



# *Snow Angels Program*

Resident and Volunteer  
Information Package

**Organized by:**

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## Information for Volunteers

### How does the Snow Angels Program work?

A volunteer service program where individuals commit to removing snow from the driveway and entranceway of a community resident in need throughout the winter season.

Interested volunteers can contact us and be matched with a resident(s) in need of snow clearing. The volunteer is committed to the same resident throughout the winter season but may assist more than one person, if desired.

### Why Volunteer?

The Snow Angels Program is a proactive approach to helping those who have difficulty clearing their walkways. Rather than scrambling for help after a major snowfall, resources for these residents will be in place in advance which provides them with consistency and peace of mind.

The program is also a fun and healthy opportunity for citizens of all ages to enjoy the outdoors while making a personal contribution to improving the quality of life of another in need. The Snow Angels Program fosters a sense of ownership and goodwill, encourages civic responsibility and pride in the community, and builds connection between citizens of all ages. Studies have shown that when citizens actively work together for each other, crime decreases, health improves, resources can be redistributed, and quality of life becomes better for all.

### Who should take part in the Snow Angels Program?

Anyone! People of all ages can take part.

### Can I volunteer with my family or a group I am part of?

Yes! We understand that shovelling for the whole winter is a large commitment, so we can accommodate families/groups of individuals who want to share the responsibility of shovelling for one resident. We will require one member to be a main contact for the program coordinator to contact as needed. There is a section on the application where you can indicate whether you are volunteering as part of a group.

### What do I need to get involved?

We encourage the residents to provide volunteers with shovels, ice chippers, ice melt, etc. We ask that they have the tools easily accessible for the volunteer at all times. If the resident is unable to provide the necessary tools, the FCSS Program Coordinator will contact the volunteer to see if they are able to bring their own.

### How often does the property need to be cleared?

Snow should be cleared within 24 hours of the last snowfall. If the volunteer cannot make it to the resident's home within 24 hours, the volunteer will contact the resident to reassure them of when they can make it.

### What areas of the resident's property needs to be cleared?

You will be responsible for making initial contact with the resident, at which point you will discuss which areas of the property need snow removal. This is also a good time to discuss any barriers or hazards that could impede the snow removal on their property. Generally, the volunteers would clear the sidewalks and driveway of the resident's home. **It is the responsibility of the resident to ensure that the property is safe.**

### How long is the commitment?

The nature of the program is to provide a resident in need with a regular service until the end of the winter/snow season. If you will be away, it is best to let your resident know ahead of time and where possible find a suitable replacement during your absence. If you cannot find a replacement, please let the FCSS Program Coordinator know.

### Can I accept tips?

Since the program is a volunteer-based initiative, volunteers are not permitted to accept payment of any kind from residents. Call us with any concerns that may arise. Residents may want to show their appreciation with a thank you card or a hot chocolate- feel free to accept these types of small tokens!

### Do you screen the volunteers?

All volunteers must complete an application form and a criminal record check prior to being put on the list. **The Program Coordinator will give you a letter that must be brought with you to the RCMP Detachment in order to have the fee waived.** We are aware that it may be difficult to obtain a criminal record check at this time due to COVID-19 restrictions, so we will work with volunteers who are unable to get a criminal record check at the time of application with the understanding that they will obtain one once they are able. We assume no responsibility for the actions of the volunteers.

## How do I get involved?

1. Complete the Snow Angels Volunteer Application on the Westlock County website at [Westlock.ca/p/fcss](http://Westlock.ca/p/fcss)
2. If you are unable to access the forms online, please call the FCSS Office at 780-349-5900.
3. Once you have completed the application form, the FCSS Program Coordinator will call you to discuss the next steps.

## Safety Tips for Snow Removal

### Why shovel your driveway and sidewalks?

Snow and ice create a hazardous situation for everyone but especially for seniors and people with disabilities. Shoveling and using salt, sand or other substances with ice melting properties will help reduce the potential for slip and fall incidents, which can cause serious injuries. Snow shoveling requires proper preparation, the right tools, good technique and basic safety precautions.

### **Preparation:**

- Talk to your doctor about this activity, your health status and about your suitability for this program.
- Shovel at least 1-2 hours after eating and avoid caffeine or nicotine during the activity.
- Warm up first (walk or march in place for several minutes before beginning, stretch arms and legs).
- Start slow and continue at a slow pace (suggestion: shovel for 5–7 minutes and rest 2–3 minutes).
- Drink lots of water to prevent dehydration.
- Shovel fresh snow sooner; new snow is lighter than heavily packed/partially melted snow.
- Take breaks when you are feeling tired.

### **Tools:**

#### *Shovel:*

- Sturdy yet lightweight is best (a small plastic blade is often better than a large metal blade).
- Choose a shovel that is comfortable for your height and strength. One that is too long or too short will add extra effort and strain.
- An ergonomically correct model (curved handle) can help prevent injury.
- Spray the blade with a silicone-based lubricant or WD-40 as snow will not stick and will slide off better.

#### *Snow blower (optional):*

- You are most welcome to use your snow blower in the program.
- Never add fuel when the engine is running or hot. Do not operate the machine in an enclosed area.
- Never stick your hands in the snow blower! If snow becomes too impacted, stop the engine and wait more than five seconds. Use a solid object to clear wet snow or debris from the chute. Beware of the recoil of the motor and blades after the machine has been turned off.
- Do not leave the snow blower unattended when it is running. Shut off the engine if you must walk away from the machine.

### **Proper clothing:**

- Wear multiple layers and cover as much skin as possible.
- Wear a hat, scarf and mittens (mitts are warmer than gloves).
- Wear boots with non-skid/no-slip rubber soles.

**Technique:**

- Always try to push snow rather than lifting it.
- Walk to dump snow rather than throwing it to the side since this requires a twisting motion that stresses your back.
- Stand with feet at hip width for balance.
- Hold the shovel close to your body.
- Space hands apart to increase leverage.
- Bend from your knees, not your back.
- Tighten your stomach muscles while lifting.
- If the ground is icy or slippery, we recommend spreading kitty litter to create better foot traction.

**Stop shoveling immediately and call for help if you experience:**

- unusual discomfort, pain or heaviness in the chest, arms or neck
- unusual shortness of breath
- faint or dizzy spells even after taking a break
- excessive sweating or nausea and vomiting

**REMEMBER:**

- \* A warm-up goes a long way!
- \* Wearing the right clothing is key!
- \* Bring lots of water to drink!
- \* Use the right tools and technique!
- \* HAVE FUN!

