



## Volunteering 101

Hello! My name is Charmaine McMahon. I joined JC's Place Ministries in May, 2022 as a volunteer, little knowing that I would soon be deeply involved with the Ministry. Sometimes it is better not to know what you are getting into, but rather to just volunteer and jump in to help.

I'd like to give you a little special report on what happened on Sunday, November 13<sup>th</sup>. No, I am not superstitious but the weather was shaping up to be a foreboding day. In the early morning hours, there was a snowfall that did not accumulate on the warm grass but collected about 1 inch on the cars. The temperature hovered around 1°C and was not forecasted to reach much above 3 degrees. To compound things, the humidity was about 90% and the wind was blowing at a hefty 13 km/h out of the northwest. In case there are any southerners reading this, the weather was bone chilling and very damp, which makes for a very uncomfortable time outdoors unless you dress up for the weather with scarves and gloves and a warm coat. Maybe you would even need long johns, if you were not being active out of doors.

Early in the week, my husband and I always buy the food supplies needed for the preparation of about 70 lunches that we distribute on Sundays. Yes, if you do not know, I accepted the position of department head for food purchasing, and organizing and scheduling those who prepare the lunches for the unsheltered each week.

My memory does not always cooperate with me, so before I forget anything else today, I wanted you (Carl) to know that the younger lady at the motel unit we serve on the corner of Stanley Avenue told us her boyfriend is in the hospital with cancer. This happened in the last 3 days. She said he hadn't been eating for a little while before. She wanted to let you know.

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How do I begin to tell you all the events and happenings since we last met via this newsletter. Special requests always come in from those living in the bush: size 30 pants, size 9 shoes, and, by the way, my wallet and cell phone were stolen. What does one do when we know the pants are not on the truck's shelving (they have all been given out)?

On visiting another location, there was a girl who came out, crying, needing a hug, after which she tells me her boyfriend is in hospital with cancer. (See: Volunteer 101 for more details). Then another lady comes out with a downtrodden look, and after hearing her story, we prayed together; her son was murdered. We also found out at this location, another lady, whom we've known for quite some time, has disappeared again.

On a brighter note, two elderly couples brought coats, socks, and prayer to our home--a great encouragement. Later we stopped at the new warming center to meet with the administrators, and realized that 2 of the administrators I knew before. We set up a delivery time to drop off food with our small vehicle to help out.

On another morning Pam and I went out with a new container that holds about 32 cups of various beverages, a \$35.00 investment in equipment. Oh, the joy on those cold, happy, thankful faces who received a cup of hot chocolate on a cold morning.

A couple who were 8+ months pregnant requested warm clothes and gloves. Her due date was soon; we needed somehow to get them out of the bush and into shelter. We were able to have prayer together. Later they found a motel to stay in. It has been rewarding, helping people on the street. Others in the community are recognizing our van with the large logo, and have given us cash donations to help us help the homeless.

On the way home, we saw a car stuck in the bush by our house, so I thought I had better walk into the bush to see if anyone was there. There was a cold, shivering, confused girl inside, dressed all in black leather. She got out of the car and came to van. I gave her a coat, socks, sweat shirt, gloves and some food. I called a contact to help and she made arrangements on my phone to see if they could find a place for her to stay. Her car had run out of gas, so I went home and brought some gas so at least she could have some heat in her car as she waited for the help. Now we needed to get the car out of the muddy mess. By placing wood and stones under the tires of the front wheel drive, I was able to push the car out of the mud, with wheels spinning and mud flying everywhere. She rendered a thankful hug, and as I walked back to the van, I heard her say to someone on her cell phone, "a man from JC's Place church helped me out."

Well, it has been nice sharing with you, and as we come to the end of a dramatic 2022, please consider a gift for JC's Place Ministries. You all know what the price of gas and groceries are. Well, to make our Ministry even more financially vulnerable, the number of people we are serving weekly has doubled. Donations are very much appreciated at this time to help our unsheltered folk find some help in these trying times.

***Have a peaceful and joyous Christmas season. ~ ~ John***

# Volunteering 101

We had another gentleman at our large stop on Buchanan Street, who came out just to tell me how happy and grateful he was about the coat we'd given him the last time we were there. He happened to be a person I now know by name, which just topped it off. He said he feels so blessed that we take such good care of them and how much he loves his coat. It's calming to him, when he's having really bad days. It was so amazing; he told me that he received the coat on a day when he was having a really bad time of making the day make sense. He had so much to say today; it was sweet to hear him talk about the joy and peace he was enjoying.

