



Closer *to* Home

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Uniting vulnerable children, youth & families

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Dear Friends of Closer To Home,

With the holidays and New Year's resolutions now behind us, February is a time of renewal and anticipation. In our part of the world, the days, although still cold, are noticeably longer and remind us that Spring is not far. This edition of Closer to Home's newsletter offers opportunities to experience both renewal and anticipation. Maybe you know someone who would like to become a better student, maybe you would like to become a better parent, maybe you would like to learn something new among friends and colleagues, maybe you will be inspired by the generosity of Calgarians like you. Whatever it is, we hope you will find information in this issue to help you reach your goals. And remember, this leap year, you have an extra day to work on it.



Canadian Pickers Give Back

Closer to Home was the beneficiary of an auction hosted by Sheldon Smith and Scott Cozens of "Canadian Pickers" television fame at the season premiere event on January 9.

A large crowd of antique and collectibles fans and friends gathered to watch the second season opener of Scott and Sheldon in their starring role of this TV series. An auction of "treasures" found along their travels garnered proceeds of \$2,500 that was immediately matched by Mr. Sam Switzer. Closer to Home received a total of \$4,500 from this event.

Our thanks go out to fans of the show and to the Canadian Pickers for including Closer to Home in this event as their charity of choice!



Cool Kids Care & Adopt-a-Family Calgary Academy shows they care

During the 2011 Christmas season, Closer to Home was fortunate to have been the recipient of an amazing act of altruism and caring by Calgary Academy (CA) students and staff, who "adopted" 120 individual children and 14 families in the Calgary area.

The elementary students enthusiastically spearheaded the "**Cool Kids Care**" program. Each student was matched with a child and given a bit of information about that child along with a list of the things that would make the child's Christmas special. The children matched with the CA elementary students were, for the most part, children who were unable to live with their own families and were spending Christmas with caring foster families or Teaching Parents. The generosity and caring displayed by the CA students was overwhelming, not only through the gifts, but also through the cards and pictures they included with their packages. These amazing students showed they could "change the world, one act of kindness at a time."

Calgary Academy Junior and Senior High students were equally as enthusiastic in their participation in the "**Adopt-a-Family**" initiative. These students held bake sales, bottle drives, smoothie sales, and offered pictures with Santa, all to raise money so their classrooms could shop for their specific "family". More than 14 large families were "adopted" by these students. Each and every family was overwhelmed

and moved by the incredible generosity of these students. Not only were their basic needs for food taken care of, there were many wonderful and personalized gifts for every member of each family. One family wished for a Christmas tree, and that was what they got! It included bulbs, balls, tinsel, decorations and, of course, a star for the top. Although the students could not participate in the delivery of the gifts, they know that through their generosity they contributed to a brighter and richer Christmas for these families.





The support of the Calgary Academy staff and teachers was instrumental in making magic happen for our families and children this Christmas. They championed the cause, supported their students in their various efforts, wrapped presents for hours on end, organized events and as a group held a “baby drive” to collect much-needed items such as baby formula, diapers, winter clothing, strollers, cribs and toys.

Together, the students and staff at Calgary Academy contributed to a warm and wonderful Christmas for many families and children, making a difference ‘one act of kindness at a time!’ Thank you.



Christmas 2011: A Huge Success

Thank you to everyone who participated

Christmas 2011 was truly a time of giving! Approximately 340 people were served by Closer to Home's Adopt-A-Family program, including 97 different families and 205 children. More than \$83,000 was raised to buy gifts and food hampers for families in need. The generosity of community donors allowed us to help fulfill the Christmas wish lists of the 20 young people in our Teaching Group Homes.

A special thank-you goes to the students and teachers of the Calgary Academy, who raised more than half of the funds and in-kind donations! This community-minded school provided food and gifts for many children and families at Christmas.

Several of the donors delivered the hampers and gifts to the families we serve and, as a result, formed new friendships and connections. Here are letters from both a donor and a recipient describing their experience with the program this year:

All I want for Christmas...

A story from a thankful family

“I want to thank you all for what you did for my family. Christmas was the best, everything was great and unforgettable. You put a smile on my kids' faces. When I saw the look on my son's face, there were no words to describe the way I felt and the way he looked at me. His smile was worth a million words.

At this time, I'm not working and trying to save for school in September to create a better future for my children, including my little brother. He is from Haiti; he had a tough life there. Because my father lost his documents and had financial difficulties, it took 12 years to bring my little brother to Canada. My little brother's mother died when he was young and he was left in the care of a relative. Unfortunately, he never got the chance to go to school; he stayed home all the time because the lady who took care of him treated him like a slave.

When I found out that he was finally living in Canada, I was excited to have the opportunity to finally meet him, and to have gifts to give him. He came here with nothing and when he saw all the gifts that were for him, he was as excited as if he won the lottery. Thank God he no longer lives in Haiti. He is very shy but he couldn't stop smiling.

