

# Baskets of Joy

For the City of Greater Shepparton 2020



Business as usual and Christmas in the midst of COVID19 created a lot of challenges with planning and distribution this year. It was decided to go online and replace the Baskets of Joy with virtual baskets. Utilizing the Greater Shepparton Foundation's website, we were able to set up a donation site where participants could either do a shop and fill a virtual basket (where the value of the purchases was the donation) or they could make a direct donation.

A letter and email were sent out to all previous donors to let them know how they could still contribute to the Christmas appeal. We launched the campaign mid October.

As restrictions eased closer to Christmas, FamilyCare was able to receive donations directly via our reception and Wishing tree collection point at the Shepparton Marketplace.

Notre Dame's Seeds of Justice program purchased vouchers and gift cards instead of gifts and we were



very fortunate to be the recipient of a large donor who chose to purchase vouchers from local cafés,

children's activities and shops. There were several donors who dropped off gifts, food and money at our reception too. One organisation donated 17 boxes of food, another chose to deliver their toys this year rather than us collecting them.

We received vouchers and donations to the value of \$22, 375.00 either directly to Family Care or online via the Greater Shepparton Foundation website.

The online donors were a mixture of businesses and individuals—several of whom were new to the Basket of Joy donation list and others who have donated in the past. Due to the change in how families could donate, and COVID restrictions, there were several organisations and schools who did not donate this year.

208 families were identified by staff as requiring assistance this year (268 adults and 419 children).

This included three families identified by COGS and one from Greater Shepparton Foundation.

FamilyCare staff were given a Christmas Finance Survival guide written by our Financial Counsellor to share with the families they work with to prepare them financially for Christmas. Tips included Budgeting, Gifts, Food, Back to School. They were also asked to be mindful of the necessity of their families (some were receiving the increased COVID Centrelink job seeker payments) when submitting their request forms to their supervisors. The numbers of requests for families was down by about 30% from last year.

The monetary donations were converted by the



Greater Shepparton Foundation into \$50 grocery cards and together with the \$40 grocery cards received from Commonwealth Bank's operation Plum Pudding, were allocated to families. The gift cards were allocated according to number and ages of family members as well as any notes the worker had provided.

As restrictions eased further we were able to have a small group of volunteers work in the training rooms to sort through the existing gifts in the store room and provide some families with both gifts and vouchers. The volunteers labeled and packed bags



and boxes on behalf of the staff and finance did the same with the vouchers. Staff were then required to sign for and collect their vouchers from reception.

A request was sent to staff to collect feedback from the families whom they had assisted over Christmas. I heard back from 13 staff members.

- All responses indicated that families were very appreciative of the vouchers and food received.
- Vouchers were cited as being more popular/ useful than baskets of food as there was less waste and more choice.
- Staff said it was easier to deliver vouchers than baskets
- Feedback about the online donation page indicated that we need to ensure donors understand how the funds are distributed.

Christmas 2020 was a very different process at FamilyCare but I believe the end result was the same. We were able to stand by our promise to make sure those who needed assistance received it.

Katie Huddleston

**Shep 12636** – loved the vouchers and said it was more helpful than the hamper. The hamper they have had in previous years and said that they didn't like all of the items and there was some wastage of food not being consumed. The vouchers were put to very good use and everything purchased was eaten and enjoyed.

**Shep 13672** – the vouchers were extremely helpful for her family. They have not had the hampers in the past as they are new to the area, however could not have gotten through Christmas without them. They were able to buy food that they knew their young children would enjoy.

**Shep 11894**—Vouchers more helpful than the hampers. Receiving a pudding, ham or chocolates is always eaten and nice to receive. The vouchers enabled him to buy food that he knew his family would eat and not waste- quote "it's helpful to have choice". He also received a small food hamper from the school his children attend (Bourchier St) from the welfare coordinator which contained frozen meals and he said that this was also helpful over the school holidays – simple roasts.

NDIS No- 430745983 family are very grateful to receive the vouchers and presents. Jack's mum, Melissa said that Jack was excited to choose something he likes in JB HiFi. It was a great help as the family was having relocation and financial difficulties during Christmas.

