

Believe Bags initiative returning for ninth annual year

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Starting this Friday (Nov. 12) and running until Dec. 12, the Believe Bag initiative is back for its ninth annual year, providing single moms with gifts for Christmas.

This year, the bags will be filled with gift cards as opposed to actual items, due to the pandemic,

The goal is to fill each of the bags with \$100 worth of gift cards, preferably in \$25 increments, that can go towards grocery stores, gas stations, Dollarama and Shoppers Drug Mart/pharmacies.

Last year, the initiative raised \$20,000 in gift cards, all bought locally, which helps support businesses in the area.

"I bought gift cards from all local stores, so \$20,000 was reimbursed right back into our community," says Karen Ross-Smith, founder of the Believe Bag initiative.

After being assembled, the bags are given to Family Transition Place (FTP), Dufferin Child and Family Services (DCAFS), Big Brothers/Big Sisters Dufferin, and the Orangeville Foodbank to be distributed.

While out Christmas shopping herself, Ross-Smith noticed all the initiatives to provide gifts for those who may not receive them such as Toys for Tots and Hampers for Grandparents.

She thought to herself, "who looks after all those moms that are trying to get out and get gifts for their kids?"

That year, instead of doing a Secret Santa, Ross-Smith got together with a few of her friends to put together Believe Bags for some of the single mothers in the community who wouldn't get a gift otherwise.

"We made 12 of them the first year and that was for Family Transition Place, for all the women staying there, and in those nine years [since it started], it's grown to 200 bags," Ross-Smith noted.

Those interested in donating to the Believe Bag initiative this year, can e-transfer money to believebagsorangeville@hotmail.com or drop off gift cards at a few different locations throughout town. These places include Deja Vu Diner (318 Broadway), Shoppers Drug Mart (25 Broadway), Bluebird Café (100 Broadway), Black Birch Restaurant (307388 Hockley Rd), and Barley Vine Rail (35 Armstrong St).

For further information, visit the Believe Bags Facebook page: www.facebook.com/believebagsorangeville.