My little daughter loves her gifts because mommy showed her each and every one of them and plays with her all the time. My husband said thank you for all of his gifts, and especially those for his daughter. He was very happy that you did this for

her. And thank you so much for the gift cards, I used them wisely. I love how all the gifts were already wrapped for all of us; every detail was recognized and greatly appreciated.

You made Christmas one of the best times of my life because there was no way I could afford all the things that we received, and you erased my Christmas worries. You made me so proud of being a Canadian woman. Thank God there are still many people left in the world like you. Keep doing what you do because Karma has a way of working. God bless all of you, never stop having good hearts because you changed our lives and made a miracle for my family. If I would win the lottery one day, I will be on your team.

Once again, thank you and we love you for everything that you have done for us. Writing this letter is my way to return the love. Best wishes to all of you!"

Here Comes Santa Claus...

A donor's experience

"I always thought Santa had a pretty good job. It seemed to me that I'd be jolly too if I spent my career spreading Christmas joy and delivering gifts to people throughout the world. Luckily, through my family's participation in Closer to Home's Adopt-a-Family program, I got a glimpse of what it might be like to have such a dream job.

2011 was my family's second year with the Adopt-a-Family program and we were very excited. We were matched to a family, then shopping commenced. When the gifts were ready for delivery, our adopted family invited us to their home.

Having the chance to actually meet our adopted family proved to be more special than I could have imagined. When you're assigned a family and given their wish list, you have very little idea about the people on that list. You know their names and ages and you get a glimpse of their personalities by reading their gift suggestions, but you don't always feel like you have a real sense of the people in the family.

Spending some time with our adopted family meant they became more than just names on a list. The mother was a sweet woman with a sense of humor. The baby was darling and my brother and I were thrilled to coax a smile from her. The son was a bit shy and the daughters were vibrant and lively and insisted on helping us as we unloaded our car.

When we were finished unloading and were saying goodbye, the mother wrapped her arms around me and asked me to thank my family for bringing Christmas to her house. In that moment, I realized an important lesson - even though I'll never have Santa's job, there are opportunities for each of us to carry on his tradition.

In the spirit of Santa, I would highly encourage people to involve themselves with this worthwhile project."

Thank you to everyone who participated in making Christmas 2011 such a special time for so many children and families in the community!



Online Resources At Your Fingertips

Are you looking for reliable online parenting resources? The following sites have information for parents and youth.

- For parental support and information about mental health: www.pcmh.ca; www.bckidsmentalhealth.org; www.offordcentre.com
- For research on children and families: www.cwlc.ca
- Research Briefs in Calgary: www.calgary.ca/_layouts/CoCIS/GSASearchresults.aspx?k=fcsc%20research%20briefs
- For things to do in Calgary: www.calgary.ca/_layouts/CoCIS/GSASearchResults.aspx?k=calendar&selectedDate={today}&searchType=calendar
- For up-to-date quality research, see Chapel Hill University of North Carolina behavioral research magazine: endeavors.unc.edu/



Donor Appreciation

Closer to home would like to recognize our supporters from the last quarter

- 360178 Alberta Ltd
- About Staffing Ltd
- Andrew Mcquiston
- ATCO Pipelines EPIC Program
- ATCO Power Asset Optimization
- Bedrock Consulting Group
- Beth Williams & Family
- Bethany Calgary Facility Management Team
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- Closer to Home Staff
- Code Hunter LLP
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- Karen Olivier
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- Ken Bouwman
- Kevin & Melodie Houghton
- Kids Up Front Foundation
- Kiwanis Club of Northmount
- Ladies at Cornerstone Law Group
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- Lora & Terry Wyman
- Lucinda Pearce
- Mary Axworthy
- Michelle French
- Minoush Rafie
- Nicole Jordan
- Operation Christmas Child
- Pulse Seismic Inc
- Rangeland Engineering Ltd
- Rocky Mountain Soap Company
- Roxanne LeBlanc
- Ryan & Kate Andrews Hoult
- Sanjel Corporation
- Scarboro United Church
- Sharon Cowie
- Sheldon Psychology Group
- Stacey & Ryan Morasch
- Steeling Home Ltd
- Wei (Vivian) Dong
- Willow Park Preschool

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***For credit card donations, we will call you during business hours to verify information**

Do you wish to receive further correspondence from us such as our quarterly newsletter, donor recognition, or upcoming events? Yes No


Giving made simple.

Donor privacy information: Closer to Home Community Services respects the personal privacy of our donors. We do not sell or share our donor list with other organizations. We use your donor information to support the processing of your gift and for ongoing fundraising activities. As part of our recognition program, we will publish donor names in Closer to Home publications such as our annual report or quarterly newsletters. **If you prefer to remain anonymous, please contact our Fund Development Department at (403) 543-0550 ext 225.** If you do not wish to receive further correspondence from our agency, please check the box provided above.

Please send completed form to: Charitable Registration #: 89823 5759 RR0001
3507A - 17 Avenue SW, Calgary, AB T3E 0B6

Please visit our website at closertohome.com
To be removed from our mailing list, email funddevelopment@closertohome.com