



**Annual Report 2023**

  
Hearts of Blue

# A message from our chair



**Joan Tandy**

**MANAGER, PHARMACEUTICAL  
PRODUCTS AND PRICING  
ADMINISTRATION**

Pharmacy and Clinical Drug Services  
Alberta Blue Cross

Dear Alberta Blue Cross® team members,

On behalf of the Hearts of Blue committee, I'm pleased to present the 2023 Hearts of Blue annual report.

We have wonderful team members throughout our organization who support Hearts of Blue, either through a payroll deduction or by volunteering. Your generosity has enabled us to support charitable organizations across Alberta as they help those in need.

In 2023, we welcomed new members to our committee and worked hard to find and support charities in need. We also expanded our scope to all of Alberta, which means some donations are completed with in-person drop-offs. It's a wonderful experience when our committee members are invited on facility tours while dropping off donations. They see firsthand the help and support these charities provide to communities. I've heard from those who dropped off donations that they are so pleased to see the gratitude and happiness that Hearts of Blue brings to these organizations.

The Hearts of Blue team assisted 45 charities in 2023. Many of these organizations are struggling to keep up with demand due to lack of funding or donations. Our contributions made a huge difference for them.

The continued support from Alberta Blue Cross team members made our dream a reality for these organizations. We need to keep the momentum going. Please consider supporting Hearts of Blue.

I've completed my term as committee chair and am passing the reins over to **Kristy Kozun** for 2024. Being the Hearts of Blue chair was an exciting, eye-opening and wonderful experience for me, and I thank all of you for your teamwork in making this time a success.

**Thank you for your continued support in 2024!**

# 2023 committee members

## **AMANDA CROOT**

Committee member  
With Hearts of Blue since 2018

## **ANITA QUACH**

Committee member  
With Hearts of Blue since 2022

## **ASHLEY BOLDUC**

Committee member  
With Hearts of Blue since 2008

## **BRIAN GEISLINGER**

Committee member and executive sponsor  
With Hearts of Blue since its creation in 1998

## **CAROLYN ARSENAULT**

Committee member  
With Hearts of Blue since 2021

## **GABRIELLA APARICIO**

Committee member and secretary  
With Hearts of Blue since 2016

## **HOLLY BLUM**

Committee member  
With Hearts of Blue since 2022

## **JOAN TANDY**

Committee member and chair  
With Hearts of Blue since 2018

## **KRISTY KOZUN**

Committee member and vice-chair  
With Hearts of Blue since 2017

## **LEANNE O'ROURKE**

Committee member  
With Hearts of Blue since 2023

## **MARIAM AOUDE**

Committee member  
With Hearts of Blue since 2022

## **MEGAN KRIENKE**

Committee member  
With Hearts of Blue since 2021

## **MIRELLA NARDI**

Committee member  
With Hearts of Blue since 2013

## **NATALEE MARCHAND**

Committee member  
With Hearts of Blue since 2023

## **NIRMAL SINGH**

Committee member  
With Hearts of Blue since 2006

## **TERESA SOKOLOWSKI**

Committee member and treasurer  
With Hearts of Blue since 2022



# About us

## Who we are

Hearts of Blue is an employee-run charity, meaning that we are operated and funded by Alberta Blue Cross employees. Funding is supplemented through an annual contribution from our community foundation. We support registered charities across Alberta through volunteering, financial donations and gifts of essential items.

We were founded in 1998 as a one-time event to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Alberta Blue Cross. However, the idea of establishing an employee-run charity proved to be so popular that it continued past that and is an essential part of our community involvement—even now, more than 25 years later.



**In 2023, Hearts of Blue contributed more than \$67,762 to charities across Alberta.**

We are honoured to support our community's needs wherever they arise and however we can help—whether that means donating clothes, food, toys or even kitchen supplies. Volunteers do everything from dropping off donations to serving dinners and planting gardens.



## We operate with 4 main objectives in mind

1. To encourage team members to **become involved** in the communities in which they live.
2. To **strengthen the team spirit** of Alberta Blue Cross team members.
3. To live the values of a **caring company**.
4. To **raise the profile** of Alberta Blue Cross in the community.





# Support Hearts of Blue

We rely on the generosity of our Alberta Blue Cross team members to fund our efforts. Without you, we wouldn't be able to help the many worthy organizations we support each year. All donations are tax deductible and 100 per cent of the money you give goes towards the charities that Hearts of Blue supports. We hope you will consider donating.

## 3 ways to donate

- Biweekly payroll deductions of any denomination—all it takes is 5 seconds to complete the online form.
- One-time donations can be deducted from your paycheque—a quick email to Payroll is all that's required.
- During the annual Employee Giving Campaign, donations to Canadian-registered charities are matched up to \$100 per employee at Alberta Blue Cross and these donations can be directed to Hearts of Blue.



## Other ways to support Hearts of Blue

- **Volunteer** with an organization during work hours as part of a Days of Giving event. Watch *News to Use* for upcoming opportunities.
- **Join** the Hearts of Blue committee. Email [Hearts of Blue](#) for more information.
- **Donate** items during one of our collection drives. Specific collection drives and details will be announced via *News to Use*.



