

OPERATION ELVES COMMUNITY

Giving to Those in Need



Spotlight - 2022 Delivery to Farmington Maine

It's hard to believe that we delivered all our gifts two months ago... boy, time goes by fast! As we adventured out (and it was an adventure), we overcome a little bit of illness, the challenge of finding a hotel in leaf-peeping season, and a little bit of cold weather!

It was a wonderful experience in so many ways. At our first stop, we unloaded our trailer and put all our goodies in Elk's storage conditioners - it was amazing to see how much we had. Special thanks to Aaron, Bonnie, and John for helping us unload the trailer (see pictures on page 2). It was exciting to know that we were going to help not only children but had some goodies for the elderly too! Much like the children, many don't have family or the financial resources to take care of the basics. So we provided 39 blankets for this group. We will get an update from Aaron and Anissa on how the 2022 Operation Santa giving turned out in our February issue. Good luck to the hard-working "elves" that create an exciting Christmas for the children - we are grateful for your hard work and dedication!

Next, we went over to see Danielle F, at WMCA (Western Maine Community Action). At this organization, they help those in need with fuel assistance, WIC, and other emergency help. We were able to drop off a couple of boxes of diapers that they desperately needed. (Thanks Caroline for the donation).

Next, we went over to the next town of Wilton to say "hi" to the 2nd graders at Blue Hill Academy. We help to support them through an initiative called "Diggity Dog Bookclub" which provides monthly books to each 2nd-grade student throughout the year. On this trip, we delivered coloring books and crayons and got to see 45 excited, friendly, wonderful children. Thank goodness they have dedicated, wonderful teachers to support them.

After leaving the Farmington area, we spend the rest of the trip checking in on family and friends, enjoying the fall colors, and getting apples to bring home.

A special thanks to Darryl B - who let us borrow his trailer so we could get all the goodies to Maine. And to Sheri S - who behind the scenes is the creator and graphic designer that helps me get customized hats and other special items for our community. Thank you both!

Volume 11 - December 2022

Updates for this issue

2022 Operation Santa gift goals

Blankets - 240 (106% to goal)
Hat Sets - 180 (133% to goal)
Books - 160 (124% to goal)

2022 current gift count

Blankets - 255
Hat Sets - 240
Books: 199

Special Thanks

A big shout-out to individuals who have contributed to this year's goal in the past two months! A special thank you to:

- Ted D
- Beverly
- Darryl B
- Sheri S
- Caroline S

How Can You Get Involved

You can reach me (melissa stack) at:

- jusmel@comcast.net
- www.operationelvescommunity.org
- [venmo:@melissa-stack-3](https://venmo.com/melissa-stack-3)
- 615-631-4920

Let me know if you would like to add anyone to our newsletter distribution. Go out to our website to see more pictures and back issues of the newsletter.

The next issue will be in February 2023.



BEST WISHES FOR A WONDERFUL HOLIDAY SEASON

As we close out 2022 and begin to think about 2023, I want to take a moment to thank all of you for your contributions and support this year. We exceeded our goals and are truly making an impact for those who are in need... Without you, there wouldn't have had a trailer full of gifts!

The holidays remind us to be caring and kind. May we carry that into 2023 and be a voice for good. As you celebrate the joys of the season, here are some words of wisdom to carry you through the season and into 2023.

This season.....

Mend a quarrel, Seek out a forgotten friend. Dismiss suspicion, and replace it with trust. Write a love letter. Share some treasure. Give a soft answer. Encourage youth. Manifest your loyalty in word and deed. Keep a promise. Find the Time. Forego a grudge. Forgive an enemy. Listen. Apologize if you were wrong. Try to understand. Flout envy. Think first of someone else. Appreciate. Be kind. Gentle. Laugh a little. Laugh a little more. Deserve confidence. Take up arms against malice. Decri complacency. Express your gratitude. Say a prayer. Welcome a stranger. Gladden the heart of a child. Take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of the earth. Speak your love. Speak it again. Speak it still once more.

Happy Holidays to you all!



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2022 Operation Santa Wrap Up

Last week, I was able to connect with Anissa and Aaron Allumbaugh, from the Elks, to see how the 2022 Operation Santa distribution went. This is the 3rd year that the Elks have been responsible for this important Christmas initiative and with every year, they learn more and it gets a little smoother and a lot more efficient.

Beginning two weeks before Thanksgiving up and up until December 18, twelve Elve (Elk) volunteers put together and distributed Christmas packages to 831 individuals who had put in an application expressing the need for help at Christmas. That total represents 757 children and 74 seniors in the communities in and near Farmington Maine.

