

Happy New Year to all our friends and family supporters!

We are quickly seeing the last few days of 2022 evaporate before us as 2023 is about to dawn. 2022 has been quite the year for many of us and I am sure there are some amazing stories to be told.

I am contacting you to update what the past few months have been like for LIFE EXCHANGE with our support of children and teens in the Chilliwack and surrounding community plus our contact in Princeton that is working steadily and progressively to bring support and life change for many families in their community that are still struggling and, in some cases, massive struggles due to the loss of their homes, possessions and troubling housing scenarios. Far too many youths are going without proper meals and life care.



Here is a summary of our outreach ventures this Christmas season:

1. We provided gift cards, groceries, and clothing to over 300 children and teens in our community. This year's need has been greater than expected and is still increasing daily.
2. I partnered with a Youth Leadership team to provide a Christmas pizza party where 30-plus teens from the inner city came out for pizza, Christmas treats, gifts and a lot of cheer. There was a lot of excitement there yet several teens bearing sad faces. One teen had his brother die in a car accident the previous week and the other brother took his own life. The pain in his life was over the top. Another teen shared how their dad walked out just that week and they were in shock.

Christmas is a time of great joy for many but not for all. It was an emotional time for me seeing many teens in this group facing many pain-filled life issues where they were so deeply impacted and trying to survive.

3. We partnered with the Optimist Club of Chilliwack to provide gift cards for several families that are facing very challenging times with children and teens that are handicapped, loss of jobs, loss of vehicles, severe marital conflict and inability to pay for groceries due to horrific inflation costs. The president of the Optimist Club dressed up as Santa and went door to door to present the food hampers, presents and treats to the selected families. The faces of the little children coming out to see Santa come a week early with all these gifts were over the top and for some overwhelming. Very emotional time for those involved in delivering the Christmas goods.
4. I connected with a charity that was working at providing for many children and teens in their community that are in critical need of literally anything and everything. I provided various gift cards (Old Navy,

Walmart, Timmies, Subway etc.) for hundreds of children and teens that were overjoyed at what was presented to them the last few days before Christmas.

5. We are working with Princeton Food Bank and Recovery Team to help raise funds for their new kitchen and dining area to serve meals for families in need and backpack food to the youth for the weekends as needed. The cost of purchasing dining tables, chairs, serving trays, plates, cups, cutlery, garbage bins, heating trays etc. is approximately \$12,000. I hope to see funds being provided in early 2023 to make this a reality. There are still hundreds of people in Princeton in dire need. Making this happen will remove a lot of anxiety, stress and mental health conflict for these.

On behalf of our Board of Directors, I wish to thank you so very deeply for your partnership with Life Exchange and its charitable ventures for the past year. 2021 the needs were those impacted by the fires, floods, slides, Covid and emerging housing crises. 2022 was massive inflation, loss of jobs, exploding interest rates, housing deficiencies plus Omicron, Flu virus, RSV in children, horrific colds and what is 2023 going to be like for the underprivileged in our community and surrounding regions.

As I shared in my previous email counsellors are telling me that the new mental health issue affecting teens and children is Social PTSD. The destructive forces of social media in these youth are causing Post Traumatic Social-stress disorder which is pushing our youth into depths of depression and anxiety not seen before. The counsellors say this is something that they are not trained for and it's a huge learning curve for them to deal with in our schools and families. This is a subject that I will share with you later.

I will share with you in January where I feel that Life Exchange is going to focus its charitable objectives. We are going through a change that will be much more challenging for us as well as more costly to be resourced with the right solutions for these emerging needs and crises.

We still have a few days left for you to consider making your end-of-year donation. You can still send a cheque in the mail if it is postmarked before December 31. Going online to our website [www.life-exchange.ca](http://www.life-exchange.ca) and donating is available or dropping off your cheque or cash with me ASAP works as well. Some of our previous donors have not been able to donate this year due to the massive increase in the cost of living which is very much understood and respected. Many of you have given more than you would have normally. Whatever you can donate now is so valued as it will provide the necessary funds for what will be happening at the end of January as requests for help from hundreds of families with kids facing increased harder times will be emerging. It will also enable us to work on the new programs and systems that we would purpose to develop for the mental health challenges before us.

May 2023 be the year of blessing for you and through you. Thank you for “being there for those children and teens in critical life conditions”!

Rod Bitterman  
Founder/CEO Life Exchange Foundation