**"If you are thinking about getting involved with Hearts of Blue—do it!"**

– **Kathy Alves**, Hearts of Blue volunteer



# Charities supported in 2023

<b>Supportive sanctuaries</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Family foundations</b>	<b>23</b>
CASA Mental Health	7	Basically Babies	23
Eagles Nest Ranch	7	Children's Cottage Society	23
Homes for Heroes	8	KARA Family Resource Centre	24
Lady Flower Gardens	9	Kids on Track	24
Little Bits Therapeutic Riding Association	9	Mamas for Mamas	25
Lurana Shelter	10	The Today Centre	25
Pace Centre	10	The Nurture Pregnancy Centre	26
Pilgrims Hospice Society	11	Zebra Child and Youth Advocacy Centre	27
Recovery Acres	11		
Robin Hood Association	12	<b>Education and empowerment</b>	<b>28</b>
Safe Haven Foundation	12	Chrysalis	28
Stepping Stones Crisis Society	13	Delton Elementary School	29
Valour Place	13	EmployAbilities	29
Wood Buffalo Wellness Society	14	Peak Vocational and Support Services Ltd.	30
		Rise Calgary	30
<b>Community champions</b>	<b>15</b>	St. Elizabeth Seton School	31
Blackfalds Food Bank	15	The Shaama Centre	31
Calgary Urban Project Society	15	Terra Centre	32
ElderCare Edmonton	16		
Elizabeth Fry Society	16	<b>Holiday helpers</b>	<b>33</b>
Food Banks Alberta	17	630 CHED Santas Anonymous	33
Hope Mission	17	Christmas Bureau of Edmonton	34
Missing Children Society of Canada	18	Leduc Santa's Little Helpers Society	34
Operation Friendship Seniors Society	19	Stocking Stuffers for Seniors	35
Tawaw Outreach Collective	20		
United Way	21		
Vulcan Regional Food Bank Society	22		



# Supportive sanctuaries



**“Everyone who supports or donates to Hearts of Blue makes an impact.”**

– **Teresa Sokolowski**, Hearts of Blue committee member and treasurer

## CASA Mental Health

CASA Mental Health is a non-profit with a team of mental health professionals who support Albertans between the ages of 3 and 18 years old. Through holistic, culturally safe services, CASA Mental Health fills in the current gaps in mental health service for children.

In October, **Mariam Aoude** donated kids winter jackets, waterproof gloves, sweatpants, underwear, 3-wheeled scooters and printable vinyl packs to CASA Mental Health.

**“My favourite memory from 2023 was getting a tour of CASA Mental Health classrooms and understanding the roles for each classroom and how it supports the mental, social and emotional health of children.”**

– **Mariam Aoude**, Hearts of Blue committee member



## Eagles Nest Ranch

Eagles Nest Ranch is a non-denominational Christian camp in Cypress Hills that invites kids to enjoy year-round camping in a safe, fun and challenging environment. The camp provides opportunities and guidance for youth in their physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual development.

In late July, **Amanda Croot** donated 4 walkie talkies, 12 shower curtains, a first aid kit, an emergency horn and a tick remover to Eagles Nest Ranch. These items will support adventures for youth who attend the camp.

## Homes for Heroes

The Homes for Heroes Foundation was developed in response to the growing number of military veterans who are facing a crisis as they return to civilian life and find themselves on the path to homelessness. Homes for Heroes provides them with housing, resources, services and training that enables them to successfully transition back into civilian life.

Hearts of Blue donated to the Homes for Heroes Foundation in Edmonton and Calgary in early November, just in time for Remembrance Day. In Calgary, **Amanda Croot** delivered care packages to welcome 15 veterans into a home of their own that will help ease their transition from homelessness. In Edmonton, **Gabriella Aparicio** delivered 20 care packages to the Homes for Heroes ATCO Veterans Village.

The care packages included items such as toiletries, coffee, tea, stationary, crossword books, gloves, hats, warm socks and a blanket, as well as a gift card to enjoy a meal at a restaurant. These are items that most people would take for granted but are a very special treat for veterans who haven't been able to indulge in a long time.



**"During my visit to Homes for Heroes, I delivered baskets to each home and was able to meet some of the veterans. They were very grateful for the baskets. It was wonderful speaking with them, as well as learning about their situations. Being able to say thank you for their service to our country was very special."**

– **Amanda Croot**, Hearts of Blue committee member

**"I had an amazing experience making the donation to Homes for Heroes in Edmonton. They gave me a tour of the homes and demonstrated how they support veterans in need."**

– **Gabriella Aparicio**, Hearts of Blue committee member and secretary





## Lady Flower Gardens

Since 2012, Lady Flower Gardens has partnered with mental health and wellness agencies to provide disadvantaged Edmontonians with access to wilderness and agricultural lands. Their primary objective is to grow a healthy agricultural community for those who have experienced serious obstacles regarding health and wellness. Their clients learn agricultural skills while giving back to the community. The harvests are donated

to Edmonton's Food Bank and those who harvest also take a large grocery bag of food for themselves.

In June, Hearts of Blue donated 2 sun shelters with weights to Lady Flower Gardens. The volunteers were grateful for the shade, taking refuge from the spring heat.



## Little Bits Therapeutic Riding Association

Little Bits Therapeutic Riding Association is a non-profit, charitable organization in Edmonton that provides recreational horseback riding with therapeutic benefits for children and adults with disabilities. Their focus is on skill development, enjoyment and the unique therapeutic aspects of horseback riding.

In November, Hearts of Blue made a donation to the Little Bits Therapeutic Riding Association. The donation included new stirrups and stirrup leathers.

