

# OPERATION ELVES

*Giving to Children in Need*

Volume 1 - April 2021



## 2021 CAMPAIGN

First, I want to thank everyone who helped make last year's donations possible. Through your generosity of cash, handmade or bought items, we were able to give: **121 blankets, 108 hat sets** and **40 young adult books**. 2020 Operation Santa Claus served over 259 families which represented 659 children in the Greater Franklin County of Maine. Without the generosity of individuals like yourselves, there are many children that would have nothing to open or celebrate on Christmas.

Now we are focused on the impact and ways, we can make a difference for children in 2021. The three items we collected last year are still in high demand so they are our initial focus. I know with all the generous and fortunate friends I have and then their friends, we can do more. So if you would like to be a part of the 2021 Campaign, we would love to have you!



## UPDATES FOR THIS ISSUE

## 2021 GIFT GOALS

Blankets - 175

Hat Sets - 125

Young Adult Books - 100

## 2021 CURRENT GIFT COUNT

Blankets - 82

Hat Sets - 27

Young Adult Books: 10

## HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED

You can reach me (melissa stack) at:

- melissa.operationelves@gmail.com
- jusmel@comcast.net
- venmo:@melissa-stack-3
- 615-631-4920

to learn how you can help make a difference for a child this Christmas!

- let me know if you want me to add someone to the the distro list for future newsletter updates

## SPECIAL THANKS

Here we would like to get a big shout out to individuals who have already contributed to this year's goal! Special thank you to:

- Shannon R.
- Beverly N.
- Lisa L.
- Jean S.





## A LITTLE ABOUT WHO YOU ARE HELPING

I first learned of this area of Maine when I my niece started her teaching career and was a 2nd grade teacher at Blue Hill Academy. As we talked, what continue to strike me was Katherine's comments about the financial circumstances of many of her students.

The Franklin County area is about 2 hours North of Augusta Maine where the median income is approximately \$45,541. Given its location, the average temperature in the winter is 15 degrees and the average cost to heat a home is between \$2,000 - \$3,000 annually. So families struggling financially have to juggle utility costs, food then try to figure out how they might give their children Christmas gifts.

Given the recent pandemic, we are all aware that there are individuals who are struggling to make ends meet. For folks that were struggling before, it only gets harder.

But I truly believe, we can make a difference and I am extremely grateful to know so many generous and helpful people. Reach out to me if you want to learn more about how you can be a part of this great cause!

“

**The blankets, hats and mitten sets were a huge hit. The kids loved them both and the parents were grateful for them.**

*Anissa - Co-chair of  
Operation Santa Claus*





# OPERATION ELVES

*Giving to Children in Need*

Volume 2 - June 2021



## SPOTLIGHT DANIELLE FLANNERY & WMCA

I met Danielle last year when we made our first in-person delivery for Operation Santa. I was instantly struck by her kindness and giving spirit! She works "behind the scenes" at Western Maine Community Action (WMCA) and has been helping those in financial need for the last fifteen years. I wanted to do a spotlight so we could learn more about the individuals that this great organization helps and to give you more insight into the families we are helping with our **Operation Elves** donations.

When I interviewed Danielle, I was surprised and humbled to learn more about what Danielle describes as the "working poor" which is the big part of the community that WMCA supports. A typical "client family" will be a family of 4 (one adult and 3 children) who is trying to make it work on a \$12-hour job. They struggle to provide their families with food, heat, and shelter. Danielle's organization provides a number of programs that help families get heating fuel; however, they can't provide all the money that is required to provide adequate fuel throughout the cold northern winters. What this means, in reality, is these families are either setting their thermostat at 58-degrees all winter or going without some type of fuel for the equivalent of three months. And remember that the heating season up North starts in early November and lasts until the end of April.

Franklin County Maine is a rural community with jobs being up to an hour away for these working families. So the assistance that WMCA provides in terms of fuel, food, and rent assistance is critical to this community. Much of the money that WMCA uses comes through federal Government support. There are few individual donations to support the over 600 families and over 260 seniors they serve. With families struggling to just to get the basics, it was volunteerism and individual donations that helped to start the Operation Santa program.

At Christmas, these families just don't have anything extra to help make Christmas special or to get "presents" for their kids. So WMCA saw a need and wanted to keep the spirit of Christmas alive for these children and began Operation Santa in the 1960's and it continues today.