Given what has been happening with gas prices and inflation, the Elks saw an increase in requests for the necessities: coats, boots, hats, and gloves. So our focus on blankets and hats sets was essential to this year's packages.

Another way to look at what was distributed to those during Christmas is the Elks system of tracking both monetary and what they call "product" (actual items donated). This year, they distributed \$64,000 in items, another \$11,000 from the money they raised during the year, and another \$6,500 from the National Elks Foundation. In total that represents, over \$80,000 to fund this year's distribution efforts.

My conversation with Aaron and Anissa reinforced the importance of the gifts we send up for distribution. Blankets and hat sets help to keep children and seniors warm inside and out and the books for kids is both a gift and an investment in learning.

As I ended my call with Aaron and Anissa, I asked them if there was any message they wanted me to send back to you, the Operation Elves. And they simply said in their usual modest and heartfelt way: "Please tell everyone that we want to say thank you for your help... without your efforts there would be so much less to give. Also, we can never have enough blankets"

As we close out 2022, I hope you feel proud that you made a difference in the lives of so many. And I truly thank everyone for your interest in the organization, sharing the message with others, and giving in whatever way you can: For some, it is the creating, for others, it is your shopping prowess and for others, it is your monetary contribution that helps us buy a few extras for those in need. And let me add my "thank you" as well!

Like all organizations, we start again for 2023! I hope you will join us and make 2023 even more amazing!

Volume 12 - February 2023

Updates for this issue

2023 Operation Santa gift goals

Blankets - 265 (26% to goal)

Hat Sets - 200 (32% to goal)

Books - 175 (32% to goal)

2023 current gift count

Blankets - 69

Hat Sets - 63

Books: 55

Special Thanks

A big shout-out to individuals who have contributed to this year's goal in the past two months! A special thank you to:

- Ted D
- Beverly N
- Jenny W & HRBPs
- Jean Stack

How Can You Get Involved

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SPOTLIGHT - LISA LEDOUX

When I first started telling others about my goal to help Operation Santa, Lisa was one of the first people to start donating to the cause. While Lisa won't admit to any "crafty" talents, she is a legendary bargain shopper (with really good taste). So before I knew it, I was getting boxes and boxes from QVC that had beautiful and fun blankets in them. In a worthy cause, help comes in so many ways.... and being a good blanket shopper is a skill we need. I am so grateful that Lisa so willingly and generously started giving and has been a continuous donation since. I thought you might like to know a little more about this special elf. Here are her words to a couple of questions I asked.

Tell me a little about you. I know you are from Massachusetts. How long did you live there and where else have you lived.

I am originally from Massachusetts. I moved to Atlanta around the time of the Olympics and lived there for 19 years. I then moved to Ohio where I met my fiancé. I've since lived in Nashville and now reside in Norfolk, Virginia. I plan to retire here.

You were about the fifth person who jumped right in and sent blankets as we started to reach out past my mother and me. What appealed to you? What made you want to help?

I learned about your efforts through a co-worker, and I thought the best thing I could do to help women and their children was to provide a few warm and fun things. Being originally from the Northeast, I liked the idea of helping folks from my home region. Also, I really respect that, despite how busy you are, you take on this amazing cause with professionalism and inclusivity. Helping support a colleague who is trying to help other women is the least I can do.

I know you are a QVC zealot and you pick out the cutest blankets. How did you decide on a blanket?

I started by only buying Peanuts-themed blankets. I figured that getting a blanket may not be as fun as getting toys, but I know that these blankets are warm and the themes are fun. The Peanuts brought me a lot of joy as a child, and I have many Snoopy-themed artworks in my house by the artist Tom Everhart. I hope it makes the owners smile when they use the blankets. I do love these blankets. One year I gave seven of these blankets to family and friends for the holidays. It's a way I like to express love and warmth.

QVC makes it so easy to give to your charity. I put your name and address in my QVC address book and whenever I see a warm, beautiful blanket, especially when it's on sale, I ship them off. That's why you may get blankets from me in the summer. The more deals I can score, the more stuff I can give. It's kind of like a game where the families benefit.

What causes specially speak to your heart and why.

I sponsor a child in Sri Lanka, and I wanted to make sure it was a girl. I think when we help girls get a good education, the world is a better place. I also donate time and money to causes that address food insecurity. My mother is an immigrant, and she is always amazed at how a wealthy country can have hungry people in it. It's a message I heard all my life, and it's a way I can help.

Lisa LeDoux



"I get more joy out of being an elf than what you possibly can give away"