is a non-profit organization helping pregnant and parenting teens develop the self-reliance and skills to be successful parents. Terra started in 1971 as a small group of young moms who wanted more for themselves and their children, including completing their high school education. Today, Terra provides support, services and necessities to 1,000 moms, dads and children in the Edmonton area each year.

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