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## **ASSUMPTION CARES**

### ***Year In Review - 2020***

When Assumption Cares was first launched September 8th, 2019, there was no way of knowing what would become of this incredible grassroots endeavour. Little did we know how many people we would be able to reach in just over a year's time, and the great struggle serving would be once the COVID-19 virus showed its face across the globe. Despite the difficulties of this year and those that are being foreshadowed as I type this, Assumption Cares and its volunteers still managed to make an impact in the west-end, and we are just getting started.

As we continue fulfilling the "Dicoesan call to be a missionary parish" - a parish that reaches out to the fringes of society - we are still finding people willing to join and serve, even in the most uncertain times. Assumption Cares, now in its second year, has seen a lot of turnover, yet a steady amount of new volunteers who have been willing to give of themselves. Health & safety has been our greatest priority, as well as trying to find ways to help the lonely and isolated of our community to continue connecting when possible. All while wearing a mask, we've been able to reach the people.

Although our weekly community meal has been put on hold until the pandemic has dissipated, we are still finding ways to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. We have served 300 guests (ave. 30 per month) with our **Feeding Pets Emergency Pet Food Bank** since its inception. The **St. Vincent de Paul Forgotten Harvest** has been able to serve around 300 plus people a week with free fresh produce. In September we adopted a children's clothing charity called **Cuddles Clothing for Kids** that was seeking a new location. Since their move in day in September, they have helped over 60 families find free children's clothing.

With the use of Zoom we have begun hosting multiple online programs for the public including; **Conversational English Circle** (restart), our **Foodies Cooking Club**, **Mental Health Mondays**, **Coffee with Friends**, a **Trivia Night**, an **Advance Care Planning** workshop, and many of our **Volunteer Training** sessions.

We currently have 35 dedicated volunteers that on a regular basis work to provide compassionate care to Windsor's west end. We have hosted four separate training's for incoming volunteers over 2020. We have an extensive training program for our volunteers which serves to move them toward becoming intentional disciples. There are even a few guests of Assumption Cares who have decided to become volunteers in order to give back in the way they were served when they first joined.

In addition to supporting the community in general, Assumption Cares has adopted some of the programs created by the **Windsor Essex Compassion Cares Community** to provide one-on-one support to those who are more lonely and isolated in our community. Two **Master of Social Work Students** joined the Assumption Cares team from September to December. Together with two other volunteers, they were

able to call and support 28 guests on a weekly basis, connecting them to services and finding ways of helping them get what they need. Including the guests we were calling, we delivered 71 Santa For A Senior presents to those who are living alone this Christmas season. We were also able to help one woman find transportation for an out-of-town surgery, and help a pregnant mother to navigate the government and health care systems in her third trimester.

The **Exercise for Chronic Pain** program has consistently had 3-8 members on a weekly basis even throughout the pandemic, and despite having to wear a mask. The participants have expressed that attending this program is helping to reduce their pain and motivating them to get more active. The fund the Pope Francis grant provided helped to add equipment to this program could improve the quality of this service.

Over the past year we have hosted 35 different programs, workshops, and services both at our building and online. All of which we are constantly evaluating to make sure that it is filling a need in our community. We have continued providing a monthly calendar that we always distribute to our guests, volunteers, and local partners in order for them to know what's happening at 711 McEwan on a regular basis. We have also launched our website so that our programs are more accessible to the public.

Looking ahead to 2021, some things we are looking forward to is our newest program **Homework Help!** This is a free tutoring program for students from K-12. Over the past two months we have worked hard to brainstorm the best ways to deliver this program, and have recruited over a dozen young people willing to give up their free time to volunteer for this new program. Another new program we just recently started is the **Crochet & Knit Club**. One of our older volunteers, who had been helping us from our earliest days, passed away in May and her husband donated all of her yarn to us.

We are finding more and more synchronicity between our programs all the time. The guests who started coming to our Crochet & Knit club have started knitting hats for Cuddles Clothing, and guests of Cuddles Clothing are becoming volunteers, who then in turn want to help give out food at Forgotten Harvest on Fridays, guests at Forgotten Harvest are coming to our Conversational English Circle, and then some show up with pet food donations the following week. We really are building a more compassionate community.

It has been a crazy year, but if we were able to do all that we did this year alongside a pandemic, imagine the potential of a time when the pandemic restrictions finally lift and we can serve at our fullest capacity! I am very much looking forward to that future.

Thank you to all who have supported Assumption Cares over this past year, for the opportunity to bring so much more support to those living in the west-end of Windsor. Assumption Cares would not exist without your generosity and compassion.

Sincerely,

Natalie Steiner  
Outreach Coordinator  
Assumption Cares  
Our Lady of the Assumption Parish

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