

One fall day in 2018 my friend June asked me to help her sort toys for an afternoon at Village Green Thrift Shop. Six years later I'm still there - sorting, bagging, pricing and tidying up the shelves in the Toy Department! I am following in the footsteps of my parents. When I mentioned to my daughter that volunteering at the Thrift Shop used to be for old people, she looked at me and said "Well, yes, it still is!" In reality, people of many ages work or volunteer at the Shop.

Much credit goes to four visionary women who opened the first MCC Thrift Shop in Altona, Manitoba expecting the project might last a few months. More than 50 years later, there are over 100 shops in North America producing millions of dollars for MCC every year. 2024 was an exceptional year with Thrift Stores donating \$39,565,000 to support MCC's work in 45 countries around the world impacting many vulnerable communities. These funds provided relief and hygiene kits, emergency food assistance, blankets, education and peacebuilding projects, and safe water. Together with my husband Bruno, we have spent many years with MCC in southern Africa and have seen firsthand how MCC's work has positively impacted people and communities.

I'm glad to report that Village Green also supports local needs in the community such as The Bridge, youth work in the Meadowgreen neighbourhood, and St. Michael's Community School just down the street. Here it might be support for the nutrition program or supplying clothes to students and families in need or hosting a pancake breakfast.

I learned the values of reducing, reusing, repurposing and not wasting anything from my mother. These values fit well within the Thrift Shop goals. Recently, staff and volunteers were invited to a webinar on the environmental impact of textiles. Did you know that "on a per-person basis, each Canadian throws away approximately around thirty-seven kilograms (81 pounds) of textiles every year. This waste contributes to the rapid filling of landfills and creates significant environmental concerns." <https://waste.solutions/blog/textile-waste-in-canada/>. Now more than ever it is important to support Thrift Stores which help to reduce our carbon footprint.

Village Green is a great place to find good deals. Where else can you find a good quality Cobble Hill puzzle for \$6 or a beautiful fashion doll straight from my sister Colleen's "Barbie Hair Salon" with clothes and accessories for \$5 or a sparkly, pink t-shirt with unicorns for \$2! In these tough economic times, it is a service to the community to provide items that are affordable.

I am grateful for the camaraderie among volunteers and staff, our spacious store, and the opportunity to be involved in sharing God's love through the work of Village Green. Please bring your donations, come on in and check out all our interesting items!

Lois Baerg

Village Green Thrift Shop Volunteer