

## Kiawah Cares Made With Love: July 2018-June 2019 Season 3 in Review

By Donna Porritt, KCMWL Coordinator, 7/15/2019



### Overview

Our third full season is “in the books”. Kiawah Cares Made With Love (MWL) stayed focused on bringing love and comfort to our underserved (and under-appreciated) Johns and Wadmalaw Island neighbors, while expanding the groups we work with, the residents served, and the products and services offered. (All, Made With Love!) We also diligently worked to advance our goal for elementary school children to associate reading with comfort. A year of hundreds of notes and pictures shows recipients’ unbridled joy, surprise, wide-eyed wonder, and appreciation; we see the peaceful faces of children snuggling reading books and sleeping comfortably while napping at school, and seniors contented in being remembered and being warm; we get spontaneous hugs from little ones and seniors and teachers -- and even wagging tails and squeals from the animals that receive our wares... All MWLers agree: “THIS is why we do it!” A ton of work goes into being able to witness these desired end results. Here are Season 3 highlights:

### Season 3 Notable Firsts – that we will continue to build on in Season 4

- We **renamed our weekly MWL “Fleece Fridays” to “Fleece+ Fridays”** to better reflect that while fleece is our mainstay medium, we also sew cotton fabric projects, do lots of toiletries collecting and packaging, and make new items from used greeting cards.
- We established a relationship with the new **Sea Island Adult Day Care** on Bohicket – thanks to our friends at Our Lady of Mercy – and were able to make a first delivery of several blankets and shawls to get them started.
- We expanded our reach to **Meals on Wheels**, giving them adult blankets – including Veteran patriotic blankets -- and toiletry kits for their clients, some 300 items in total.
- We did workshops for **Haut Gap teenagers**, donating supplies to make as service projects 10 blankets and 12 wreaths (made from bags of our leftover fleece cuttings), and also gave more than 120 toiletry items and cosmetic bags for their Student Store.
- We supported **Kiawah Cares Foundation’s (KCF)** Christmas gift drive by making 58 scarves for adults and kids, as well as 88 gift tags made from recycled cards.
- We supported the fund-raising efforts of the **Kiawah Island Turtle Patrol** with a dozen turtle/nature-themed items including totes, blankets, pillows, and sachets.
- We established a relationship with Kiawah’s **Shirley Salvo and the Sea Islands Hunger Awareness Foundation**. In addition to donating sufficient fabric from their leftover pillow case projects – enabling us to make nearly 400 of our cloth EZPZ tote bags – Shirley personally introduced us to her contacts at several area churches who so effectively reach our neighbors. In addition to the Foundation’s **Water Wellness** project leader, we established relationships with:
  - **New Bethlehem Baptist Church**, donating about 200 items including child blanket/pillow/book sets, adult blankets, shawls, Emergency Kits (blankets, toiletries, towels and such) – and a bag of children’s books.
  - **Bethlehem St. James**, donating about 65 items including blankets, lanyards, totes, sachets -- and a bag of books.
  - **Hebron Zion**, donating a couple of dozen items from blankets and key fobs, to scarves and pamper kits.
- One MWLer worked with the **Kiawah Women’s Foundation** and made 110 scarves for their student holiday gift drive.
- We were introduced by a new MWLer to **Mt. Zion’s Head Start** staff and we brought each of their students a blanket/pillow/book set, and their Teachers about 120 items for Teacher Appreciation month.
- As a result of the **KCF Volunteer Fair**, we established a relationship with **Hands of Christ**, and are preparing a Season 4 summer delivery of 250 cloth “EZPZ” bags to replace plastic bags used to package uniforms and school supplies for island students.
- We held a summer workshop for **Charleston Collegiate students and chaperones**, where they helped make blankets, pillow covers, scarves and braided dog toys for MWL deliverables...a wonderful way to encourage service and crafting!
- The Mother’s Day “store” we host for **Angel Oak** requires that the kids “pay for” their items by making “Thinking of You” cards that MWL takes to the **Respite Care Charleston (RCC) clients**. We delivered 49 cards to RCC and were SO touched when told the RCC clients wanted to do “Think Spring” cards for the kids – which we delivered! We were heart-warmed by the “book end” generational reach – all from things Made With Love!

