

United Way thanks those who give

By MICHELE YOUNG
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The United Way is known for its fundraising efforts and for giving big amounts to little groups to accomplish enormous community good.

On Thursday, the agency's board celebrated the donors and volunteers at lunch at the Thompson Rivers University Campus Activity Centre.

"One of the things we don't do often enough is celebrate. That's what today is about," said executive director Brenda Aynsley.

And so, really, the event was about warmth. The warmth donors feel raising money for good causes. The warmth the recipients feel knowing they'll be able to make a difference.

For one group that was recognized, it was about the warmth that the Out of the Cold program has provided to hundreds of

homeless people.

Rev. Dan Hines of St. Paul's Cathedral was given a plaque and posed for photos for his church's involvement in the program.

"Everyone likes to be recognized."

Out of the Cold was started by another group, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, on the North Shore's Briar Avenue.

But the location quickly became cramped, and providing warm shelter in cold weather with inadequate bathrooms and space was a problem.

Enter St. Paul's. Holding the plaque acknowledging his group's contribution, Hines said the church leapt on board two years ago.

The church isn't alone. St. Vincent de Paul is still involved, and the Elizabeth Fry Society helped out with the how-tos of applying for B.C. Housing money.

This past winter, especially,

Out of the Cold has been invaluable to homeless people living on the streets of Kamloops, he said.

"We had a parish meeting and said how can we not offer the space. It's a big space, it's heated," Hines said. "It's really made us aware of our role as a faith community in the downtown."

Housing the homeless program has opened his eyes and those of the church members. Volunteerism has swelled.

"It's not safe on the streets, so people come in and they just crash. It's somewhere safe, their gear's not going to get stolen."

Hines was at the program on Christmas morning. They sang Christmas carols and a few people — him included — strummed guitars.

"We had a good little jam session," he said.

"At the same time, it was a little sad. Everyone should be with their family at Christmas."

Sunday school children had decorated a tree with gifts that were handed out to those at Out of the Cold that morning.

"There's a big barrier between the people who sleep on the streets and those who have their own homes. That starts to come down," he said.

"Living on the street is a whole different world."