

Gifts of Hope – 2020 Annual Report

Program Highlights

- Gifts of Hope turned 28 years old during Advent, 2020.
- Carolyn Sowinski retired as Director and transitioned to a volunteer. Natalie Cain began working in the Director role in October 2020.
- Due to COVID-19, the entire Gifts of Hope program went digital for the 2020 Advent Campaign. Part of this included the introduction of digital cards for donors to send to loved ones.

Operations

- Carolyn introduced Natalie to beneficiary organization contacts in October 2020. Natalie met with each of the conferences in October to introduce herself and talk about the 2020 Advent Campaign.
- Natalie worked with Synod staff to create operating procedures for Gifts of Hope.
- The Advisory Board is now called the Advisory Committee and comprised of the following individuals: the Gifts of Hope Director, the Synod Treasurer, one representative from the Stewardship and Mission Support Table, and two beneficiary organization representatives (one rep from two different organizations). Natalie holds Advisory Committee meetings as needed and sends monthly reports (which include profit/loss information, social media analytics, program updates, etc.) to committee members.
- Natalie attends a Synod staff meeting once per month and is an active participant on the Stewardship and Mission Support Table.
- Natalie continues to meet with volunteer conference coordinators on a regular basis to plan.

Finance

- Results of 2020 Advent Campaign:
 - Total amount donated: \$39,338.
 - Total number of gifts: 133.
 - 71% paid via PayPal and 29% paid via check.
 - 57 of the 133 gifts (43%) had a disclosed tie to a Metro D.C. Synod congregation.
- Grand total of all fundraising from 1992 through January 2021: \$3,713,192.
- Natalie revised the FY21 budget and the Advisory Committee approved it in February, 2021.

Communications

- We added an Instagram account and changed the handles on all social media (FB, IG, Twitter) accounts to be the same: GiftsOfHopeDC.
- The Gifts of Hope social media accounts are following all congregations in the Synod and all beneficiary organizations on social media.
- Natalie created a social media toolkit for congregations to use and ramped up the number of posts during the Advent campaign. Conference coordinators helped disseminate information to congregations within the Synod (such as information about the social media toolkit and prewritten newsletter blurbs for each Sunday in Advent).
- Part of the rebrand included an exercise on identifying the brand essence, and this will be used in future communications to help others understand what Gifts of Hope is, how it helps others, etc.

Looking Ahead

- 2021 will be an exciting year for Gifts of Hope as the website will transition to the Synod's website and the program will receive a rebrand. Part of the rebrand will include a new catalog!
- Beneficiary organizations will remain the same for 2021.
- We will be moving away from PayPal and using Square as our online giving vendor.
- To save on operational expenses, we will not be printing new cards for FY21. We have many old cards we can send and we'll continue the use of digital cards.
- Gifts of Hope is more than an Advent campaign. We'll be promoting this alternative gift-giving program throughout the year so that people can engage in more meaningful giving on numerous occasions.