

SOS Community Impact

Fall 2022

Looking back with a spirit of appreciation

Autumn is a time to reflect, to reminisce and appreciate the spectacular colours of fall before they disappear. This fall is especially poignant for us at the SOS as we look back with a spirit of appreciation on what we have been able to achieve with your help. We restarted programs and introduced new initiatives to serve our community. Here are a few examples.

Our Seniors Connecting Program was revived after being on hold for two years due to the pandemic. We had our first ever Teen Shopping Event at the Thrift

Shop in September complete with a DJ and prizes, and we had our first Learning Series Seminar in October on Legacy Giving.

The Learning Series is a gift to the community in appreciation for all the support we have received. Seminars planned for next year include mental health and resilience, healthy recreation opportunities for children and youth, and another Legacy Giving.

We also have a workshop on Thrift Shopping in the works, as well as themed social events for adults.

Although it has been a difficult time for many, we are looking ahead



with optimism and continuing our focus on meeting needs, improving quality of life and strengthening our community. It is an exciting time to be part of SOS, and we appreciate that so many of you, with your continued support, have made this journey with us this year.

— Jennifer Mullett, SOS Board Chair

Forging a lasting bond in Seniors Connecting

SOS Seniors Connecting has been an important part of many local seniors' social lives. When the program first started at Qualicum Commons in 2017, Mary Steele and Pat Knight became good friends. "We met in a car on our way to Seniors Connecting," says Pat. They grew closer as they both used the same transportation provided by the program. "We'd go together, sit together and naturally got to know each other," says Mary. It turns out, they both grew up in England and moved to Canada in the 1960s.

Both Mary and Pat are visually impaired, but with Pat needing her walker and Mary hav-

ing slightly more sight, they are able to move around as a team.

When Seniors Connecting was put on hold in 2020 due to the pandemic, seniors eagerly awaited its return. For Pat and Mary, it was important that they continue to stay in touch. And so every Tuesday, they looked forward to a phone call.

"We couldn't see one another, so the only way we could stay in contact and check in on each other was by phone," says Mary.

Two years later, they still phone each other every Tuesday and Friday. And now, they also get to visit in person.

"As soon as they relaunched Se-



Mary Steele and Pat Knight.

niors Connecting this year in Qualicum, we were excited!" says Mary. Every Tuesday at 11 am, Mary and Pat board the SOS bus, support one another through the hallways of Qualicum Commons, and make their way to their favourite program.

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Expanding support for local youth

SOS has been providing programs for youth since 2004, and providing affordable clothing and housewares for them at SOS Thrift Shop since 1969. This year the two were combined to offer a Teen Shopping Event to help reduce the stigma attached to shopping secondhand, promote sustainable shopping, and provide a safe space for young people to meet friends, enjoy music and get extra special deals.

"We were really pleased with the turnout and the overall positive vibe of the event," said SOS Child, Youth & Family Programs Manager, Alice Tulia. "This was a great way to help local youth get items they need, while providing a safe and fun space for them to enjoy themselves."

The Teen Shopping Event featured a performance by a local singer, a DJ, scavenger hunt and selfie station.

The event coincided with the SOS Thrift Shop's 19th anniversary at its current location. Thanks to the success of the event, SOS is planning to host Teen Shopping Events twice a year, the next



Top, local singer Amber Davie, bottom left, youth at the event, right, staff at the event.

one taking place May 3, 2023, during BC Youth Week (May 1 - 7).

Other programs for youth include SOS GradWear, where local graduates can find a new or gently used graduation outfit for \$5 (donations are gratefully accepted year-round!). SOS also has a School Night Out Program

(Grades 7 - 8) and Youth Open Space (Grades 9 - 12), and we are in need of Volunteer Youth Mentors! SOS also offers Recreation Assistance for Children & Youth helping low income families register their children in sports and summer camps. Visit the SOS website for more information.

Loving volunteering at SOS Thrift Shop

In 2018, Tru moved to Qualicum Beach and was looking for something to do to support the community. She was interested in volunteering at the Thrift Shop and thought that it would be a friendly environment to get to know people. She started volunteering on the second floor sorting clothing, and then moved to being a cashier. When the pandemic struck and the lockdown took effect, the Thrift Shop closed for three months. Once SOS announced that it was reopen-

ing the Thrift Shop, Tru couldn't wait to get back to volunteering. As soon as volunteers were welcomed back, she leaped at the opportunity.

Tru says she felt safe and supported by SOS Thrift Shop Manager Paulette and the staff during the reopening of the store, and that feeling continues today. "I love it so much!" she exclaims.

