

Kiawah Cares Made With Love: July 2019-June 2020 Season 4 in Review

By Donna Porritt, KCMWL Coordinator, 7/31/2020



Our fourth full season of Kiawah Cares Made With Love (MWL) ended on 6/30, based on the Kiawah Cares Foundation fiscal year. We remained **focused on bringing love and comfort to our underserved (and under-appreciated) Johns and Wadmalaw Islands' neighbors mainly through handmade items**. We expanded the groups we work with and the residents served. We focused on several core items: helping children associate reading with comfort mainly through our blanket/pillow/book sets; helping adults through blankets, scarves/shawls, cloth bags and toiletry packages; and providing a variety of appreciation gifts for teachers, caregivers, new moms and reading awards for children. I regularly ask our MWL Team "Do we all still believe in the mission and support what we are providing?" – and there is always a unanimous and enthusiastic "Yes!". I can never say it often enough or mean it more: **MWLn have amazing hearts to serve!**

We were on a run rate for a record year in terms of numbers of volunteers, hours logged, groups served, products distributed, deliveries made and planned – even after Hurricane Dorian interrupted plans last Fall. Then, Covid19 struck in March...and like so many in the world our MWL charity that relies on group participation and in-person deliveries of thousands of items to old and young alike in congregant settings was adversely affected. Yet, we still set some records! Our terrific MWL Leadership Team and our major recipient groups stepped up, made adjustments, and – though a mere shadow of our usual MWL – pressed on in new ways: postponing to the Fall still-desired school events; revising packaging and delivery methods to minimize contact as we made deliveries through June; and offering ways for MWLn to work from home. Here are **Season 4 Highlights**:

About Our Deliveries

We established **new relationships** with several Johns and Wadmalaw Islands churches, Blessing Baskets, Meals on Mondays and Rural Housing. We **deepened relationships** with Mt. Zion and Haut Gap schools, and continued strong relationships with E.L. Frierson and Angel Oak schools, groups that care for the aged, and outreach groups like Our Lady of Mercy, among others.

Numbers can't tell the whole story, but when you see the quantities you can also think of the number of lives touched. MWL delivered more than 7,400 items through 57 deliveries on 47 delivery days, and delivered items to 22 Sea Islands' organizations (excluding the deliveries and additional groups included in the **Face Mask Project** discussed later in this report). We made one delivery to each of nine groups – 2 for the first time – and as many as 11 deliveries to another, with the majority receiving 3 to 4 deliveries throughout the Season. Some highlights of those deliveries and organizations:

- **Angel Oak Elementary School: MWL delivered 2,060 items** – including blanket/pillow/book sets, toiletry packs for Hygiene Classes, reading folders, and books for summer programs. *We postponed Mother's Day, Teacher Appreciation and Star Reader celebrations into the Fall due to Covid19 so have more than 1,000 items ready and awaiting the start of the new school year.* A heart-warming item: we made sure the "graduating" 5th graders got their Star Reader awards of a specially-made book bag, bookmark and new book; these were given them in their summer packets.
- **E.L. Frierson Elementary School: MWL delivered 556 items**, made up of mainly blankets, pillows, and books, including books for their summer reading program. *Mother's Day, Teacher Appreciation and Star Reader Awards were postponed into the Fall due to Covid19 so we have another 225 items ready to deliver when school resumes.*
- **Mt. Zion Elementary: MWL delivered 1,143 items** including blanket/pillow/book sets, Buddy Loveys, toiletries, and more than 330 items for the first-ever Valentine's Day store where the kids were able to choose from a selection of items (EZPZ bags, clutches, key fobs and more) for their loved one that they paid for by making Valentine Cards MWL delivered to JI Post Acute residents. We also gave Star Reader Puppy Pillows and books to "graduating" 5th graders.
- **Haut Gap Middle School: MWL delivered 624 items**, from toiletries and purses and to scarves, bookmarks and cards. We established a relationship with HG's Junior Beta Club and brought large bags of selvages from our fleece yardage, gave a tutorial, and members made braided pulls for MWL to give to area animal rescues and shelters.
- **Our Lady of Mercy: MWL delivered 1,119 items**, including our New Mom "pamper" kits for their Prenatal Program, key fobs, scarves, hats, books, toiletries, and more. One of our favorite contacts retired from OLM so we gave her lovely Made With Love gifts to thank her for all her work through the years and so she can remember us all!
- **Groups caring for the elderly** – Johns Island Post Acute, Respite Care Charleston, Sea Islands Day Care -- received nearly **150 items from MWL**, from adult blankets and Veteran's Day Flag blankets and cards, to a new specialty: sewing bells on our fleece-braided pull-toys to use on doors to alert when a client tries to exit. In addition, **MWL made 150 greeting cards for the Rotary Club and eldercare-facility staff** to send to quarantined elderly to buoy their spirits.
- **Animal shelters: MWL delivered 391 items** --consisting mainly of fleece braided pull-toys made from our fleece selvages -- to our liaison who delivers to local shelters and rescue groups.
- New relationships:
 - **Blessing Baskets**, a program of the Sea Islands Hunger Awareness Foundation, **received more than 650 MWL items**. For their special "Grandparents Raising Grandchildren" appreciation time at their monthly

distribution, MWL gave 50 adult fleece-tie blankets for each. Plus, we gave BB key fobs and carabiners with MWL tags for their volunteers as a way to thank them for all THEY do to help our neighbors.