## Lurana Shelter

The Lurana Shelter is a first-stage emergency shelter providing safe, secure refuge and emergency services such as meals, clothing, personal care items, transportation and child support, as well as services related to advocacy and staffing 24/7 for support and security.

In November, Hearts of Blue dropped off donations at the Lurana Shelter in Edmonton. Donated items included diapers, wipes, kids pajamas, nightgowns, tooth paste and brushes, makeup, masks, nail polish and slippers. The shelter was thrilled to receive the donations.

**"When we made the drop off at the Lurana Shelter, they mentioned how short they were on items. When I brought her to my vehicle to unload, she was shocked as the items Hearts of Blue purchased were what they were hoping for. It made my heart flutter with pride and joy to be a part of this wonderful committee."**

– **Mirella Nardi**, Hearts of Blue committee member



## Pace Centre

The Pace Centre is a sexual assault and trauma centre that provides essential services, programs and community training. They believe that anyone dealing with sexual assault, sexual abuse, crisis or trauma has the right to access skilled, caring and professional supports and services.

All children and teenagers receive a gift from the Pace Centre after a family interview. They also provide gifts to the children when they come for a visit with their parents through the family intervention program or safe visitation program.

In December, **Karen Ryan** donated toys and gift cards to the Pace Centre in Grande Prairie.





## Pilgrims Hospice Society

Pilgrims Hospice Society offers compassionate care for individuals living with a terminal illness, enhancing dignity and quality of life until the end of life.

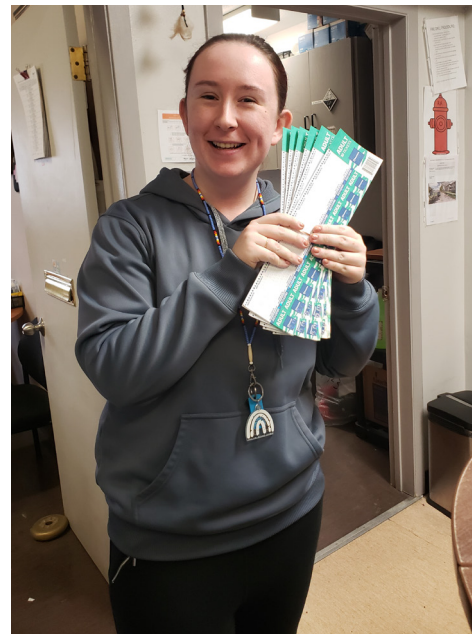
In May, Hearts of Blue volunteers went to Pilgrims Hospice Society to plant some flowers. Hearts of Blue donated funds to purchase the beautiful flowers. The flowers were planted in the courtyard to brighten the spirits of residents and their families and to help them feel more at home during their stay.

One of our volunteers shared the following about their experience: **"I love any opportunity to get my hands in the dirt and knowing these flowers will bring a little joy to the folks at the hospice makes it even better."**

## Recovery Acres

Recovery Acres is an Edmonton-based residential addiction treatment facility in a safe and sober living environment for men who are motivated to change. The program helps clients build strong, ongoing connections to community supports, connecting them to support groups, parenting classes and anger management programs. Their programs help clients regain control of their lives, better understand their addictions and learn alternative behaviours for living a life free of addictions.

In late March, **Carolyn Arsenault** donated transit tickets to Recovery Acres on behalf of Hearts of Blue, so that clients have easier access to appointments and other services that aren't offered directly at the facility.



## Robin Hood Association

The Robin Hood Association is a non-profit organization that provides services to children and adults with developmental disabilities in Sherwood Park, Fort Saskatchewan and the surrounding areas. Made up of families and friends of people with disabilities, the organization currently serves approximately 350 adults and 350 children and their families, and they have over 55 residences.

In June, **Carolyn Arsenault** delivered a barbecue, cover and tools to a Robin Hood Association residence that is home to 5 individuals. The residents have developed a remarkable bond and flourished through their shared passion for cooking. With the new barbecue, the residents are looking forward to practicing different cooking techniques and hosting gatherings to grow their community.



*"Witnessing the growth and connection among these individuals who require significant support is truly a beautiful experience."*

— **Rudy Varga**, partnerships and development specialist, Robin Hood Association



## Safe Haven Foundation

Save Haven is a local charity that supports young women between the ages of 14 and 24 and is dedicated to keeping homeless and at-risk teenage girls safe, off the streets and in school. Young women accessing the charity have a live-in house parent, peer mentor and dedicated programming team to support them through their trauma and to help them overcome barriers.

In August, **Anita Quach** donated fresh bedsheets, towels, toiletries and cleaning supplies to the Safe Haven Foundation in Calgary.

*"I support Hearts of Blue because it's an amazing way to support local initiatives, fostering a stronger relationship and connection with my community."*

— **Sandra Loutan**, Hearts of Blue volunteer



## Stepping Stones Crisis Society

Stepping Stones Crisis Society is an emergency shelter that assists women and their children in need of short-term emergency accommodations. They also provide a second-stage women's shelter program, a community support program, public education and a 24-hour helpline offering confidential support, information and referrals to anyone who calls.

In November, **Gabriella Aparicio** donated a treadmill to the Stepping Stones Crisis Society on behalf of Hearts of Blue. The treadmill is a meaningful donation because access to a gym is often a barrier for women fleeing abuse due to safety or financial reasons. Access to on-site fitness equipment empowers them to feel safe while working on their health.

