

Can't find the perfect gift for mom? Consider 'adopting' a mom in need

By Brock Weir

Mother's Day arrives on Sunday, a perfect time to shower moms with gifts and flowers as much as stay-at-home orders allow. But however much moms enjoy these treats on their special day, there are plenty of mothers who don't want any gifts at all; they just want a helping hand.

That is a message being driven home this season by the Shine Through the Rain Foundation, an organization supporting families through life-threatening illnesses.

The group encourages you to consider 'adopting' a mom this Mother's Day to help ease some of the pressures they are facing as they address life's greatest challenges.

'When Sophia (not her real name) was on maternity leave, she learned she had breast cancer,' says Shine Through the Rain on the experience of a recent patient. 'Instead of worrying about how to juggle life with the new baby and two other young children when she returned to work, she wondered how to hold it all together financially shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Unable to work because of treatments and side effects, it has been hard to keep up with the bills. Diagnosis was incredibly overwhelming and difficult for the entire family, but the treatments and side effects have taken the hardest toll. Since her diagnosis, Sophia has undergone surgery, chemotherapy and radiation. This has been life over the past year.'

'Without a second income, there is very little money left at the end of the month to purchase groceries, let alone other necessities like Mother's Day gifts. The family is falling behind and have accumulated significant debt. Like many others diagnosed with a life-threatening illness, they fell behind on their basic utility bills and have had a hard time affording groceries. With Mother's Day just around the corner, for Sophia and other moms like her, she just wants to wake up in her own bed for Mother's Day in her own home, knowing she can turn on the shower that day and water will flow out. She would also like to know there is food in the fridge. For many mothers in the community, this is the reality of being diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. No matter the occasion, that means there is no money to buy gifts because of the financial hardship illness has caused.'

'Adopting' a mom for the occasion is a great way to honour your mother 'with the most beautiful gift' making it possible for an ill mother to remain in her own home with her children, without the usual worries of how to pay for rent, utilities, groceries or hospital parking.'

'This is the first year we launched this for Mother's Day,' explains Laurie Docimo of Shine Through the Rain, noting that previous 'adoption' programs, particularly around the holiday season, have been particularly successful. 'The gifts they want, rather than a tangible gift, is just to help pay hospital parking costs and that would be the best gift they could possibly have. A lot of times, people who are very well-meaning have their individual pre-conceived notions that everybody likes a gift. Yes, they do, but when you're about to be evicted or you don't know how you're going to afford groceries' that is what they are concerned about.

'These needs have always been there. However, with COVID, it changed the patients' needs in more than one way. When COVID first hit, we noticed a lot of donors often came to a screeching halt. They slammed the brakes on their donations and a lot of the usual funders like individuals, corporate donors, and a lot of the foundations that exist out there [hit the brakes] but what we were starting to hear from the patients, social workers, and child life specialists referring to their patients is not everybody can go to a food bank because sometimes when you're ill and diagnosed with a life-threatening illness, you need to be able to have a control over what kinds of foods they receive. Our grocery gift cards make it possible for our patients to control what they receive for food.'

'Some people when they are diagnosed with a life-threatening illness lose their income, they don't have extended health benefits, or they have exceeded their maximum ceiling spend. Other costs like hospital and medical office parking, mileage, especially if they have to go to a large urban centre like downtown Toronto? It is real costly and not only do you have the every day cost of living, but

you're dealing with reduced income, significantly higher expenses, and most people unless they have been in that situation, are not aware how financially devastating it can be. ?

For more information on how to ?adopt? a mom, learn more about the organization, and how to help beyond Mother's Day, visit shinethroughtherain.ca.