

Local Realtor Helps Knox Church to Continue Feeding Hungry During Pandemic

By Caroline Phillips

For 25 years, Knox Presbyterian Church in Ottawa has been running a weekly dinner over the winter months to give vulnerable folks the opportunity to sit down to a warm and nutritious meal.

While the ice and snow are now gone, the cold elements have been replaced by something far worse: a global pandemic that has created an unprecedented impact on everyone — including the homeless and those at risk for homelessness.

That's why Knox Church has extended and expanded its Out of the Cold program beyond March 31st to continue feeding neighbours in need. It's handing out dinners each Saturday and Wednesday at the church, located at the corner of Elgin and Lisgar streets.

Out of the Cold receives donations from many individuals, organizations and businesses, including Faulkner Real Estate. The Ottawa residential brokerage has become the single largest donor to the extended program.

The brokerage is owned by Judy Faulkner, a realtor with nearly 40 years' experience.

"In all honesty, Judy's contribution really gave us the confidence to continue," said Rev. Jim Pot, minister of Knox Presbyterian Church.



Volunteer and donor Judy Faulkner, owner of Faulkner Real Estate, hands out bagged dinners as part of an extended and expanded community meal program run through Knox Presbyterian Church in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

Since 2018, Faulkner Real Estate has been donating 100 percent of its profits from fees on winter sales back to the community, in order to help others.

The idea to generously give back hit Faulkner one day as she was driving down Elgin Street. She spotted a number of homeless individuals trying to stay warm. It was one of those late

autumn days, when the weather quickly drops from mild to downright cold.

"I was inspired—in the right moment—to do something," Faulkner explained.

The Centretown Community Association has stepped up to coordinate the extended meal program and to provide the extra volunteers needed to deliver it.

The program serves, on average, about 100 people each day that it runs. Some of its guests are homeless or street-involved individuals while others appear to just be in need of an extra meal.

Organizers are doing "everything possible" to follow public health guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19, said Rev. Pot. Implemented steps include frequent hand washing, the wearing of face masks and gloves, maintaining proper social distancing and the serving of take-away meals only.

Along with financial support, Faulkner is occasionally called to volunteer.

"It is a heartwarming and fulfilling experience to serve the needs of others," said Faulkner. "It feels good.

"Every guest receiving a meal looks at me and says, 'Thank you'. They mean it. You can see it in their eyes."