

Donated guitars bring warmth of music to Out of the Cold

A social media movement has brought music to the Warming Centre

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It's the little touches that help to make a place feel more like home, and while the Out of the Cold Warming Centre isn't a permanent home for any of its visitors, it is proof that little things can still make a big difference.

The warming centre has recently come into possession of a pair of guitars for those who visit to make use of. The idea itself came from Out of the Cold's Dave Ashworth, who is also a prominent local musician, and he put out the call on social media to help make the idea a reality.

"I started here last November," Ashworth explained.

"What really happened was one of the staff said 'hey, one of the guests that comes in plays guitar.' He was going to bring down his guitar that he has at home, and I was going to bring mine whatever night this guest came in, and I thought it would be nice to have something here a little more permanently. That's when I thought I'd use the power of social media and put it out there, and it works. People have a genuine desire,

I think, to help out or donate whatever they might have."

Once the call went out, there were a few false starts and missed connections, but eventually Ashworth managed to secure one acoustic and one electric guitar for those visiting the warming centre to play, which he said are comforts to people who might not otherwise have an instrument to play on.

"It's a universal language," he said. "Music is good in good times and in bad times."

The call for instruments must have struck a chord with people in the community, as Ashworth noted there were plenty of people offering to make donations in one form or another, either of instruments or of monetary donations that could be put towards musical accessories like wall hangers for the guitars.

"Businesses helped out too and gave us some discounts on strings," Ashworth said.

"A number of people donated. I had one guy, and this was kind of unique, but he was on the Borderland Musicians and Enthusiasts Facebook page, and he offered to send an acoustic guitar. I started talking to him and asked if he was from here, and he said 'No, I'm from Saskatchewan, I'm living out north of Red Deer right now.' He was willing to send it, but we started considering shipping costs and the length of time we're going to be open [this season] so I thought for



Dave Ashworth displays the pair of guitars that were donated to the Out of the Cold Warming Centre for guests to play with when they arrive in the evening. Being a longtime musician himself, when Ashworth learned some of the guests played guitar, he put a call out to social media to collect a few axes that could permanently live at the centre so that anyone was able to play an instrument to unwind or let their creativity flow.

—Ken Kellar photo

this year we're good."

So far Ashworth said there have been a handful of occasions where guests have played songs together, with others lending their voices or picking up a tambourine to play along. But the instruments are also there for solo use, allowing anyone at the warming centre to pick up a guitar and keep themselves company.

"Even in the last week we had a new guest come in and he grabbed it the first night and wanted to play it," he said.

"He got it in the morning too. It's nice to see. If it wasn't here then you might not even know some of these people

have a musical background. It's been very laid back."

The Out of the Cold Warming Centre might be full up on instruments right now, but Ashworth says as the program continues there's always a chance it could grow in some way.

He also added that the centre could still do with a donation of another guitar strap and a small practice amp for their electric guitar, should anyone still be looking to help support the initiative. Still, Ashworth said he's grateful to all of those who did reach out to him with offers of instruments or other donations to help provide a little bit of

music and a creative outlet to those in need.

"I think you want to provide any opportunity you can to dive into things they might not normally have access to," he explained.

"Maybe for various reasons they don't have a guitar at home, or don't have any instruments, and this is an option for them to come in and use. We encourage all the guests to just relax and treat it like your home, be respectful and we'll be respectful in return. They seem to enjoy it. Like I said earlier, music is a feel good thing. The feedback has been really good so far."

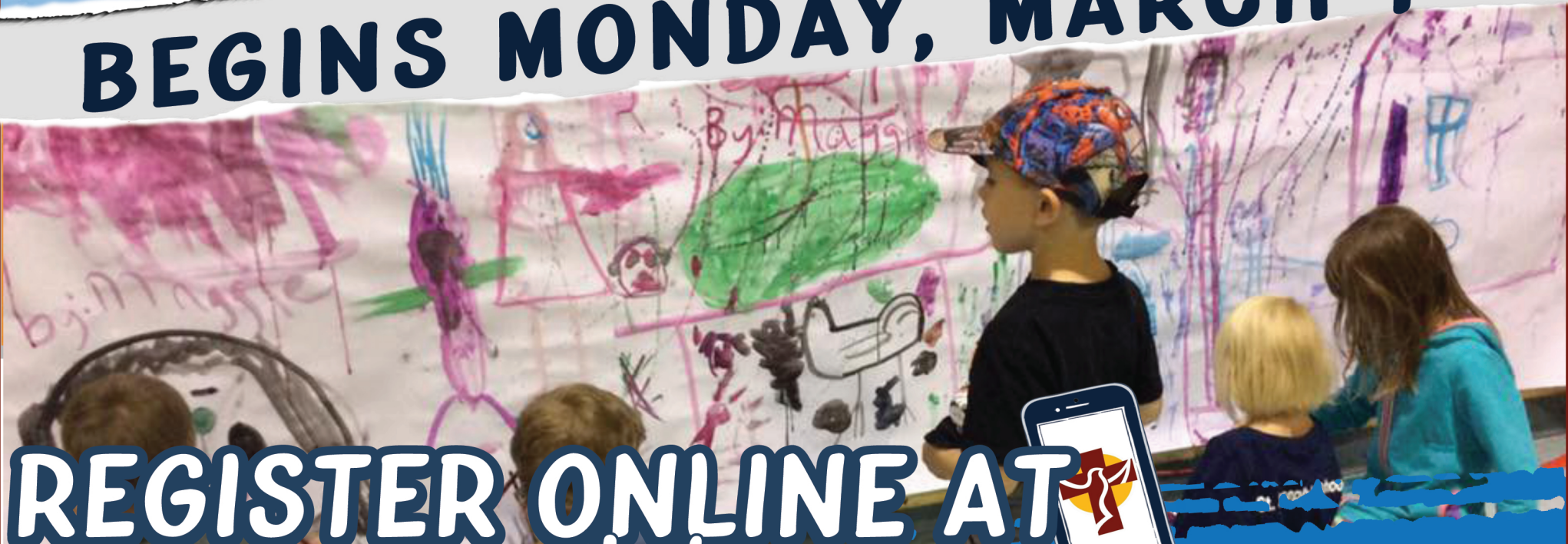
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—Dave Ashworth

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