- **Meals on Mondays** – a program of Johns Island Presbyterian Church that delivers prepared meals weekly to families on Wadmalaw Island – **received 97 MWL items** to distribute to their clients, including adult blankets, scarves and hats as well as children blanket/pillow/book sets.
- **Hands of Christ received 250** of MWL’s in-demand “EZPZ” cotton reversible totes to use in their distribution of uniforms and supplies at the start of the last school year.
- **St. James Bethel, Hebron Zion, and Wesley United Methodist churches received a total of 264 MWL items:** adult blankets, scarves and shawls; children blanket/pillow sets; pre-cut blankets for one of their Senior Groups to tie as service projects; and books for a summer camp.
- **Rural Housing** put on a Veteran’s Day Appreciation Event for their residents where we were honored to **present 8 Veterans with specially-made red/white/blue flag fleece-tie blankets and “Thank you for Your Service” Cards**, all delivered with a salute from one of our own MWLers who is a veteran.

About the Value of Our Goods Delivered

In addition to items that are *Made With Love*, **we distributed numerous non-handmade items** as part of our MWL packages to our neighbors; most notable and with the greatest volume:

- **2,115 loose toiletry items, valued at about \$3,175**
- **2,070+ books** – new and used (most thanks to a MWLer’s generous efforts with her local library)—**valued at \$17,500+**
- **135 Beanie Babies (donated by Kiawah Women’s Foundation) – valued at \$675**
- **300 carabiners used with our key fobs – valued at \$300**

The following MWL categories of **handmade items**, when combined with the toiletries, books, Beanie Babies, and carabiners, total more than **7,400 items distributed, with a combined total fair-market value exceeding \$77,000:**

Item	Number Delivered	Fair-market value
Fleece-tie blankets, various sizes	490	\$24,500
Fleece-tie pillows	284	\$8,520
Star Reader Awards (various)	48	\$2,400
Purses+ (fabric, various styles)	95	\$3,325
EZPZ reversible fabric totes	259	\$5,680
Scarves & shawls (fleece & knitted/crocheted)	197	\$1,970
Sachets (fleece)	50	\$250
Heat/cold rice-filled packs (fleece and fabric)	14	\$280
Doggie pull-toys (fleece and fabric)	347	\$3,470
Greeting cards/gift tags/misc	750	\$1,875
Key fobs (fabric)	429	\$3,000
Totals	2,963	\$55,270

Another Covid19-caused adjustment: MWL’s EZPZ fabric totes were intended to capitalize on the reusable grocery bag trend. Now plastic and paper bags are back “in”. Future uses of EZPZs may change but we know they will find new life for our neighbors in need!

About Our Budget

Detailed budget accounting is maintained by KCF but, in a nutshell: We **began Season 4 with \$9,000 for our products, and ended Season 4 with \$13,500**, thanks to: **nearly \$10,000 in cash donations** throughout Season 4; the **deep discounts/free products afforded us by partner-suppliers** – Begin With Books, YourFleece.com, PillowFlex.com and Paint Brush Studios Fabric; our well-earned reputation for wasting NOTHING; and the extraordinary **generosity of several MWLers who combined had nearly \$5,000 in MWL expenses for which reimbursement was not sought.**

About Our Volunteers

MWLers ROCK! Talented, dedicated, productive, and humble. We appreciate every volunteer’s interest and time:

- We held **32 Fleece+Fraturdays (F+Fs)**, our mainstay production time. This is versus the **planned 57 for Season 4** as the final **15 F+Fs were cancelled due to Covid19.**
- **310+ attended the 32 F+Fs – folks from Kiawah, Seabrook, Johns and Wadmalaw Islands**, some came once, some to most all, averaging **10 volunteers a week** (the number grows each year.). We had **43 individual volunteers, including 7 men.**
- MWLers reported more than **2,600 volunteer hours despite the 15 cancelled F+Fs.** There were a lot more hours reported for March through June but a technology glitch at KICA resulted in those hours being inadvertently erased. Still, just on the documented hours tracked, MWLers volunteer hours have a **fair market value of over \$66,000.**

About MWL Leadership

The **MWL Leadership Team** amazes me! Tireless, dedicated, talented, giving, fun – I remain so honored to be a part of the Team...and I am ever-humbled and proud of all! I became a full-time KI resident just before Covid19 hit, and along with full-time

residents **Jane Payne, Ruth Flynn, Cathy Lavin** and **Jennifer Bland** hosted Fleece+ Fridays through mid-March, and together we did MWL planning, and coordinated and made deliveries, as well as produced MWL products.