**"Hearts of Blue is more than just a volunteer position—it's a community of caring individuals dedicated to making a difference."**

– **Crystal Alan**, Hearts of Blue volunteer



## Valour Place

Valour Place is a temporary home for members of the Canadian Armed Forces and RCMP, families of the fallen, veterans, first responders and their families who require medical treatment in Edmonton and live outside the city. The home is fully furnished and guests do not pay for their accommodations.

In June, **Mirella Nardi** donated cushions, a metal rack to store water bottles and a microwave shelf to Valour Place. Sylvie Keane, executive director of Valour Place, was happy to receive the donations and excited for these items to make guests more comfortable.

## Wood Buffalo Wellness Society

Wood Buffalo Wellness Society is a non-profit organization that provides solutions for individuals and families facing addiction and homelessness. Through their values—love, respect, humility, honesty, courage, wisdom and truth—they create an inclusive space for their residential therapeutic treatment and Housing First Case Management solutions.

In October, **Megan Krienke** coordinated a delivery of toiletries to Wood Buffalo Wellness Society in Fort McMurray.

**“A few months later, the Wood Buffalo Wellness Society reached out and shared how much it meant to their clients that they had their own toiletries. It was a reminder of how important Hearts of Blue is to the community.”**

– **Megan Krienke**, Hearts of Blue committee member



# Community champions



**"Hearts of Blue is really the essence of our commitment to the communities we serve at Alberta Blue Cross. We are helping grassroots organizations across the province that are chronically underfunded but doing amazing things to support Albertans in need, and it is led by our team members who care deeply about the wellbeing of our communities."**

– **Brian Geislinger**, Hearts of Blue committee member and executive sponsor

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## Blackfalds Food Bank

The Blackfalds Food Bank works to relieve hunger in their community. They turn hunger into hope by empowering the community to aid those in need of food support.

In June, Hearts of Blue donated \$1,000 worth of food and personal items to the Blackfalds Food Bank.



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## Calgary Urban Project Society

The Calgary Urban Project Society (CUPS) provides programming for Calgarians facing poverty and trauma. Through integrated health care, education and housing, CUPS supports people to help them become self-sufficient. Their programs and services include health care and counselling, developmental resources, financial and housing supports and social supports.

In August, **Amanda Croot** donated cleaning products, toilet paper, paper towels, hygiene products, socks and feminine hygiene products to CUPS.



## ElderCare Edmonton

ElderCare Edmonton is a non-profit organization that supports adults and their caregivers through recreational adult day programs. These programs include wellness-centered activities, exercise and active games, lunch and socialization opportunities. Programs take place in public centres, meaning participants are active in their own communities while maintaining their independence.

In September, **Holly Blum** donated 4 ASUS laptops to ElderCare Edmonton. These laptops will help staff stay organized and better equipped for their jobs.

**“Hearts of Blue builds grassroots relationships with smaller charitable organizations where its impact is needed and richly received.”**

– **Trish Haryett**, Hearts of Blue volunteer



## Elizabeth Fry Society

The Elizabeth Fry Society provides a supportive environment for individuals, particularly women, in contact with the legal system. They work in conjunction with other agencies to provide programs and services, advocate for improvements in the criminal legal system and assist with the reintegration of female prisoners into the community.

In early May, **Gabriella Aparicio** donated socks, underwear, shampoo, conditioner, body soap, deodorant, toothpaste and snacks to the Elizabeth Fry Society.

**“It’s an amazing feeling to make donations to organizations that are in need. Working with this committee has been a wonderful experience and they are a great team to work with.”**

– **Gabriella Aparicio**, Hearts of Blue committee member and secretary

## Food Banks Alberta

Food Banks Alberta is the provincial association of food banks in Alberta with a mission to strengthen their impact by sharing best practices, innovations and essential resources between members, stakeholders and community partners. They have 100 members across the province.

As part of a Days of Giving initiative organized by our Hearts of Blue team in March, volunteers donated their time to help out at the food bank in Leduc. Duties included working in the warehouse to sort and unpack pallets of food donations.



**"I support Hearts of Blue because it's such an easy and fun way to contribute. I find it easier to show up with a group of co-workers than I might on my own. I'd recommend Hearts of Blue and Days of Giving to anyone who wants to make a contribution, particularly those who might not be sure how to get started."**

– **Pat Hughes**, Hearts of Blue volunteer



## Hope Mission

Hope Mission is a not-for-profit charity that provides care to more than 800 people daily, including counsel and referral services for men, women and youth. Hope Mission provides over 1,000 meals and shelter for more than 500 people each day. They also operate a 24/7 rescue van that provides emergency care for people in need.

In early December, **Mariam Aoude** donated to Hope Mission. The donation included underwear, socks, sweatpants, T-shirts, sweaters, jeans, jackets, shampoo, conditioner, soaps, deodorant, toothbrushes, toothpaste and lip balm.

**"Hearts of Blue makes a difference in our communities, and that was the number 1 reason I wanted to join."**

– **Mariam Aoude**, Hearts of Blue committee member



## Missing Children Society of Canada

The Missing Children Society of Canada's (MCSC) mandate is to help return missing children to a safe environment. The organization was established in 1986 and has evolved from distributing posters to embracing the latest technology and assisting police in missing child searches. The MCSC also reaches out to enlist the help of other professionals in the search and location of missing children in addition to working with traditional media, online and social media to increase public awareness of missing children cases. The MCSC provides affected families with knowledge and resources throughout the search and reunification while ensuring that all its programs are free so that all families in need of help receive it regardless of their financial situation.

In April, **Amanda Croot** donated a tablet to the MCSC. As they are expanding their mandate to include all vulnerable people, their technological needs will increase to accommodate the caseload and travel requirements. Their partnership with police and RCMP often requires travel across Canada. Due to this, a more portable system, such as a tablet, helps increase the efficiency of their investigative program by assisting travelling law enforcement. The tablet also allows access to their remote database so they can retrieve documentation and file information no matter where they are.

**"Being a part of Hearts of Blue is one of the easiest and selfless things one can do."**

– **Amanda Croot**, Hearts of Blue committee member





## Operation Friendship Seniors Society

Operation Friendship Seniors Society (OFSS) offers services without judgement to improve the quality of life for seniors in need over 55 years of age. Hearts of Blue has been a long-time supporter of OFSS and the amazing work they do in our community to help vulnerable seniors.

In May, 10 Alberta Blue Cross team members took time out of their day to assist OFSS at their Alliance Manor location. This was part of a Days of Giving initiative organized by our Hearts of Blue team.

Our volunteers were eager to help in a variety of ways such as gardening, cleaning up flower beds and painting at the facility. Alliance Manor launched their new distribution centre later that month, so the help from Hearts of Blue getting things ready for this was greatly appreciated by the staff.

**"We heard a lot of positive feedback from the OFSS. They mentioned a long-standing relationship with Alberta Blue Cross and were so grateful for our support through the years. We spent an afternoon working in the sun on building maintenance, painting and gardening. We could clearly see the difference we'd made by the end of the day."**

**– Pat Hughes, Hearts of Blue volunteer**



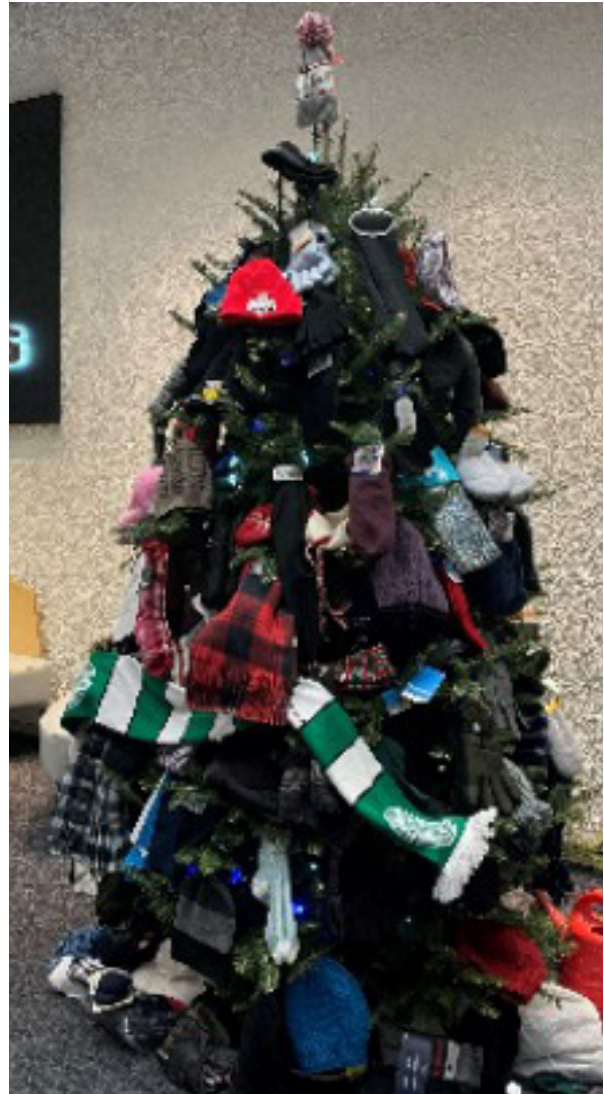
## Tawaw Outreach Collective

Tawaw Outreach Collective is an Indigenous-led, grassroots harm reduction organization. With community street outreach alongside training and workshops, Tawaw promotes Indigenous harm reduction, de-stigmatizing substance use and naloxone training sessions.

In early December, Hearts of Blue placed a Giving Tree in the lobby of our Edmonton office. Throughout the month, team members adorned the tree with new and gently used toques, scarves, mittens and socks that filled 4 boxes to the brim. With plummeting temperatures, the outreach centre was anticipating the need for more warm clothes. Our donation came just in time as they were down to their last 3 pairs of gloves.

**“Hearts of Blue supports grassroots organizations that sometimes get overlooked. We look to make meaningful connections with the organizations we help and seek to understand and learn about what they do in our communities and why it is so important.”**

– **Ashley Bolduc**, Hearts of Blue committee member





## United Way

United Way brings together social agencies, schools, organizations and governments to make a meaningful difference in the community through local programs and services that empower people to improve their lives. By working together, we create lasting change and build a stronger, more vibrant community for everyone.

In July, Hearts of Blue volunteers donated their time to help out at the United Way InKind Exchange. Duties included creating tools for schools and hygiene kits. This was part of a Days of Giving initiative organized by our Hearts of Blue team.

