Annual Report 2019

January 1st is always an appropriate time to look back on the year that has passed, but also a time to look forward to the year that is just beginning to unfold. For Lenny and the DreamMakers it is a time to reflect on the moments that brought us to where we are today, looking at 2019, our best year ever.

One of the first moments of the year brought us to the Gifts in Kind Program through United Way. We are now a United Way Agency which gives us access to their donation “shopping” once a month as well as allows us to advertise what we do on the 2-1-1 helpline and post our volunteer needs on the United Way Website. In addition, we received free tickets to community events throughout the year. We estimate that the value of the items we have received are upwards of $500 while our fee to join is only $50.

Another moment that came early in this best year ever was the beginning of our Welcome Box program. Working with case managers from Catholic Community Services (CCS) and Tacoma Rescue Mission (TRM), we asked them to supply us with requests from people who are newly housed after having been homeless. It is a way to help stabilize their situation so that they are more likely to succeed in the transition to being permanently housed. Amazingly, we have filled requests for 55 households throughout the year. At an average value of $300 per family, this comes to a total of $16,500 worth of goods, many of which are donated so that our actual cost of goods supplied is much less at just over $3000. For the year.

New this year was also the building of a second storage shed which has alleviated a lot of stress in terms of battling with where to put all the donations, caper items, garage sale storage and Value Village FunDrive items. It was built with all volunteer labor and currently holds all the items for the next Fundrive with Value Village and some extras for the Welcome Boxes. As we get closer to the Garage Sale, it will serve as the holding area for those items as well. We held a highly successful fundraiser on our facebook page which brought in over $500 to help complete the shed. In addition, Home Depot, McLendon’s, and Bartells donated to the cause.

The Garage Sale had its best year ever with a mountain of stuff to be sold and a winning total of over $3000. We changed the date this year to the first weekend in June instead of May. This coincided with the Duck Daze celebration that the City of University Place puts on which seemed to increase the number of people who were mobile and increased our sales. We counted over 400 people who shopped with us. We also used a credit card reader for the first time to allow folks to make credit card buys which further increased sales.

Several of our other regular projects also experienced their best year ever. The school supply drive brought in over $305 and many more item donations than ever before. We were able to give the Family Housing Network through CCS more than 80 backpacks filled with all kinds of school supplies. Another project is our Hat and Glove Drive for Sheridan School in East Tacoma. This year we gave them 200 pairs of gloves, 155 hats and about 25 sweatshirts in November. This came from $275 in cash donations and lots of donated goods.

We took part in Project Homeless Connect for the first time and were able to distribute 50 bundles of three bus passes each. That is a face value of $750 but thanks to our partnership with Pierce Transit only cost us $375. We also picked up the possibility of 2 new volunteers.

Our Board of Directors expanded by three new members this year bringing the total of active members to 12 our largest board ever! We welcome them to our group and find they have been a real asset to the group with their participation in much more than board meetings.

We sponsored two families for the holidays and while all the gifts were donated by group members, about 10 volunteers worked tirelessly one day for eight hours wrapping all the gifts. The families are a part of the Family Housing Network at CCS.

We have also had great moments of being the recipient of several wonderful gifts this year. Beyond our regular generous donations from individuals, we received unsolicited gifts from the Cheney Foundation for $1500, another from the Royal Neighbors for $200, and a $500 donation from the South Sound Seattle Seahawkers. It makes it fun to open the mail!

Looking back on the year in terms of monetary and volume milestones, these are the ways we made it the best year ever:

* New storage shed completed with donated labor and money.
* Total online donations were up over $1000 to beat last year’s record of $700.
* Four Capers saw us interacting with over 275 people which is more than last year’s 250.
* The Garage Sale brought in over $3000 which is almost 3 times as much as last year.
* School Supply drive supplied more than 80 backpacks full of paper, pens and other needed items as compared to 50 in 2018.
* Hat and glove drive warmed the fingers and heads of 200 kids increasing from last year’s 183.
* Over 350 pillowcases were made and given out at Capers and through the Emergency Foster Care Program which is up from 300 in 2018.
* For each caper, we make about 50 blankets bringing the total for the year to about 200.
* Distributed 400 greeting cards to the Chi Franciscan Hospice up from 300 last year
* 2257 volunteer hours (provided by 31 people) were on the books, up from 1785 last year.
* Purchased $1775 worth of all-day bus passes which translates to 710 rides, and $480 worth of $8 gas cards.
* FunDrives with Value Village have brought in $856.87 this year as compared to $545.00 last year.

As I sit in my warm house writing this report, I am reminded that winter is the time for comfort, for food and warmth, for the touch of a caring hand. It is the time for home. One of the things we will continue to work toward in 2020 is homes for all who need and deserve that comfort.

Next year when I am drafting the annual report for 2020, I hope to be saying it was the best year ever, not only financially but also in our resolve to work with our community to increase awareness of and help for the people who are experiencing homelessness. As we reach out in new ways to meet the needs of our community, we can also change a few minds with kindness, willingness and integrity.