

Free Christmas Day Lunch Report 2021

Thank you for Didcot Town Council's kind donation toward my Free Christmas Day Lunch for people on their own

As you may know I have held this event for 15 out of the past 16 years. I started it because I felt that no-one should be alone on Christmas Day, I wanted to ensure that some of the older and more vulnerable people of Didcot would have a lovely Christmas dinner and more importantly be in the company of others on that day. Loneliness is a real problem for a lot of people but especially on Christmas Day, the joy it brings to my attendees being in a social environment on this very special day is incredibly rewarding and humbling. I am able to do what I do with the support of organisations such as Didcot Town Council and of course with my team of volunteers who are willing to give up their day for this worthy cause. It takes a lot of organising and co-ordination to make it happen but it is definitely worth the time, effort, trials and tribulations

This year was very challenging as of course we are still in the midst of a pandemic. I was delighted to be able to have attendees at the venue unlike last year but quite a few of the Organisations who approached me e.g. Caring Companies, Social workers, The Adult Mental Health Team, Age UK etc. had clients who were too anxious or felt too vulnerable to leave their homes, therefore I offered to have the dinners delivered to them. Leading up to the day a few of those who were originally going to attend also decided to have a dinner delivered instead so constantly having to change the lists for my volunteer drivers to swap from picking up a person to delivering a dinner instead was quite a feat and could not be finalised until Christmas Eve. Fortunately, it all worked on the day although I must say the logistics were very challenging. There were 29 dinner deliveries made, 22 attendees (most of whom needed a lift to and from the venue) and 16 volunteers in the venue including the chefs and 6 delivery/pick up drivers

The attendees arrived from midday, dinner was served at 1pm (and the dinner deliveries were picked up) then we watched the Queen's speech, played bingo and had a raffle in the afternoon before each of them left with a hamper of goodies. A hamper was also sent out to everyone who had a dinner deliver. Everyone had a fabulous day including the volunteers

With the funds I received I also did the following: -

- I made a trip into Oxford on the Sunday before Christmas to give hot drinks and snacks to any homeless people I saw on the streets
- I also gifted two young children a present each as their mother made a plea on Facebook
- One of the organisations who contacted me; The Adult Mental Health Team asked me to provide a dinner for a mother and daughter who could not afford Christmas Dinner, I

of course had two delivered together with a present for the 10-year-old child and a hamper of goodies

- I was contacted by a school in Milton about a family in need who could not afford a Christmas Dinner, one of my lovely volunteer drivers delivered four dinners and a hamper to them together with gifts I had bought for the young son and daughter



