

# A Very Condo Christmas

*Tips from our members on connecting with neighbours and celebrating Christmas during COVID-19*



**2020 is an unusual year. In Alberta, public health restrictions have required many of us to rethink our winter social activities and holiday traditions.**

**We asked members of the Alberta condominium community to share their plans and suggestions for a socially distanced but still connected Christmas and holiday season. This guide is a compilation of those suggestions.**

**Thank you to everyone who contributed!**



A LEGO Village turned advent calendar activity



## Gifts

One of the members of my family works in a Senior Care Facility. We will be arranging for small gifts for every resident. - Sandra

## Family Games Night

Christmas is a time for family. As we all live apart, typically we would travel to come together to celebrate.

With COVID19, this is not an option but we still plan to stay connected and make it memorable. We will do a family games night for those in our immediate household but this year we have a new twist: We are planning fun games in a "A Minute to Win It " format to be played over Zoom (ie:Face the Cookie, Move It On Up, Suck it Up, Tissue Toss) for those we will be celebrating with virtually.

Use your imagination...make the games Christmas themed. Switch out the Oreo with gingerbread men, that kind of thing.

Many great ideas if you just search the internet. Here's a good site to get you started.  
<https://www.thechaosandtheclutter.com/archives/minute-to-win-it-christmas-games>

-Janet

## **Christmas Dinner with a Twist**

As this has been a very different year for everyone and we will miss having Family for Christmas day and dinner.

My plan is to still make Christmas dinner and make up dinner plates and deliver them to our Family. We can call/text and leave the hot meal on the front step of their home. Wave to them from the car and wish them a Blessed and Merry Christmas. - Fran

## **LEGO Advent Calendar**

With an 8 year old LEGO fan in the house, we started a tradition 3 years ago of buying the annual Christmas village set and dividing it up into 24 parts as an advent calendar. -Jo

## **Instead of Elf on a Shelf: Polar Bear in the Lobby**

I have put a stuffed polar bear in our lobby with a mask and sunglasses. Several people have taken his picture, have moved him, hid him, put his glasses on upside down or backwards, have talked about him and have wondered where he has come from. People who don't chat with each other are now yapping away to each other like magpies. The other day he was upside down with a note that said: "where is the wine". -Jean

## **Secret Santa & Decorating Contest**

Our wonderful Social Coordinator is organizing a secret Santa gift and a decorating doors and front windows contest. Many have joined the fun, so we are looking forward to lighting up our neighbourhood and sharing the Season. Also, we may have a socially distanced Christmas Carol sing at some point.

-Carolyn

## Virtual Ugly Sweater & Mask Contest

My family will be doing a Zoom video conference this Christmas and we've upped our "ugly Christmas sweaters" contest to add "ugly Christmas masks" as well. While we won't need the masks because we'll be celebrating apart, we wanted to include the masks because they've become such an iconic accessory this year. -Joshua

## Google Meets to Beat the Quarantine Blues

Have discussed with our family having a Google video meeting at Christmas time if the family visiting restrictions haven't been relaxed. We recently accomplished the same with our son and daughters' families for a birthday supper. With 3 of 4 grandchildren in quarantine by themselves in their bedrooms, we had their parents from their respective dining rooms (in different cities) with our 4th grandchild, the other three from their bedrooms, two in one city and one in the other. -Don L.

## Virtual Gift Opening

I'm using technology to connect with my friends and family. Instead of the usual Christmas party with my friends we had a zoom call one evening. We send out an agenda outlining the evening. We had a recap of the year and everyone had a chance to speak and share what they have been up to over the year or share a joke etc . At the end of the call we all open our present and wishing everyone a Merry Christmas! -Darlene

## Walks in the River Valley

My family is sharing the holiday cheer by enjoying the outdoors and going for long walks along the Edmonton river valley. -Vanessa



## Advent for Adults: A Month of Contests and Activities

We are a 55+, 34 unit complex in Grande Prairie. Typically December is a busy time for us socially with shared meals and gatherings in our Clubhouse. Since not being able to use our Clubhouse and the cancellation of our Christmas Party due to COVID restrictions, a few residents decided to "Think out of the Box" to keep the residents connected during this Christmas Season.

1) First week: and continues throughout the month of December, a "Secret Horizon Village Neighbour" - those wanting to participate sent in their Names and Unit Number. Then the names were randomly drawn and delivered to their house mailbox who they then could give gifts to "secretly" place things on the step or to put them in the mailbox. (The participants don't know who the participants are) as not all joined in the fun! We have received many positive comments!

2) Second week: A Photo Contest, those choosing to participate sent in a photo of themselves between the ages of 1 to 10 years of age. It turned out to be a fun time and we all realized we had changed a lot over the years! Out of 15 photos the winner only got 10 of them right!

