

paying it FORWARD

There's no such thing as a lone wolf when it comes to helping people. These *Calgary Herald* Christmas Fund charities rely on each other to get food, shelter and TLC to those who need it.

by JACQUIE MOORE

The theme song of any charity working to help the impoverished has got to be Bill Withers' empathetic "Lean On Me." That selfless offer is aimed at the thousands of Calgarians who require food, clothing, an affordable apartment, mental health care or simply a shoulder to cry on. But if you listen carefully you'll hear the leanees—social workers, health-care professionals, addictions counsellors and food-hamper delivery drivers—humming the line, "We all need somebody to lean on" (emphasis on *all*).

Indeed, as the complex web woven by these 14 charitable organizations proves, nobody's in this for individual glory. As Erin Waite, communications manager for the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter puts it: "We are aware each and every day that we couldn't possibly do what we do without all of the other agencies out there working in areas that we can't cover."

For instance, the CWES's Emergency Kitchen relies on weekly support from the Calgary Inter-Faith Food Bank. Likewise, the Food Bank referred 9,825 families and individuals to community agencies last year, including the Women's Emergency Shelter, for everything from counselling to affordable housing to baby supplies. Many of the representatives from the agencies listed here sit on committees together or have formal, long-standing relationships, like the one shared by CUPS and Inn From the Cold as they work together to find sustainable housing for homeless families.

Beyond the practical support each agency offers the other, however, it's perhaps the psychic benefit of knowing they're not alone that keeps our urban angels uplifted. Waite describes her experience of sharing office space with fellow leanees: "A group of the CUPS employees work from our office," she says. "I overhear them sometimes and it always amazes me how good they are—they are great advocates for the many families they serve. It's a pleasure to see them in action."

Which brings us around to you: if it weren't for individual donations, there would be nobody to lean on at all.



TO MAKE A DONATION visit heraldchristmasfund.com or phone in your donation (please have credit card ready) to 403-235-7481, Monday to Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Or mail your donation to Calgary Herald Christmas Fund, P. O. Box 1515, Stn. M, Calgary, AB T2P 5A7.

the charities:

