

SHARING THE LOAD: BACKPACKS FILLED WITH LOVE St. Mark's Parish – Gatineau, Quebec.

Watch our promotional video here

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/12mc41F-3b-c2KZplUuiQ4jQKIHAa3LZB/view?usp=drivesdk>

Homelessness in Gatineau is at an all-time high. Outaouais area is the area in the province of Quebec where the number of people experiencing homelessness has increased the most in the last 4 years – 5 times more in 2022 in comparison to 2018. In Gatineau, 30% of them are female.

In light of this, our Christmas outreach program will transition from “Shoe Boxes” to “**Backpacks for our Neighbours in Need**”. We wish to support them during the coming winter months and to show them that we care and we are thinking about them. “*Sharing the Load: Backpacks Filled with Love*” will let them know “*They are Never Forgotten*”.

We will be collecting **NEW** items to fill the backpacks, as well as monetary donations that will be used to buy other articles to supplement the backpacks. Tax receipts will be issued for monetary donations of \$20 or more. Bins will be placed at the entrance to the church for your donated items during all the masses. Your monetary donations can be dropped in the collection baskets in an envelope indicating “**Backpacks**” or sent by E-Transfer to stmarkinterac@bell.net and indicating “**Backpacks**” in the message/comment section. You can also bring your donations every Monday morning from 9:00 am to 11:00 am to the church hall.

Along with the following items, a prayer card provided by the church, will be placed in each backpack. The reverse side of this card will acknowledge the generosity of St. Mark's parishioners.

- warm toque; scarf; waterproof mittens; warm socks; underwear; fleece blanket/throw; bar of soap; baby wipes; toothpaste; toothbrush; hairbrush/comb; non-perishable snacks

The church will provide the backpacks. In early December, the Youth Group will help to fill these backpacks with the items received. The backpacks will be delivered **directly** to those in need in our community by a few members of our parish.

At the end of each mass, we will hand out a list of the items you can purchase with other pertinent information. **For further information, please contact Linda Javornik (514) 882-4561, Shirley Frenette (819) 685-0576 or Claire Larochelle (819) 682-7235.**