My clients (all refugee/CALD background) were very happy to be receiving vouchers. Some of them didn't really know how to use them but I explained how easy it is and suggested they ask for help at the shop if they couldn't remember. It was sooo much easier to transport (especially to Wodonga) and I actually spread the vouchers out between all of my families (Shep9152, Shep11781, Shep11934, Shep12941, Shep11760, Shep11781 Shep12950 and Shep11653)...not sure if you want to pass that on but I felt that they were generous enough amounts for me to be able to do that. I also took one of the clients shopping with the vouchers for Rebel sport after Christmas and bought him a new pair of soccer boots, showing him how to use the vouchers. (Shep12941/ Shep12942)

Also, it was way easier for OHS. I didn't have to worry about hurting myself carrying the huge baskets or having to keep anything cool for a long drive.



I have had overwhelming feedback from the C2K mums with being grateful for the help they received at Christmas.

The vouchers were very popular.

Attached is a photo a C2K mum sent me last week - it was of the sensory sand that she bought with her Dotz voucher.

The mum had never been in the shop before and was very grateful for the help with educational toys for her girls.

I know I won't have feedback from clients, but I do have some from volunteers.

Obviously depending on the main feedback from clients (as they are the ones affected), but if it was decided to go back to baskets, I had plenty of volunteers that would have liked to be part of it again. There were many that were looking for it, but obviously understood the situation his year.

Unsolicited feedback I received from a client regarding the Xmas vouchers was that she was "very grateful and that the extra funds made all the difference to her being able to provide Christmas gifts for her children."

The client lives in Marysville, and I think the flexibility of being able to use the vouchers and shop where it was convenient and to buy exactly what she wanted was a positive. From me as a practitioner, the vouchers also made travel and delivery to clients much easier.

My clients were all appreciative of getting something.

**Shep 12579** Thank you so much this will be helpful money is tight at the moment. Vouchers a helpful I can get the few extra things to help make it a great Christmas day

**Shep 13408** . Thanks this is great. He went through the hamper with his 5 children making positive comments about each of the contents. (this was one of the boxes of food from Church of Christ ). He opened the box and pulled each item out one by one pointing out to the kids how great the items were. He was less ehtuisatic about the vouchers but still very appreciative.

**Shep 13569** this is lovely thank you.

All of my clients were new to FamilyCare so did not have the previous hampers to compare to. They were all very appreciative of receiving something that would make Christmas special.

**Client Sey4902**, she was provided with many vouchers as she has eight children. Two adult children, one 12 y/o male with ASD and five children aged 6 and under. The baby is now approx. 5 months old. FamilyCare supported this then single mother well (father out of home due to FV full exclusion and breach of bail orders). We were concerned that she would not manage financially over the XMAS period after the last FV incident.

FamilyCare were generous and when I handed the vouchers to the mother, she was full of gratitude.

On top, as you are probably aware that a anon donor from Seymour, gave funding to Seymour Toyworld and although I was on annual leave by then, I understand that one of the management team dropped of gifts to this family in need as an extra bonus. The verbal feedback has been wonderful.

I have some feedback from someone who donated to the appeal. Their comments were they did not understand the people wouldn't receive what they had chosen. They felt it wasn't until the end after they had carefully chosen the products they wanted to give that they were aware clients would receive a voucher for x amount of funds.

The families reactions that DSS saw were so very grateful, some were not expecting the amount of items/vouchers that they'd received.

When we mentioned there were vouchers in amongst their goodies a lot of responses were, "oh thank you".

Gifts that had been chosen for families children were perfect, lots of "they're going to love this, thank you".

One of our DSS Participants was wearing a nice cap whilst on program, staff commented on what a nice cap he had, he replied that he had got it with one of the Rebel Vouchers from FamilyCare.

And the smiles on the families faces when they received their gifts/vouchers was beautiful.

The vouchers were popular - especially with families with allergies and special dietary needs so they could purchase the exact food they were after for their family.

Several of my clients specifically requested food vouchers (e.g. Woolworths or Coles). I think there are many expenses around Christmas time, and they are short of money to buy essential items. Also, they must buy food to invite people. Having said that, they also seem to enjoy getting small gift items to get the Christmas feel. Clients with small children really like the toy gifts, especially for older children. Older children also like having clothing vouchers from Kmart or Big W. I think it is to prepare for the school starting. Thanks very much for organising the basket of joy.



465 gifts were received from The Market Place wishing tree

**“Helping to provide families with a better and brighter Christmas”**