To make our Blessings even better today, and to top things off, our friend at this same location, who is quite unstable on his feet, did not curse or swear at all today. Trevor (my better half) and I got the biggest hug from him, which kept our hearts warm and thankful for what we were able to provide.

At our first stop of the day, we found we had several extra people coming out to the mobile van. It is a sad fact that we are now seeing at least 4 children (age 7-13) at this location and the rooms are filling up. We will have to see that we are able to help some more in this location.

Even at our stop on Kitchener Street there were 3 more new folks who were grateful for the help they received. At the railway station there are additional people too. One wonders where they are all coming from, and what has made it necessary for these folks to be living in the bush, off the beaten track with very little to call their own. To make the situation even more desperate, they are all living in make-shift accommodations without security or police protection, running water or toilet facilities. It's a hard life to imagine and as the winter approaches with dropping temperatures and falling snow, wow, it is just unbelievable.

The gentleman who was burned out, in his temporary tarp shelter, has now acquired a new dog, a guard dog which kept us volunteers at bay for a bit of time until, he, the dog, was told to lay down and allow us into the area. Another gentleman just a short distance away lost everything last week. He had a fire going in his tented area while he was away and everything burnt to the ground again.

We had an interesting experience with a young lady who wanted and needed a warm pair of pants. I tried to convince Rosie to take a nice pair of warm pants but she didn't like the colour. I told her I liked the pants and I'd wear them; to which she replied, "It's because you are old." We had a hearty laugh before she clarified she meant older.

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We had a new volunteer working with us today. Anthony found that he was not properly dressed for the cold weather. Though he was very cold, he was quite the trooper. It was nice to have a teenager on the run.

Dear Supporter of JC's Place Ministries, did you know that PBJ (peanut butter and jam sandwich) is the favourite on a cold day? The PBJ's went really fast. "Everyone likes a PBJ in winter. It covers the ribs." was how one person explained it.

The soup, that great big 20-quart pot of soup that was made, was such a hit today again. The unsheltered living in the outdoors, were very cold, including the gentleman with the new guard dog.

We got a bit of a surprise today! About mid-run, our volunteers Jan & Gino met us to give us extra hats, gloves and socks. Volunteers who not only give of their time but also provide items of warmth. We do not, and probably will not, have enough coats, particularly men's, hoodies and men's pants to meet the needs this winter.

The Ministry is going through growing pains again as we struggle to not only find enough clothing to distribute, but also a space large enough for the volunteers to sort, and stack the items in a comfortable manner. We are presently looking for a portable office building.

As I wrap up my first epistle for the newsletter, let me state that it is quite the experience to be volunteering with JC's Place Ministries. As we endeavor to be a Blessing to those we serve, I can truly state that I have also received a special Blessing each time I meet and interact with these precious souls. God Bless Us, Everyone.

## **Are You a Potential Volunteer?**

How does JC's PM recruit its volunteers? At first, we had to ask and ask for people to volunteer on a regular basis. Now, the volunteer roster has grown and we have been having adequate help in preparing the lunches and enough drivers and assistants to man our two vehicles.

This weekend we were pleasantly surprised by a new volunteer. She told us she had asked her co-worker what he had done that weekend. He replied that he had helped to prepare lunches for the unsheltered with his mom. Our new volunteer thought about the situation for a minute, then said, "I would like to do that also." So we were able to welcome her to her first exposure to our kitchen staff, and she is looking forward to also helping with our vehicle staff. We continue to be thankful for our dedicated volunteers who show up week after week to "Lend a Helping Hand."

Let's begin with a review of our outing this weekend. Our first stop brought us a young person who was actually waiting for us to arrive on his motel room balcony. Aged 6, he was excited to see the van drive into the parking lot and immediately he wanted to go down and get a sandwich and bowl of soup. We surprised him with a colouring book and crayons that he could share with his 2-year old sister.

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The colouring book and crayons were supplied by Blooming Deals of Vineland (a thrift store) which, after hearing our story of needing boots, sweat shirts, blanket etc. went into their sorting area and came up with 6 bags of items for our distribution. As an important side note to this situation, as I was explaining our mission in the store, one of the customers came up to me and simply said, "I heard what you said and I wish to help. Please accept this \$50.00 donation."

It was at this stop that another of our new volunteers, who himself is a recovered drug addict and who had removed himself from the streets of Toronto, was able to help in assisting a young lady who had just been released from jail with only her prison clothes and some borrowed boots. Well, after a considerable amount of time and with help from our new volunteer, she was able to find a nice pair of boots that fit, socks to accompany the boots, shirts and pants, under garments, and other items as well as a sandwich and soup to top everything off.