### Season 3 Ongoing Relationships

We are delighted that we have been able to deepen our relationships with our longer-standing “partners”:

- **Angel Oak Elementary**, where in Season 3 we supplied more than 1700 items: blanket/pillow/book sets for all incoming pre-K students; comfort blankets and Buddy Loveys for counselors to use with kids; kids’ scarves, mittens, hats; 135 7-piece toiletry kits for their Hygiene classes; pocket pillows and books for readership awards; MWL items for the kids to “buy” at the annual Mother’s Day Store that we host; and a large selection of MWL items for all teachers and staff for Teacher Appreciation month. **New this Season:** We gave a supply of adult blankets and specially-assembled multi-item Emergency Sacks for use with the families of students needing extra help. At a teacher’s request, special reading folders were designed and sewn by two MWLers.
- **E. L. Frierson School**, where we delivered more than 800 items, including: blanket/pillow/book sets for every student that ELF awarded as kids achieved key reading levels; 27 special totes for Teacher Appreciation Month; and comfort blankets and Buddy Loveys for counselors and teachers to use with kids.

**New this Season:** We made large floor pillows for use in the Library, provided specially-assembled multi-item Emergency Kits; experimented (successfully!) with putting beads and mylar in some Buddy Loveys – at ELF’s request – to improve the sensory comfort for kids; hosted an all-school Mother’s Day Store with over 350 MWL items for the kids to “buy”; and provided special pocket-pillows and books for ELF’s “star readers”.

- **Our Lady of Mercy**, to whom we provided more than 600 items, among them: 17 New Mom Flannel Sacks (made from flannel donated to MWL) for their pre-natal program, stocked with items including totes, sachets, key fobs, eyeglass cases, pampering items and books for babies; adult and children’s blankets; and the lion’s share of our toiletries, used with Open Pantry clients.

**New this Season:** We made 75 machine washable/dryable/reversible “EZPZ” bags for use with the OLM Arthritis Clinic, enabling clients to more easily carry groceries walking home from the grocery store; and we provided blanket/pillow/book sets for the 35 children enrolled in their summer programs.

- **Respite Care Charleston**, where we supplied 125 items for their clients, among them blankets for warmth – including patriotic blankets for Respite Vets – and shawls. We also brought the Angel Oak “thinking of you” cards to delighted RCC clients.

**New this Season:** We made fidget blankets to keep dementia patients occupied; colorful fringed “lapkins” to cover client clothing while eating; “braided bell alarms” where we sewed bells into braided pulls made from fleece selvage, for staff to put on facility doors to help alert when clients wander. And we brought delighted Angel Oak students cards from the RCC clients.

- **Johns Island Health and Rehab Center**, where we hosted a “Veteran’s Day” awarding of our patriotic blankets to nursing home Vets, and provided two dozen items for their Bingo Store: blankets, cloth totes, lapkins, shawls, wreaths and lanyards.
- **Animal Rescue Shelters** were supported with eight deliveries by our Liaison Sharon Hite and totaled more than 400 braided dog pulls/cat toys made from fleece scraps, several dozen blankets from fabrics not suitable for our MWL projects, and worn towels.

### Season 3 “By the Numbers”

As always, while numbers don’t tell the whole story, they go a long way in showing the servant-hearts, love, and dedication of our MWL volunteers, the generosity of our donors, and the need and receptivity on the neighboring islands.

