

## **COMMENTS FOR BGA MEETING – JANUARY 15, 2021**

**I have two announcements to make.**

- **Debbie Stonebraker has rejoined the club**
- **Sandy Shaner is a new resident of Charbonneau and just recently joined.**

**A Look Back on the year that just ended.**

First, I'd like to extend my best wishes to all of you for 2021.

We've had more than our share of challenges in 2020. We suffered the heart-breaking loss of Kathy Gibbons, a dear friend and champion for Boys & Girls Aid, and we've had to reimagine almost everything we do throughout the year. With that said, we've managed to survive as individuals and as a club. Although I'm glad to see 2020 in my rear-view mirror, I have to marvel at what we've been able to accomplish.

With the expert guidance of Anne Shevlin, Elaine Swyt and Chris Bosak, along with many other volunteers, we were able to finally hold our virtual auction. We missed the interaction of our usual Crab and Rib dinner but with a lot of work on the part of these three women, we were able to raise over \$50,000 for the children served by the Cypress Branch of Boys & Girls Aid. This was an amazing feat by any stretch of the imagination. It served as an inspiration to me and the board that we could conquer the challenges of the year ahead.

As you no doubt know, we began our year with Zoom meetings – another challenge for many of us. Even though attendance has been down, we've been able to achieve and even exceed every goal we've set for ourselves.

Dianne McMichael led the way with our annual project of providing sports bags for the boys. Thanks to our contributors, we were able to provide wonderful bags, full of items that delighted the boys. The cookie elves outdid

themselves this year and our thanks go out to all who donated, baked, and help in other ways. The abundance of donations covered everything and allowed us to upgrade and give even more than in the past. We were even able to use some left-over funds to provide a basketball hoop to a family that has cared for five foster boys in their home for several years.

Leslie Walker provided a home in her covered entry for the gift box laden with gift ideas for the kids in programs sponsored by BGA. Every card was taken, and the gifts were wonderful. We were even able to provide one young lady with a like new sewing machine. Thank you to our membership for taking tags, shopping and delivering these gifts back to Leslie.

Robyn Andrus headed up our annual Christmas giving to the Transitional Living Program which serves young adults who are homeless and need to secure housing, to stabilize, and to move toward self-sufficiency. Through your donations, we were able to provide gift cards to the young adults and gifts to all of the small children of these clients.

### **And now looking forward to 2021**

Terri Royse and Connie Taylor are deep into planning for this year's Easter basket program. Leslie Walker has graciously agreed to host an Easter wreath in her entry way which will contain tags for the items needed for the Easter baskets. There are ten girls housed in the Cypress House (formerly Seneca House) and four little ones between the ages of four and seven years in the Nest. Our goal is to provide a wonderful Easter basket to each of them. We will be back to you on the details regarding when the wreath will be available.

At our most recent meeting, the board voted to reinstate the monthly meals for the girls in Cypress House. These meals will be provided twice weekly and will be left outside in the front entry. Due to Covid concerns, there are

fewer staff at Cypress House and they are having a difficult time meeting all the needs of these young girls. The board will cover the first couple of months of meals. Jan Bliss is working on a schedule for people to sign up for home cooked, Costco cooked, or restaurant ordered meals. Please consider whether you and a couple of friends might be able to volunteer for one of these meal times. You'll see more on this later.

Finally, we are hoping to provide The Nest with three or four small bikes for the little ones there. Any donations toward this project would be greatly appreciated. There will be more to come on this later also.

It is with great honor that I serve as the Cypress Branch president this year.

Diann Harland