**"I spent a morning at United Way creating back to school backpacks for kids whose parents are not able to afford all their school needs. I loved being able to get to know other co-workers as well as learning the different ways that Hearts of Blue has made an impact in people's lives."**

**– Colleen Goodman, Hearts of Blue volunteer**



## Vulcan Regional Food Bank Society

The Vulcan Regional Food Bank Society is a charitable organization dedicated to providing food security. It serves the residents of Vulcan, Vulcan County, Brant, Arrowwood, Milo, Lomond, Champion and Carmangay. The food bank relies entirely on donations and grants. They work closely with local businesses and partner organizations to provide sustainable food accessibility and integrated support to their clients. The area farms also donate a cow each year so the people accessing the food bank can have fresh meat.

In April, **Amanda Croot** donated to the Vulcan Regional Food Bank Society. The donation included an array of hygiene products (shampoo,

deodorant, soap, lotion, tissue, razors, feminine hygiene products, chapstick, combs, etc.) as these items are most forgotten about when donations are made.

**"Participating in Hearts of Blue is a generous act of kindness that embodies the art of giving. The impactful donations that we make help build and strengthen our ties to our communities by improving the lives of the residents within them."**

– **Amanda Croot**, Hearts of Blue committee member





# Family foundations



**"It's always been important to me to give back to my community and I'm grateful Alberta Blue Cross provides the opportunity to do so."**

– **Narissa Kanji**, Hearts of Blue volunteer

## Basically Babies

Basically Babies is a charity in Edmonton and Calgary that creates baby wardrobes and layettes containing a 1-year supply of baby clothes and accessories for families in extreme need. Through donations and volunteer work, Basically Babies works to communicate value, dignity and hope to families in need.

In June, **Mariam Aoude** donated infant socks, clothing, receiving blankets, towels, cutlery, sippy cups, teethingers and books to Basically Babies.

**"I'm honoured to be part of this employee-led charity, as I've seen the impact directly on the communities we serve."**

– **Mariam Aoude**, Hearts of Blue committee member



## Children's Cottage Society

Since 1986, the Children's Cottage Crisis Nursery has provided a 24/7 safe haven where children can take a break from stressful situations and receive nurturing care while their parents get the help they need. The Children's Cottage Society is dedicated to building strong, healthy children and safe, nurturing families through prevention programs and support services.

On November 24, **Anita Quach** donated to the Children's Cottage Society in Calgary. The donation included baby wipes, formula, diapers and children's clothes.

**"By supporting Hearts of Blue, you are contributing to a cause that truly embodies the spirit of compassion and generosity."**

– **Crystal Alan**, Hearts of Blue volunteer



## KARA Family Resource Centre

For over 37 years, the KARA Family Resource Centre has been providing programs and services for parents in Edmonton and surrounding areas. The resource centre provides programming for families with children up to 6 years of age. This includes parent education, family support, early childhood development, information and referral and developmental screening. They focus on building meaningful relationships with their clients and meeting people where they are at in their current life and family circumstance.

In March, **Holly Blum** made a donation to the KARA Family Resource Centre. The donation included spa and pampering gift sets for their Health 4 Two program, which supports new and expectant mothers, games and activities for their Afterschool Adventures program, and aprons and cooking utensils to support their Kids in the Kitchen program.

ALBERTA BLUE CROSS  
**HEARTS OF BLUE**  
YOUR DONATION SUPPORTS:

Kids in the Kitchen	Afterschool Adventures	Let Us Pamper You
Your donation of aprons and cooking utensils supports our Kids in the Kitchen program. Every Thursday ten children, ages 6-12, join us at KARA to cook a meal that they will take home and share with their families. Every week the children are introduced to new techniques and we build in fun science lessons!	Your donation of games and activities supports Afterschool Adventures. Children ages 6-12 drop in twice a week to partake in activities that focus on growth mindset, resilience building, and developing leadership skills. This group of children are dynamic and a keen bunch who love to play and explore.	Your donation of spa and pampering gift sets, and photo albums supports our Health 4 Two: Let Us Pamper You program. This program supports expectant and new mothers. Every week participants join us for a snack, an opportunity to learn and pamper themselves, and go home with a food hamper.







## Kids on Track

Kids On Track is a community-building organization that provides hope, direction and ongoing support for children and their parents. Educational, social, spiritual and recreational elements are combined to deliver well-rounded programs. They cultivate relationships, encouraging participants in faith, character and leadership development, social skills and a healthy lifestyle. They strive to support families experiencing limited opportunities due to various socioeconomic challenges.

In April, Hearts of Blue made a donation to Kids on Track. **Mirella Nardi** presented the organization with 2 iPads, warranty, screen protectors and cases. This donation was for the various programs offered such as registration at events, keeping track of all programs by offered and providing various technology education to youths and parents.

**"Hearts of Blue is about doing something small with a ripple affect that is massive."**

– **Mirella Nardi**, Hearts of Blue committee member



## Mamas for Mamas

Mamas for Mamas is a national, charitable organization that supports mothers and caregivers in crisis by providing ongoing support to individuals and families facing various poverty-related struggles. They provide a space where moms and their kids feel safe and comfortable when they come in for poverty relief support. They also refer families to community programs when available and fill the gaps in service when the need is higher than the resources available.

Mamas for Mamas Calgary was created to help fill the gaps in the city for the many families that struggle day after day. They provide resource navigation and assistance to families in Calgary, Strathmore, Chestermere, Airdrie, Okotoks, High River, Cochrane, Banff and Canmore.

In late January, **Anita Quach** donated diapers, baby wipes, formula and baby food to Mamas for Mamas.