This weekend the Niagara Region received an unexpected snowfall of 30 -50 cm of snow, and this caused all kinds of problems. Many on the street were wearing sneakers which were soaking wet and some, with the added pressure of wet socks, were splitting at the seams. JC's PM was blessed to have been able to give every pair of winter boots we had on the truck to the unsheltered. This will cause a problem next week as our store house is completely empty of winter boots. We were able to give out quite a few gloves, but only a few really made for the winter months. Most were woolen and could be used for warmth as long as they are kept dry, an impossible task in the type of weather experienced this weekend.

At our next stop, we enjoy meeting our 3 young boys who live with their mom in a one-room motel accommodation. They always come to the truck with smiles of happiness, and are eager to receive what we have been able to collect for them. 6 Nature Books were acquired this past week along with a Search-a-Word, a colouring book etc. We were able to supply this family with a set of 4 towels just acquired this week and snow suits, snow pants etc. just received this Sunday morning before the truck left for its route, and, oh yes, a one-piece pajama set. How do you have a family Christmas in a small motel room, no Christmas trees allowed (fire hazard)? I think a small table top unit would be appreciated. What to do for gifts for Christmas? Well, I think I have found a secret Santa who is planning to make Christmas more enjoyable for this family!

Our second to last stop was heart breaking . . . the weight of the fallen snow on the tent snapped the main support pole, and our volunteers found a lady wet and freezing cold. They brought her back to the passenger van where the heat was turned up to high and, with a warm bowl of soup, some feeling was returned to her arms and feet. When she came to the back of the cube van, I recognized her as one who had previously given food and other articles to the Ministry when she was living in a motel room. Now, out in the cold on the edge of an embankment covered with trees, the winter storm had devastated her accommodation. Again, one of our volunteers had come prepared, bringing a tent with her as we were loading our vehicles before we left on our route today. Talk about JIT (Just In Time)!

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**www.JCsPlace.org** is now working. Please like our page and share us with your friends. You are now able to donate online . . . Thank you!

How did our volunteer know that a tent would be needed today after a snowy Friday and Saturday, with snow coming down all weekend?

I would like to emphasize how cold one person can be. Her face was turning blue when she came to the passenger van to get warmed up. WOW!!! Guess what else we discovered as our new volunteer was helping her change her wet running shoes and sock? We were able to find a pair of winter boots for her and nice warm dry socks. The shocking event that took place before our eyes is that the socks she removed were so wet that they were frozen stiff in the minus 5-degree weather, minutes after she removed them. I think everyone knows that we lose our body heat in 3 main areas: 1. our heads, 2. our feet, 3. our abdominal area. If you want to stay alive, you need to protect these areas. We were also able to supply a new coat and neck warmer to help her to maintain some body heat. You want to see love in action? After she had warmed up, she immediately went back into the woods to send out some more people living further back, to share her news of good fortune. JC's PM was able to help a few more unsheltered folks. One of our prime missions is to help these folks who live back in the woods and in off the beaten track areas as much as we can. They are not as well sheltered as those in the motels.

Well, the stories could go on and on, but we like to bring to you the highlights of our trips. Some days we just have an ordinary run, and yet, on others, there is a special need that surfaces, and it is heartbreaking when the Ministry does not have all the resources it needs to supply the bare necessities of life. We pray that we will never have to report the loss of life in these rough and rugged circumstances.

In closing, JC's PM is in desperate need of a room, and shelving and tote bins, to sort and store clothing, blankets, shoes, boots etc. The small room we have been using is just not big enough (probably less than 80 sq. ft.). We are looking at the purchase of a mobile office trailer. This could cost us upwards of \$75,000.00 for a new one, or a used one for around \$25,000.00. It doesn't matter which number you look at right now, we do not have enough cash on hand for such a purchase. Please pray that this situation will find a solution, making it possible for JC's PM to continue serving the unsheltered on the streets and in temporary housing in the city of Niagara Falls.

### **Ways to Give:**

**1. Electronically . . . [Www.jcsPlace.org](http://www.jcsPlace.org)**

**2. Mail . . . JC's Place 2408 Smithville Road Smithville L0R 2A0**

**3. Phone . . . 905-975-6394 or 365-880-7229**



### **JC's Place Ministries**

a mobile ministry of the Niagara Falls Seventh-day Adventist Church

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