### **We made 57 deliveries on 44 “delivery days” throughout the year – nearly doubling last Season.**

- In addition to items that are “Made With Love”, **we distributed numerous donated items** as part of our MWL packages to our neighbors, most notably and with the greatest volume:
  - 2107 loose toiletry items, including larger-size items for families, valued at about \$3,160
  - 546 books (as part of our blanket and pillow sets) with a fair market value exceeding \$3,300
  - 111 gently-used towels (as part of our various Care Sacks) with a fair market value \$389
- And here’s a summarized look at the major MWL categories of handmade items, that, when combined with the toiletries, towels and books, total more than **6,138 items distributed (nearly tripling last year’s volume), with a fair-market value** (based on Internet sources, KCF, Communities in Schools) **exceeding \$91,000:**

Item	Number Delivered	Fair-market value
Fleece-tie blankets, various sizes	723	\$36,150
Fleece-tie pillows	469	\$14,070
Animal Pocket Pillows (fleece and fabric) & books	85	\$5,100=pillows, \$1,275=books
Buddy loveys (fleece)	78	\$1,950
Totes (fabric, various sizes) and ID tags (metal)	111	\$6,660
Purses/Bags (fabric, various styles)	129	\$4,515
Tissue pack covers (fabric)	127	\$635
Scarves & shawls (fleece & knitted/crocheted)	374	\$3,740
Hats, hair bands/bows (fleece, knitted)	44	\$440
Sachets (fleece)	329	\$1,645
Heat/cold rice-filled packs (fleece and fabric)	92	\$1,840
Wreaths (fleece squares)	26	\$910
Doggie pull-toys (fleece and fabric)	423	\$4,230
Greeting cards/gift tags, recycled	150	\$150
Key fobs (fabric)	214	\$1,498
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3,374</b>	<b>\$84,808</b>

Numbers and the hundreds of pictures and notes that cheer our hearts help make all these efforts worthwhile. There are also “**one time” and emergency things** that happen that enrich us even more because we can show love in extra special ways:

- Through our work with Mt. Zion Head Start, we learned of the **Johns Island family of 8 burned out of their home** in April. MWL quickly provided our Emergency Care Sacks, filled with specially selected items for each of the 2 adults and 6 children. There were nearly 100 items like blankets, pillows, totes, books, sox, sachets, and towel sets, in addition to 100 toiletries.
- In January, a local church advised us of **a man temporarily sheltering in a vacant house on Bohicket**. MWL provided a Care Sack containing a large blanket, several pairs of sox, a towel set, a warm scarf and a grooming bag with a dozen essentials.

### About Our Volunteers

MWLeers are prolific, dedicated, hard-working and humble! Every volunteer is appreciated – no matter the time they can lend or the level of talent they bring. Some fun facts:

- MWL **logged 49 volunteers at Fleece+ Fridays (F+Fs)** this year, some coming once, some most every week.
- Season 3's **46 F+Fs: 359 people attended, or 8 per week; this translates to just shy of 1000 volunteer hours on Fridays** alone.
- The MWL team members who tracked and reported their Season 3 hours – not all do! -- logged over **4,325 hours on MWL activities**, including F+Fs, deliveries, work at our storage facilities, and, of course, producing the items – all Made With Love!
- At the 2019 nationally-recognized “value of a volunteer hour” of \$25.43, **MWLeers gave close to \$110,000 in labor value.**
- Volunteers are **part-time and full-time residents, adults and children, local and from 6 other states.**
- This year, **9 men volunteered with MWL**, making blankets as well as helping with logistics.

I can never say enough about the **MWL Leadership Team**, which expanded to seven this year. We often remark with awe (and appreciation) the complementary skills, experiences, personalities, talents, and desires each brings. This year, more took on Lead Liaison Leadership roles as our partner/recipient relationships and resulting product needs expanded. Together, we develop strategy, identify goals and plans, welcome and teach newcomers, make products, and much more! I'm a part-time resident so rely on the Leadership Team in ways too numerous to mention; I'm honored to be a part of the Team...and humbled and so proud of all!