**"My favourite thing about being part of Hearts of Blue is seeing the impact on local organizations."**

– **Anita Quach**, Hearts of Blue committee member

## The Today Centre

The Today Centre offers short-term support for those who are experiencing family violence, including safety planning, education on family violence and connection to other resources in Edmonton and surrounding areas. They also provide non-judgmental support for everyone targeted by family violence regardless of situation, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, culture or religion.

In late March, **Megan Krienke** donated a variety of toiletries and essential items for all ages to the Today Centre.



**"Thank you again for dropping off the donations. What a blessing these items will be for our clients. We truly appreciate your generosity and kindness in thinking of us."**

– **Linda Kelly**, The Today Centre



## The Nurture Pregnancy Centre

The Nurture Pregnancy Centre provides a soft place to land for those experiencing an unexpected pregnancy or challenges in all stages of pregnancy and the first 2 years of a child's life. All of their programs and services are free and confidential, and are offered in a welcoming and accepting environment. The services they provide includes pregnancy tests, peer counselling, maternity clothing, infant and toddler clothing, toys and furniture, formula and diapers, infant layettes, educational classes (such as sewing and cooking) and a resource library.

In April, **Amanda Croot** made a donation to the Nurture Pregnancy Centre. The donation included

items to make new layettes, like diapers, clothes, hygiene items for both mom and baby, bottles, bath time items and a special book for parents to read to their newborn—all of which will be used for 3 newborns.

**"Hearts of Blue provides the opportunity to show gratitude for the blessings in life that others may not be fortunate enough to have. I feel very lucky and am humbled to be a part of such an amazing committee that dedicates itself to giving back."**

– **Amanda Croot**, Hearts of Blue committee member





## Zebra Child and Youth Advocacy Centre

The Zebra Child and Youth Advocacy Centre provides supportive programming, access to professionals and care items to children and youth who have experienced abuse. On October 24, the centre experienced a break-in and fire which tragically destroyed their toys and clothing supplies.

Hearts of Blue donated \$1,500 to Zebra Child to support the urgent need to replenish their stock.

**“Hearts of Blue has been going strong for so many years and, every year, we are growing and able to help out more organizations.”**

– **Ashley Bolduc**, Hearts of Blue committee member



# Education and empowerment



**“Hearts of Blue brings together an amazing group of likeminded individuals who just want to make a difference. Being part of this committee has allowed me to meet so many wonderful people in our organization and also in our community.”**

– **Ashley Bolduc**, Hearts of Blue committee member

## Chrysalis

The mission of Chrysalis is to provide personalized services to empower individuals with disabilities to accomplish their employment, volunteer and recreational goals. Their multidisciplinary team of professionals supports individuals with a variety of purposeful services and programs such as employment services, art programs, occupational therapy support, personal development classes and a sensory room, to name a few.

On January 9, **Holly Blum** donated various office items to Chrysalis. The donation included items for their employment hub, plant stands and art supplies.

**“Hearts of Blue is focussed on making the community better, spreading love and generosity, and providing support where it’s needed.”**

– **Holly Blum**, Hearts of Blue committee member





## Delton Elementary School

Delton Elementary School is located close to Edmonton's city centre and provides meaningful learning experiences to children in kindergarten to grade 6. The school has several supporting partnerships that enable it to provide a variety of services for students and families.

In December, **Mirella Nardi** dropped off a donation to Delton Elementary School on behalf of Hearts of Blue. The donation included sweaters and pyjamas wrapped for 23 children, as well as other clothing items for children in need. The children opened the gifts in the classroom on December 20.

## EmployAbilities

EmployAbilities provides skill development, education, employment programs and support services to adults and youth living with disabilities, medical conditions, mental health challenges, permanent injuries and other employment barriers. They offer many programs and services throughout Alberta.

In February, **Mirella Nardi** met with Chandra, a program coordinator at EmployAbilities, and had a conversation about the hardship of finding jobs for her clients. Hearts of Blue then donated 40 \$25 gift cards to EmployAbilities.

**"On behalf of [everyone at EmployAbilities], thank you for the generous gift of gift cards provided through Hearts of Blue. These cards will be used for our participants in 2 programs: Learn 2 Earn and ReStart your Career."**

– **Chandra**, program coordinator at EmployAbilities





## Peak Vocational and Support Services Ltd.

Peak Vocational and Support Services Ltd. is a not-for-profit that works with individuals with disabilities in the community. They work to empower individuals to achieve maximum independence in all areas of their lives. They have also been an Alberta Blue Cross group customer for 6 years.

In July, **Darlene Kolesar, Alex Fong** and **Vanessa Amos** made a donation of \$2,000 to Peak Vocational and Support Services Ltd. With the help of this donation, Peak Vocational and Support Services Ltd. built a wheelchair-accessible community garden for their clients to help offset the cost of food and to teach them how to maintain and grow fruits and vegetables.



**“This was an incredibly successful Hearts of Blue moment and the most memorable one I have been involved with so far! Truly incredible to see all the collaboration and teamwork from everyone involved.”**

**— Alex Fong, Hearts of Blue volunteer**



## Rise Calgary

Rise Calgary is a local charity working to end poverty. They connect with low-income folks and provide access to basic needs supports, life skills programming and empowerment opportunities.

In October, **Anita Quach** donated diapers, baby wipes, baby formula and snacks to Rise Calgary. Donations like this offer people in need a solid foundation to grow.