### UPDATES FOR THIS ISSUE

### 2021 GIFT GOALS

Blankets - 175  
Hat Sets - 125  
Young Adult Books - 100

### 2021 CURRENT GIFT COUNT

Blankets - 118  
Hat Sets - 84  
Young Adult Books: 33

### HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED

You can reach me (melissa stack) at:

- [melissa.operationelves@gmail.com](mailto:melissa.operationelves@gmail.com)
- [jusmel@comcast.net](mailto:jusmel@comcast.net)
- venmo:@melissa-stack-3
- 615-631-4920

To learn how you can help make a difference for a child this Christmas!

Let me know if you would like to add anyone to our newsletter distribution. Next issue will be in **August**.

### SPECIAL THANKS

Here we would like to get a big shout-out to individuals who have already contributed to this year's goal in the past two months! Special thank you to:

- Beverly N.
- Jean S.
- Ann Marie & Sam B.
- Dave & Sandy S.
- Donna D.
- Ted D.
- Linda E.





## DONATION UPDATE

In my interview with Danielle, I updated her on where we were for donations and asked if there was anything we could add to our list that would really help out. Her answer was two-fold. First, she wanted everyone to know that what we are doing does make a big, big difference to not only the children but also the parents. She continuously gets "thank yous" from grateful parents who want to be able to make Christmas special for their children. So she extends her "thanks" to each of you who are helping through your donations of money or needed items. The second answer was around young adults. While many people focus on items for small children, many forget the age group of 13+. And data from WMCA shows that a third of the individuals who need Operation Santa's help are in that age group. This group tends to like things like books, camping and fishing gear, headphones, and tablets. So any monetary donations we receive will be dedicated to buying these items.

I am so grateful for being surrounded by great and generous friends and family members. And I sincerely appreciate everyone's support in helping to make Christmas special for those less fortunate and in need of our caring!

“  
**"We have rooms of items  
 for small children and  
 only a shelf of items for  
 young adults".**

*Danielle - WMCA*





# OPERATION ELVES

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Volume 3 - August 2021



## SPOTLIGHT OPERATION ELF CONTRIBUTOR - LINDA ENGERT

We are able to help make Christmas special for children in need with your donations. For some, it is by giving money so we can purchase books and other items. For others, it is the donations you give us that you either purchase or make. This month, I would like to spotlight one of the **elves** among us who makes the most beautiful, colorful scarves and hats; her name is Linda Engert. I have been friends with Linda since our first Wine Weekend adventure many years ago. Last year, when I reached out to friends asking for help with my Operation Elves Project, Linda answered with a big “yes” making about 40 hats sets. And she is back at it this year, already completing about 13 sets (see picture above) and she is busy working on more.

When she talks about making scarves and hats, you will notice a big smile on her face. She gets excited about finding the yarn (at a bargain of course), making the scarves (keeps her hands busy and mind not) and the great feeling she gets from knowing she is helping someone in need. Linda lives in an area in NY that like Maine experiences cold winters and has a fair number of citizens who are struggling to make needs meet. As an occupational therapist, she wants to help others. She finds that working on the scarves is something she “loves to do” as it not only feels good to “give back”, it is therapeutic on a nightly basis and creates such positive feelings for her knowing that she is having an impact on someone else life.

Linda taught herself to crochet back when she was about 21 and has been creating blankets and other projects throughout the years since. Operation Elves instantly sparked interest for Linda and she said “yes” to helping right away. The colors and designs she picks out make the most beautiful hats and scarves that are bright, happy, attractive gifts that I am sure fly off the shelves as parents pick out gifts for their children. I am so grateful for all the generosity in terms of time, money, and talent that Linda so willingly gives so that we can make Christmas better and give a gift that helps to keeps kids warm during the winter!

## UPDATES FOR THIS ISSUE

### 2021 GIFT GOALS

Blankets - 175 (**90%** to goal)  
Hat Sets - 125 (**85%** to goal)  
Young Adult Books - 100 (**48%** to goal)

### 2021 CURRENT GIFT COUNT

Blankets - **157**  
Hat Sets - **106**  
Young Adult Books: **48**

## HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED

You can reach me (melissa stack) at:

- [melissa.operationelves@gmail.com](mailto:melissa.operationelves@gmail.com)
- [jusmel@comcast.net](mailto:jusmel@comcast.net)
- [venmo:@melissa-stack-3](https://venmo.com/melissa-stack-3)
- 615-631-4920

To learn how you can help make a difference for a child this Christmas!

Let me know if you would like to add anyone to our newsletter distribution. Next issue will be in **October**.

## SPECIAL THANKS

Here we would like to get a big shout-out to individuals who have already contributed to this year's goal in the past two months! Special thank you to:

- Lisa S
- Julie & Keith C.
- Linda E
- Beverly N
- Kristen @ Joanns Fabrics





**BILL &  
MEL ROAD  
TRIP 2021**

# DONATION UPDATE

I always think the summer goes by too fast so I apologize for starting to focus on the fall.....a fall *road trip* that is.....