Tru says she has had no negative experiences while volunteering, and has enjoyed getting to know the Wednesday morning regulars. Tru



SOS Thrift Shop Volunteer Tru Freeman.

encourages everyone to come and volunteer. "There's great staff and everyone is lovely here." SOS is in high need of volunteers at the Thrift Shop and in various other roles. To learn more, call 250-248-2093 ext. 230.

Big Breakfast event back at Tigh-Na-Mara

Fourteen years ago, Tigh-Na-Mara initiated their Toy Drive Breakfast benefitting the SOS Caring for Community at Christmas program.

"It was an amazing community event that our entire team could be a part of," said Tigh-Na-Mara General Manager Paul Drummond. "COVID took that away from us the past two years as we could not do a big event. We hope the community is ready to participate in a large event again, particularly one that supports such a worthwhile cause."

Tigh-Na-Mara also started Bikes for Tykes, where staff may donate money from their paycheques to the cause. Every Christmas, they purchase bikes at a discounted rate from Canadian Tire, and those bikes help stock the SOS Toy Shop, where local parents and grandparents shop for free.

"To me, this is something extremely special that our team members do on a totally voluntary basis, and I am so proud that so many of our team have signed on for this," said Paul.

There are two ways to support the Tigh-Na-Mara Toy Drive this year. From Nov. 14 to Nov. 25, Mon. - Fri.,



Top, SOS Executive Director Susanna Newton and Tigh-Na-Mara General Manager Paul Drummond. Bottom left, kids hold up toy donations from the Toy Drive event hosted before the pandemic. Right, event attendees fill their plates at the breakfast buffet in 2019.

bring a new, unwrapped toy, gift card or cash donation to Cedars Restaurant during breakfast hours, and receive a free Traditional Breakfast. On Nov. 30 from 6:30 am - 10 am, the Toy Drive Breakfast event will take place.

There will also be a drive-through donation drop-off from 7:30 am - 10 am.

"The goal is simple!" said Paul. "We want to help ensure that every child in our community has a special gift under the tree on Christmas morning."

SOS Thrift Shop drops off and picks up donations

SOS Thrift Shop has resumed large furniture and appliance pick-ups. "We are very happy to be able to support our residents with this service and it makes for great furniture shopping here at the Thrift Shop!" said SOS Thrift Shop Manager Paulette Harcourt.

Regular donations are accepted Monday - Saturday, 10 am - 2 pm at the back drop-off zone. SOS is fortunate to have many wonderful donations dropped off, which help to

fund programs and services, however staff can not always keep up with the volume. If donation drop-offs are closed, please consider bringing your items back another day, as staff works hard to process the overflow. You can call ahead to ensure donations are being accepted by calling the Thrift Shop at 250-248-2532.

SOS also works with the Parksville Bottle and Recycling Depot to ensure unsalable items are recycled and spared from the landfill.



Jason waves from the delivery/pick-up truck.

Join us in Caring for Community at Christmas

This has been a challenging year for residents of our community with the high cost of fuel, housing, groceries, and just about everything else it seems. Thankfully, most of us are getting by.

But for low-income residents who were already having to make tough household decisions, preparing for Christmas is even more stressful this year.

We know how difficult it can be for families as they look into bare cupboards during the holidays. The heartache of having to explain to children that there won't be a holiday meal this Christmas or gifts under the tree.

That's why the SOS Caring for Community at Christmas program has become such an important lifeline in our area. One that struggling residents know they can count on during times of hardship. Last year, SOS provided grocery store gift cards to 869 local adults and seniors, and provided gifts for 952 children and youth.

Your contribution to the SOS Caring for Community at Christmas program will enable us to purchase grocery gift cards and emergency food vouchers for local residents this year so they can have the dignity



of selecting their own special holiday foods that are meaningful to them.

Your donation of \$75 will provide a gift of groceries for one adult over the holidays. \$100 will help one adult and one child, and your contribution of \$150 will provide for two adults and two children.

To fill the grocery basket of residents in need this Christmas, please complete the donation form below and return to us as soon as you can. Thank you!

SOS CARING FOR COMMUNITY AT CHRISTMAS DONATION REPLY FORM

YES! I want to help struggling residents this Christmas. Here is my donation of:

☐ \$75 ☐ \$100
☐ \$150 ☐ \$_____



Name _____

Address _____

City/Town _____

Prov _____ Postal Code _____

Payment Options:

☐ Cheque (Please make cheque payable to Society of Organized Services.)

☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard

Card # _____

Expiry date ____ / ____ CVV code _____

Signature _____

Phone _____

Email _____

We value our donors' privacy and do not share our lists. Tax receipts are issued for donations of \$20 or more.



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