## St. Elizabeth Seton School

The staff at St. Elizabeth Seton School are committed to educating each child intellectually, spiritually, socially, emotionally and physically by providing a variety of experiences as a foundation for learning. They work in close partnership with parents to assist students in their development and provide a safe, nurturing, joyful and caring environment where students can grow to their fullest potential.

On December 13, **Mirella Nardi** donated \$1,000 worth of gift cards to Elizabeth Seton School.

**"We wanted to send a huge thank you for the generous donation of gift cards. These gift cards went to many families in our school who are not only struggling financially but also experiencing homelessness. Your generosity made a huge impact when we handed them out to our most vulnerable families. Thank you again from our entire St. Elizabeth Seton Family."**

– Elizabeth Seton School

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## The Shaama Centre

The Shaama Centre is a dynamic community hub offering activities and services that enhance the lives of the seniors, women and families they support. They offer many classes including English, basic computer training, fitness and painting. They also provide counselling and support services for those struggling with grief and domestic violence.

In June, **Megan Krienke** coordinated the donation of a new fridge to the Shaama Centre. The community needed a fridge that fit their unique space requirements and they are grateful for the thoughtfulness of the donation.

**"Giving back to the community is so special and to be lucky enough to do so while representing Hearts of Blue is great."**

– **Megan Krienke**, Hearts of Blue committee member





## Terra Centre

Terra Centre is a non-profit organization helping pregnant and parenting teens develop self-reliance and skills to be successful parents. Young parents are accepted at any point of their journey and services are tailored for their unique circumstances. The organization shares knowledge about infant care, bonding, attachment, developmental play, guiding behaviours and positive discipline to help participants build a solid foundation for family life.

In early September, **Holly Blum** donated baby-specific items to the centre including diapers, baby lotion, diaper cream, baby socks and diaper bags that double as a backpack—and items for parents such as body wash, shampoo, socks and toothpaste.

**“The work that Terra Centre does is amazing and so valuable. This touched me personally, as I have known a lot of mothers who had to drop out of school as there was not this resource when I was growing up.”**

– **Sandra Loutan**, Hearts of Blue volunteer

**“Serving lunch together to the students was so rewarding. The teen moms were so appreciative of our hot lunch. I was moved by how a small gesture can create a huge impact.”**

– **Narissa Kanji**, Hearts of Blue volunteer

Hearts of Blue also volunteered with the Terra Centre as part of the Employee Giving Campaign in November. 8 volunteers came out to prepare and serve lunch to the hardworking students, staff and volunteers at Braemar School. These hot lunches provide students with the fuel they need to get through their busy days as students and moms.



# Holiday helpers



**“We sometimes forget that the holiday season is for everyone to enjoy, even the less fortunate, so to be able to provide a few comfort items and treats that we can easily take for granted really puts things into perspective.”**

– **Kristy Kozun**, Hearts of Blue committee member and vice-chair

## 630 CHED Santas Anonymous

The mission of 630 CHED Santas Anonymous is to see every child receive a new toy at Christmas. Relying on thousands of volunteers and donors, 630 CHED Santas Anonymous now collects, sorts, packages and delivers toys to more than 20,000 children every year.

In late 2023, the annual Hearts of Blue Santas Anonymous toy drive accepted new, unwrapped toys for children aged 12 and under. On December 8, Hearts of Blue delivered a carload of toys for children in our community. That's not all—we also raised a whopping \$1,640 in cash donations. These generous donations from Alberta Blue Cross team members helped make sure Santa had a gift for every child during the holiday season.

**“Thank you from the bottom of my heart to everyone who brought in a toy for this toy drive. This time of year is hard for many, so being able to give back to our community is great.”**

– **Ashley Bolduc**, Hearts of Blue committee member





## Christmas Bureau of Edmonton

Since 1940, the Christmas Bureau has maintained the tradition of providing a festive meal and Christmas gifts to Edmontonians in need at Christmastime.

In December, **Megan Krienke** made a \$1,000 donation to the Adopt-A-Teen program through the Christmas Bureau of Edmonton. The Christmas Bureau created this program upon the realization that there was no holiday program for youth in our city. Since 2014, Adopt-A-Teen has supported more than 60,000 youth and continues to see exponential growth. Today, teens aged 13 to 17 who apply for their services are eligible to receive a \$50 gift card.

**"Hearts of Blue is an opportunity to make a difference firsthand."**

– **Leanne O'Rourke**, Hearts of Blue committee member



## Leduc Santa's Little Helpers Society

Leduc Santa's Little Helpers Society is a needs-based organization that provides toys and gift hampers to families with children in the city and county of Leduc during the holiday season.

In late November, **Kristy Kozun** had the pleasure of donating to the Leduc Santa's Little Helpers Society. Hearts of Blue donated personal care kits, sweatshirts, toques and gloves for 40 teens.

**"My heart is in my community. With a background in non-profit work, being part of Hearts of Blue allows me to keep that part of myself fulfilled."**

– **Kathy Alves**, Hearts of Blue volunteer

## Stocking Stuffers for Seniors

Operation Friendship Seniors Society partnered with London Drugs and Friends to support approximately 4,000 local seniors through the Stocking Stuffers for Seniors program.

In December, **Kristy Kozun** filled 30 stockings with items like blankets, slippers, socks, hygiene products, travel mugs and Christmas goodies to enjoy over the holiday season.

**“Thinking of the seniors receiving their care packages puts a smile on my face.”**

– **Kristy Kozun**, Hearts of Blue committee member and vice-chair





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