This is just a sampling of what the Leadership Team members do, in addition to all the above: Full-time residents **Jane Payne, Ruth Flynn, Cathy Lavin** and newbie **Jennifer Bland** keep Made With Love going year-round, hosting Fleece+ Fridays and handling day-to-day logistics. Jane leads all our non-toiletry supplies ordering, storage, organization and inventory management efforts, compiles our fleece kits, and is Lead Liaison with key suppliers; Ruth is Lead Liaison to Frierson, KICA/Kiawah Cares Foundation, and Begin With Books, is our legal guru, and our new-craft experimenter; Cathy is Lead Liaison with the various Sea Islands Hunger Awareness contacts, Kiawah Women's Foundation, and Mt. Zion, and helps with MWL marketing and communications; Jennifer is Lead Liaison to Respite Care Charleston, JI Rehab and Health Care, and Haut Gap, and assists Team members wherever needed. Part-timer **Jeanne Spray** leads all MWL things related to fabric (versus fleece), including selecting fabrics, compiling kits for MWL seamstresses, and holding tutorials. Part-timer **Sally Reed** leads our Toiletries Program, doing all organizing, purchasing, storing, compiling and major deliveries, and is Lead Liaison to Our Lady of Mercy.

**We are grateful that KICA/KCF's** Holly Newman, Carla Howard and staff assist with accounting, administration and outreach.

### Season 3 Donations and Supplies

As everyone associated with and exposed to MWL is aware: we pride ourselves in wasting NOTHING! The ingenuity of MWLeers allows us to maximize all donated and purchased supplies, as well as stretch every dollar. Season 3 highlights include:

- \$14,500 in **cash donations**, and we end the Season with \$9,000 remaining. Detailed budget accounting is maintained by KCF; KCF also pays for off-site storage space for our thousands of completed goods and delivery staging; toiletries storage is gifted by Sally Reed. Supplies for projects underway are in our storage closet at the KICA Beachwalker offices where F+Fs are held.
- About \$1,500 worth of **fabric donations** from 3 individuals and 2 partner organizations.
- Nearly \$5,000 in **unreimbursed expenses generously donated by a few MWLeers.**
- Nearly 1200 yards of patterned and solid fleece (enough to yield about 700 blankets) purchased at a blended rate of \$2.93/yard (about 1/3 the retail cost at the best sales), or about \$3,500 worth -- thanks to our **sponsor/supplier YourFleece.com.**
- 425 pieces of dental toiletries, with a retail value of about \$500, donated by sponsor/partner **Lowcountry Dental on Maybank.**
- 442 **children's books donated by Kiawah author Bill Guiffres**, retail value of \$5,500 (Bill moved to NY recently; we'll miss him).
- 120 new pre-school books – valued at \$720 – donated by **partner Begin With Books.**
- A dozen large **boxes of books donated throughout the Season 3** by MWLeer and part-time resident Denise Pierson from her work with the library near her home. Dedicated, knowledgeable MWLeers reviewed each book, kept quantities for MWL projects, and gave remaining books to groups such as the Reading Partners Program, Johns Island Library, schools, and island churches.
- Hundreds of unused **travel-size toiletries donated** by Kiawah residents. Cash donations allowed MWL to supplement as needed.

In summary: Season 3 was awesome! THANK YOU and BLESS YOU!

### Bring on Season 4....

We now have a routine of items and timing for many of our recipients/partners, so work months in advance to prepare for those deliverables. We expect deliveries in Season 4 to grow, especially as we work with the **Sea Islands Blessing Baskets** and **Water Wellness** programs to deliver at least our blankets to their adult clients, and learn more of **Hands of Christ's** needs. As always, we will watch for new opportunities to bring love and comfort to our neighbors, all with items Made With Love. With MWLeers big hearts and “can do” spirit, we in Leadership keep a watchful eye on overload and mission creep -- but agree those are great problems to have! Please spread the word: We always welcome cash donations to KCF (earmarked for Made With Love), and donations of new cotton fabric, anti-pill fleece, travel-size toiletries, and children's books. And, of course, we ALWAYS welcome more volunteers!