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For Immediate Release

Thousands of Hand-Knit Winter Items Donated by Edmonton Seniors

Edmonton... On **October 14, 2016**, members of knitting clubs based in **GEF Seniors Housing** buildings will donate more than **5,000 pieces of winter outdoor wear** to local charities for their ninth annual Great Knitting Giveaway at **Rosslyn Place (10915 134 Ave.)** starting at 10:00 a.m. All the yarn used was donated to the knitting clubs throughout the year at the more than 40 buildings that GEF Seniors Housing currently owns or manages. The winter clothing given out ranges from toques to mittens to scarfs and even includes pieces for kids and newborns.

“This is an opportunity for the seniors to give back to their communities,” says Emily Rotella, Assistant Manager with Pleasantview Place and former Chair of the Great Knitting Giveaway event. “The people who receive the items our knitters donated doesn’t just give them warmth on the outside for the cold months, but warmth on the inside too knowing that someone cares enough to hand make a toque or a scarf that’s going to help them.”

The event itself is a thank you to the knitters who made the clothing that was donated and features speakers from the charities receiving the items, telling the seniors about the kinds of people their contributions are going on to help. Charities that collect the winter clothing include the **Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, Operation Friendship**, schools in low-income areas such as **St. Benedict Catholic School**, and the **Royal Alexandra Hospital** maternity ward.

“A lot of the seniors don’t think their donations are a big deal,” Rotella says. “But, for example, they’re giving a baby her first toque and that family is going to treasure it for their whole lives.”

The knitters meet year-round as part of their recreation programs to make the winter clothing that is eventually donated. The seniors are given new knitting patterns to continually challenge them and keep the activity interesting. For many seniors, the knitting clubs are a chance to socialize and remain close to others living in their buildings. But for some, it’s what gives them a purpose to their lives.

“We have some knitters who never went to school and never learned to read,” says Rotella. “So knitting is what they can contribute to the world and it’s how they know they can help others.”

For Rotella, the Great Knitting Giveaway is an opportunity not just to show the knitting clubs from GEF Seniors Housing an appreciation for everything they do throughout the year, but also demonstrate that what would be something to pass the time for many is actually making a huge difference in Edmonton communities.

“We participated in an event at St. Benedict Catholic School where some of our seniors read to the kids and we asked how many received winter clothing from the Great Knitting Giveaway and almost all of the hands went up,” Rotella says. “That was a moment when some of our seniors realized how much of a difference their donations made. These are kids who would have gone the winter without mittens or toques and the kindness of a few knitters made sure these kids stayed warm during the winter.”

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