3) Third week: An "Indoor Scavenger Hunt" where an email is sent to all residents and if they wish to take part they take pictures of the items listed. The first one to email them all in (which is the goal) or otherwise with most of the items WINS!

-Tony B

## Condo Community Inspires A Twist on a Community Food Bank Donation Drive

I caught wind of this contest, and think it is terrific to share ideas about how to get through this holiday season still feeling connected in a meaningful way. One person's idea can inspire others, and that ripple effect can be wonderful. Here is how I was inspired...

Although I don't live in a condo, my mom does. And at her condo in Spruce Grove, they usually have a Christmas tree decorating afternoon with goodies. People pop by to pitch in, put an ornament on, share some baking. It is a beautiful way to decorate - as a community. In lieu of this event, they have notified everyone in the both buildings that on Christmas Eve at 6pm (I believe this is the time they've chosen), they are asking everyone to step out onto their balconies and ring bells for a couple of minutes. This idea warms my heart more than words can say. Such a simple gesture. Christmas Eve is the day my mom's side (Ukrainian) gathers for a traditional meatless dinner, it makes me feel good to know she lives somewhere that recognizes how many people are on their own, and makes the effort to reach out.

When the latest restrictions came down, and I learned that I cannot host my 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Christmas Carolling night for the Edmonton Food Bank, even with plans to modify it, I remembered the bells. So, inspired to still spread Christmas cheer, and to bring my community together, I sent out a request that on Wednesday, December 16<sup>th</sup> at 7pm, all neighbors would step onto their front steps and ring bells, clank a wine glass with a spoon, bang on a pot - whatever. Just make noise for 2 minutes. And, after the noise brings us together, my family will go around and collect the food that they have left for the Edmonton Food Bank on their steps. I would like to think my daughter and I will sing as we go about doing this, but truthfully, it'll be hard just to not cry.

This event is in 2 days. Yet, I'm going to send this email after the event so I can also send you a pic or two and an update. I'm hopeful that many will participate, and contribute as they usually do.

UPDATE: It went great. Many of our neighbours came onto the street in front of their home and rang bells/banged pots...lol. Then we all wished each other Merry Christmas and well wishes to keep safe. I hopped in my truck (windows rolled down with Christmas music playing of course), my daughter sat in the box and we went along house to house picking up the food that people left out for us. There was a



lot (3 grocery carts FULL!). At 8pm, we went on ZOOM and caroled with some friends and family for 45 minutes or so. It was goofy and tricky at times, but still so special to be together. My heart is full today and hopefully more tummies will be too. -Melissa

## Delivering Christmas Cheer

My wife and I usually have my son and girlfriend, my niece, her husband and two kids, and my father in law and sometimes friends over for Christmas dinner and of course we can't have anyone over. So what do we do? We (my wife) are cooking Christmas dinner on the 24th and wrapping presents. then on Christmas day we are going to put on our Santa hats and deliver Christmas dinner and presents. So all total we will be stopping at 4

places. When we get there we will put the Christmas dinners and presents on the steps, then we can visit with them from the street, but at least we get to see everyone and put smiles on their faces. In a way this may be the best Christmas we have. -Rob

## Social Committee Goes All Out to Bring the Festive Spirit

We are an over 55 building, with 181 suites in Spruce Grove. Because our usual group social activities have been shut down due to Covid restrictions imposed in March and ongoing, many residents have been complaining of lack of activity and lack of socialization.

Our Social Executive of four put our heads together and came up with a couple of ideas in an attempt to lift the spirits of residents. Firstly, a gingerbread house contest awarding prizes in four categories. The kits were purchased in a small bulk order and offered for a \$5 purchase with the remainder subsidized by our Social Committee with funds from our bottle refund donations. I've attached photos of some of our winners. The completed



houses were all located in an isolated area with plenty of Covid restriction signage and judged separately by 9 different judges. We were very surprised and proud of the hidden talents in our building. They will be left for three days for viewing, one suite at a time.

Secondly, again subsidized by the Social committee, gift bags have been put together for each of the residents. One of the Social Executive went out and bought a variety of gifts, lighted small plastic trees, Hershey kisses, light up tumblers, a variety of Christmas decorative bulbs along with candy canes and individual wrapped chocolates. The bags were then prepped by two individuals physically distanced. Santa, in his wisdom, had already requested the services of these four Executives to assist with gift delivery. Each of the four floors in the building will have one of those four individuals delivering gifts to each door.

We, as a social team, have had a lot of fun with these two projects, and are hoping to have lifted the spirits of many. In anticipation of further restrictions in the new year, we are already putting our thoughts together for subsequent monthly contests. -Joyce on behalf of the Windsor Estates Social Committee.