- **Jane Payne** also again led our non-toiletry and non-fabric (versus fleece) supplies ordering, storage, organization and inventory management efforts, compiles our fleece kits, and is Lead Liaison with key suppliers;
- **Ruth Flynn** also continued as Lead Liaison to Frierson, KICA/Kiawah Cares Foundation, and Begin With Books, and served as our legal guru;
- **Cathy Lavin** also continued as Lead Liaison with the various Sea Islands Hunger Awareness contacts, Kiawah Women's Foundation, and Mt. Zion, and helps with MWL marketing and communications. She also was Lead in the Face Mask Project detailed below;
- **Jennifer Bland** also continued as Lead Liaison to Respite Care Charleston, JI Post Acute, and Haut Gap, and assists Team members wherever needed;
- Part-timer **Jeanne Spray** continued to lead all MWL things related to fabric (versus fleece), including establishing fabric supplier relationships, selecting fabrics, compiling kits for MWL seamstresses, and holding tutorials – and sewing;
- Part-timer **Sally Reed** continued to lead our Toiletries Program, doing all organizing, purchasing, storing, compiling and major deliveries, and again was Lead Liaison to Our Lady of Mercy.

KICA/KCF's staff assisted with accounting and certain administrative items, and supplied meeting space at Beachwalker facilities. KICA/KCF also generously cover the costs of our vital MWL off-site storage, thus enabling us to focus our resources on making our MWL items for neighbors. During this pandemic, MWL Leadership also uses it as our workspace to continue MWL production.

The Face Mask Project

Probably one of the most amazing and heart-warming events to come out of the pandemic is the **Face Mask Project (FMP) that started up in March**. Recognizing the potential need very early-on – in fact, on March 21 -- **MWL Leader Cathy Lavin and our valued partner and MWLer Shirley Salvo** – who heads the Sea Island Hunger Awareness Foundation – teamed to spearhead an initiative that had a dedicated team of seamstresses, fabric, elastic, and a sanctioned pattern ready to go by the following week. Cathy led the logistical effort, reached out to potential recipient groups, coordinated kit pick-up and delivery every few days for several weeks, made the distributions; she also “kitted” the fabric and elastic -- and sewed! Shirley so generously donated the majority of the fabric and cut fabric and elastic for Cathy to kit for those who were production seamstresses. Some FMP seamstresses also donated fabric and supplies in addition to their sewing skills. The result?

- A mighty **team of 10** – 9 seamstresses and one fabric cutter, some MWLers, some newcomers – worked diligently at home.
- **Donated fabric exceeded \$400**, with some \$350 worth donated by Shirley Salvo.
- A total of **850** fabric masks were made and distributed, ALL at no charge to recipients.
- A total of **20 organizations** -- including many of our MWL partners but also adding 9 new ones -- asked for and received masks, ranging from 10 for Backpack Buddies and 70 for Barrier Islands Free Medical Clinic, to 75 for Mt. Zion Elementary School staff/students and anywhere from 40 to 100 masks for several area churches that were diligently working to continue their service programs to neighbors. E.L. Frierson school did a great video posted on their Facebook page thanking the Team for their work, and touching thank-you messages were received from other groups.
- **Despite a shortage of elastic** once the nation caught on to mask making, the FMP had to “beg and borrow (though no stealing!)” elastic, wasting nothing as they got creative and took apart contour sheets, used pony tail elastics, and more.
- While their labors brought untold value to so many, at a Fair Market Value of even \$10 a mask, their labors brought more than **\$8,500 in product to those in need, at no charge**.

The vision, teamwork, logistics and talent remain inspiring, even after **production wound down after 7 weeks** since needs were filled and other mask sources were available. So many were appreciative and inspired by the FMP Team that many recipients made donations to Kiawah Cares Foundation. Beautiful!

In Summary

Throughout the abbreviated Season 4 – despite Hurricane Dorian and Covid19 – we were able to continue to show love and caring to our neighbors with items “Made With Love,” and demonstrate once again that truly “Kiawah Cares.” **THANK YOU and BLESS YOU!**

As We Begin Season 5

We have **nearly 2,000 completed items in storage (above and beyond those completed items set aside for postponed events/deliverables), and materials for 100+ blankets and 65+ pillow covers**. We look forward to some normalcy returning where we can again **meet for Fleece+Fridays** and enjoy the fellowship that is so vital to MWLers as together we serve our neighbors. As well, we look forward to being able to **hold the postponed events** mentioned earlier in this report. As always, we will **watch and listen for opportunities to continue to bring love and comfort to our neighbors**.

Spread the word: We welcome cash donations to KCF (earmarked for Made With Love), donations of new cotton fabric, anti-pill fleece, new travel-size toiletries, and new/gently-used children's books. And, of course, we ALWAYS welcome more volunteers!