Last year with the help of my engineering husband, we were able to make all the boxes fit in the car. For 2021, we have expanded and will need a U-Haul trailer too so that we can get all our goodies to Maine. Currently, we have over 20 boxes filled with blankets, hat sets, and books. And over the next two months, I am hoping we will be able to exceed our goals and make Christmas super special for families in Western Maine. We are planning to leave and head North the 1st of October, so if you are working on some projects or still want to make a donation, it would be very helpful to our organizing/packing if we could get all additional presents/donations by September 18th. If you are local to Tennessee and need me to pick anything up - just let me know. If you are mailing anything to me, if we could receive it by September 18th that would be awesome.

I am so excited by what we have been able to do so far and we still have two months left and thank you, thank you for your generosity and help... it is priceless!

“  
"I love doing this"  
Linda Engert





# OPERATION ELVES COMMUNITY

*Giving to Children in Need*



## SPOTLIGHT OPERATION ELF CONTRIBUTOR - BEVERLY NICKLIN

This month's Elf spotlight is **Beverly Nicklin** who also happens to be my mother.

I know my creative instincts come from my mother who learned from her mother. I started to sew by 4th grade as I had watched my mom make things as far back as I can remember. My mom made my sister's and my outfits for every special occasion when we are younger – sometimes staying up all night to finish a needed dress for Christmas or Easter. My grandmother was a seamstress and crocheted. Back in her day, my grandmother used to make doilies (I still have some) and taught my mother to crochet. And while my mother doesn't make doilies, she has been crocheting as long as she has been sewing. Like me, my mother needs to keep her hands busy and needs something to do as she watches TV so you can find her working on a baby blanket or kid's scarf or hat most days.

Three years ago, I wanted to help the community of Wilton, Maine after I learned from my niece that the community tended to struggle financially which would mean kids didn't get a lot for Christmas. As I cooked up this idea, my mom was the first one to say she would help. So in 2019, we managed to make 40ish blankets for kids and sent them in two boxes up to Maine. Then in 2020, not only did my mother (and my dad) help to buy the material for about 50 blankets; my mom made almost half the blankets we delivered last year. And this year, my mother has added "assembly line worker" to her list of helping skills. This past weekend, my mom helped to put cosmetic bags and "hat sets" together so they could be packed and ready to go.

I am so grateful for the help of so many people who are helping to touch the lives of others and making the holidays special for those who have little. And to achieve the goals we have in 2021, it truly takes the caring hearts of many individuals. Thank you, Mom, for helping to make Christmas special for many children by giving of your time, your financial contribution (thanks Dad), and your talents!

## VOLUME 4 - OCTOBER 2021

### UPDATES FOR THIS ISSUE

### 2021 GIFT GOALS

Blankets - 175 (**123%** to goal)  
Hat Sets - 125 (**131%** to goal)  
Young Adult Books - 121 (**121%** to goal)

### 2021 CURRENT GIFT COUNT

Blankets - **216**  
Hat Sets - **164**  
Young Adult Books: **121**

### HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED

You can reach me (melissa stack) at:

- melissa.operationelves@gmail.com
- jusmel@comcast.net
- venmo:@melissa-stack-3
- 615-631-4920

To learn how you can help make a difference for a child at Christmas!

Let me know if you would like to add anyone to our newsletter distribution. The next issue will be in **December**.

### SPECIAL THANKS

Here we would like to get a big shout-out to individuals who have contributed to this year's goal in the past two months! Special thank you to:

- Lisa L
- Beverly N
- Kathy G
- Mindy M
- Jerry J
- Jenny W
- Suzie M
- Regina T



# BILL & MEL ROAD TRIP 2021



## 2021 FINAL OPERATION ELVES GIFT COUNT

"All my bags are packed and I'm ready to go....."



I am sooo excited and thankful for having such generous and wonderful family and friends. Because of you and your generosity, we are able to make Christmas special for so many children in need. Here was what we will be delivering to the Farmington Elks (formally WMCA) this month:

- 216 Blankets
- 164 Hat sets (hat, scarf, gloves)
- 121 Young adult books
- 15 Stuffed animals (cats, dogs & owls)
- 6 purses with matching crunchies
- 2 Patriot's themed packages (baseball hat, winter hat, cinch bag & stickers)
- 10 fun sock sets
- 22 - cosmetic bags/body care sets

“

**"I like helping people."**

*Beverly Nicklin*

