



INTERFAITH COALITION

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Holiday Joy

By Cheryl Stritzel McCarthy

Imagine for a moment that your holiday worries didn't involve too much to do, but where you and your kids were going to sleep tonight. If this were your reality, the problem of what-to-buy wouldn't even be a blip on your mental-worries screen.

But thanks to Interfaith Coalition's Holiday Joy program, 365 local people in need--children and adults--will not experience a holiday barren of gifts. In this program, started in 1998, coordinators Diane Becker and Michele Gordon volunteer to organize local businesses, families, and congregations to sponsor families in need. The recipients, who've come to believe they deserve very little, receive not only presents, but also the message that their community cares.

In addition, more than a hundred handmade Christmas stockings were donated by Ragfinery and Social Fabrics. These two downtown businesses had coordinated sewing parties where volunteers created stockings out of upcycled fabric.

SPIE, a Bellingham non-profit and long-time Holiday Joy sponsor, donated \$1,200 in gift cards, as well as hand-selected gifts from employees. Gift cards for gas, groceries, restaurants, movies, and haircuts go to those in need. *"SPIE staff look forward to shopping for our holiday families every year," said Sarah Wills, director of human resources. "It gives us joy to fulfill their needs and wishes. We love that we can provide oodles of gift cards for distribution through the rest of the year."*

Thanks to the 48 sponsors of Holiday Joy, 105 families are having holidays brightened by gifts they hadn't dare to dream of, and hope of better days to come.



The Army of Unsung Knitters

By Joe Nolting

Project Warm-up (PWU) may be the least noticed arm of Interfaith Coalition, yet it serves thousands of low-income families throughout Whatcom County. PWU's army of volunteer knitters works diligently year-round



churning out mountains of gorgeous hats and scarves.

Most of the knitters never witness the joy of a Latina mother fitting her children with brilliantly hued hats at Alderwood Food Pantry, or a Somali father smiling broadly as he selects a long, flowing scarf at Christ the King (CTK) satellite food bank, or of a laughing Ukrainian grandmother selecting hand-knit items for ten of her grandchildren at the Foothills Food Bank in Deming.

Or of the families and individuals—at Interfaith’s winter coat drives—picking out items created with such kindness and care that one can feel the love within the fabric.

Recently PWU’s coordinator, Ronalee Kincaid, recruited Jan, one of her volunteer knitters, to help distribute items at CTK’s food bank. As soon as Ronalee and Jan had arranged the scarves and hats on tables, dozens of families, waiting for the food bank to open, came forward. Excited voices filled the air as Ronalee and Jan helped each person—from very young to very old—find the right hat, the perfect scarf.

After 45 minutes, as business slowed, Jan announced to Ronalee, *“I’m sorry, but I must go home. We’re going to need more hats and scarves, and I need to get busy knitting.”*



“Interfaith is a very unique organization that brings together a broad range of community citizens to provide desperately needed services to the disadvantaged members of our community” Roland Trenouth

Within Interfaith Coalition, individual efforts coalesce into a mighty force for good. Interfaith is comprised of local people, funded by local people, and works to get local families out of poverty and into housing. Won’t you join us by making a tax-deductible contribution by Dec. 31, on interfaith-coalition.org?

Year-End Tax Tip:

Here's how you could deepen the impact and extend the effect of your generous donation.

Give a distribution from your retirement plan

One idea on how to fund your donation and save yourself taxes: consider using your assets in your 401(k), 403(b), IRA or other retirement plan to make your charitable gift to Interfaith Coalition. If you are aged 70½ or older and you have an IRA, you can make a tax-free direct charitable transfer to us from that IRA. Ask us for info! Please

even consider setting this up for next year with even \$25/month. The steady donations helps families in need all throughout the year!

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Monday – Thursday from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

We are often in the office past these hours and on Fridays, but please call 360-734-3983 to confirm.

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