

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MR# 2020001

DATE: 22 January 2021

RE: Cheryl's Cozy's mittens free for the taking

AMHERST, Nova Scotia – Cheryl's Cozy's mittens are being offered free for the taking for those in need.

They can be found in boxes recently installed in three locations in the Town of Amherst – in front of town hall, Rotary Park near the food pantry and near Tantramar Chevrolet – by the Empowering Beyond Barriers committee, aided by Maggie's Place Resource Centre for Families, Tantramar Chevrolet, local high school students, the SOAR Community Health Board, Bill Dowe Trucking and Excavating and the Town of Amherst.

The idea of providing people with free mittens began two years ago in 2019 when, "we had a desperately cold winter," said Colleen Dowe, chairperson of the Empowering Beyond Barriers committee.



TANTRAMAR CHEVROLET GM JONATHAN MACMASTER, MAGGIE'S PLACE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SARAH MACMASTER, EMPOWERING BEYOND BARRIERS CHAIRPERSON COLLEEN DOWE AND KEVIN MAPPLEBECK, AN ATTENDANCE SUPPORT WORKER WITH THE CHIGNECTO-CENTRAL REGIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION, STAND BESIDE ONE OF THREE CHERYL'S COZY'S MITTEN BOXES THAT HAVE BEEN ERECTED IN THE TOWN OF AMHERST. PEOPLE NEEDING MITTENS CAN TAKE A PAIR FROM ANY OF THE BOXES. (TOM McCOAG / TOWN OF AMHERST)



TOWN OF Amherst NOVA SCOTIA

“It was -30 C for several days in a row, and we noticed a lot of people who didn’t have gloves on.”

Concerned about the well-being of people, the committee began giving away free mittens and hats by attaching plastic bags containing them to streetlights in downtown Amherst with yarn.

“We gave out 45 pairs of mittens that year,” Dowe recalled.

The work continued last winter, but was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.



COLLEEN DOWE, EMPOWERING BEYOND BARRIERS, PLACES A SUPPLY OF FREE MITTENS INSIDE ONE OF THE THREE CHERYL’S COZY’S MITTEN BOXES THAT ARE FOUND IN THE TOWN OF AMHERST. (TOM McCOAG / TOWN OF AMHERST)

While attending a local homeless shelter committee meeting this past fall, attended by several of those now involved in the Cheryl’s Cozy’s project, the free mitten program came up during a discussion.

During that discussion, Kevin Mapplebeck, an attendance support worker with the Chignecto-Central Regional Centre for Education, suggested he may have an avenue to have boxes built so that the mittens wouldn’t get wet and more could be placed out for people to take.

That avenue was two high school students involved in a school program aimed at providing at-risk students with a connection to the school.

“They were making things like birdhouses and I thought by getting them involved in this, it would give them a connection to the town and to the school,” Mapplebeck said.





The students took three months to build the boxes, the materials of which were purchased via funding provided by the SOAR Community Health Board and Bill Dowe Trucking. (The funding also enabled the groups to get more mittens.)

Maggie's Place executive director Sarah MacMaster was also in attendance at the meeting. She committed her organization's participation in the project because they saw too many people coming to the pantry to collect food during the winter who didn't have gloves or mittens.

That was the same reason Tantramar Chevrolet, who also donated funding to the project, decided to get involved, said the firm's general manager Jonathan MacMaster.

The Town of Amherst approved the placement of the boxes on town-owned poles and its Public Works crews installed the boxes on Jan. 15, 2021.

The group decided to name the mitten box project after Cheryl Lefler, the longtime treasurer of the Empowering Beyond Barriers committee who died last year from cancer.

"She was a lovely person and did a lot for vulnerable people in the community," Sarah MacMaster said. "We felt it would be a nice way to honour her."

The mittens found in the boxes come mostly from community donations, while some were donated by Coats for Cumberland and others were purchased with the monetary donations given the groups.

Anyone needing mittens can just go to one of the boxes and take a pair, and anyone wishing to make a donation, can just place a pair, preferably in a plastic bag, inside the boxes as well.

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