

2019

*Helping you  
live your best life*



2019 COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT





**81**  
SCHOLARSHIPS  
AWARDED



**NEARLY 100**  
**SPONSORSHIPS**  
*leading to tens of thousands  
of interactions with Albertans*

**6**  
**INDIGENOUS**  
**SCHOLARSHIPS**  
**AWARDED**

**\$1.6 MILLION**  
*in grants to build amenities  
for healthy communities*

**>50** CHARITABLE  
PROGRAMS  
*supported yearly*

**\$45,000**  
*in donations made through*  
**HEARTS OF BLUE**



**20+ YEARS**  
*of Hearts of Blue*



**26,000 KIDS**  
*across Alberta participating  
in Youth Run Club*



**\$265,000**  
*donated to*  
**UNITED WAY**



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## WHO WE ARE

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As the largest provider of health benefits in Alberta, we believe we have the potential and responsibility to impact people's lives for the better. We believe all communities should thrive, and we are committed to serving as a champion for wellness by promoting the health of Albertans.

 ALBERTA  
BLUE CROSS

ODDLE  
DOWN  
CHILDREN'S  
FESTIVAL

# *Introduction*

*Empowering people to live their best lives is a key purpose of Alberta Blue Cross. From a community standpoint, this means delivering health and wellness programs, partnering with organizations and encouraging our employees with the resources to make a difference.*

Blue For Life is our vision to support the health and wellness of Albertans through all ages and stages of life. We do this to achieve our purpose of empowering Albertans to live their best lives. We draw upon three key means to create a meaningful presence in the community: partnerships, programs and our people.

In 2019, we deepened our engagement in the communities we serve with involvements across the province, including nearly 100 sponsorships that facilitated interaction with tens of thousands of Albertans. We stepped up to show Albertans that we're more than their benefits provider—we're a partner in their wellness.

Across all ages and stages, we believe that wellness is applicable for everyone. For kids, that might mean learning physical literacy in a free after school program. For youth and young adults, that can mean opportunities to pursue further education without financial barriers. For adults facing chronic health problems, that might mean learning what lifestyle changes could bring about positive results. For seniors, this can mean practicing longevity through physical and social programming. These are the small steps and the life-changing moments that we support.



*Everyone was living their best life at the 2019 International Children's Festival.*



# *Structure and strategy*



*Big Blue likes to get out and support community events.*

## THE ABC BENEFITS CORPORATION FOUNDATION

- Funding for community involvements is provided through the ABC Benefits Corporation Foundation, drawing upon interest from \$15 million in endowments from Alberta Blue Cross.
- Created in 1998 in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of Alberta Blue Cross.
- Foundation is overseen by an independent volunteer Board of Directors.
- Provides Alberta Blue Cross with a mechanism to support community engagement on a sustainable basis with funds that otherwise may not be available.

## OUR SOCIAL PURPOSE

### EMPOWERING ALBERTANS TO LIVE THEIR BEST LIVES

Our social purpose serves as a core connecting point for Alberta Blue Cross's vision, mission, values, position and strategy. It's a key reason our employees come to work every day and a key reason our organization exists.

Empowering Albertans to live their best lives means something different to everyone. Just as each person is different, at Alberta Blue Cross, it's our intention to support Albertans in realizing their best life—whatever that means for them.

## HOW WE DO IT



### **PARTNERSHIPS**

*We work hand-in-hand with organizations who are making waves in the wellness of Albertans.*



### **PROGRAMS**

*We run programs to help Albertans thrive in the communities where they live, work and play.*



### **EMPLOYEES**

*We empower Alberta Blue Cross employees with the time, tools and resources to help fellow Albertans live their best lives.*



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS, ABC BENEFITS CORPORATION FOUNDATION (2019)

**KEVIN GREGOR**

*Chair*

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**ROBERT CARWELL**

*Director*

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**BRIAN GEISLINGER**

*Director*

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**PETE MERLO**

*Director*

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**ERIC NEWELL**

*Director (term completed June 2019)*

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**RAY PISANI**

*Director (term began June 2019)*

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*How we made  
a difference in 2019*

## WHAT WE DO TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE



### FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

*We support  
the development  
of healthy habits*



### FOR STUDENTS

*We reduce  
financial barriers  
to post-secondary  
education*



### FOR ADULTS FACING CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS

*We ensure access  
to information  
and education*



### FOR SENIORS

*We enable  
lifelong wellness*



### FOR EVERYONE

*We encourage vibrant,  
inclusive, connected  
communities*



## FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH—HEALTHY HABITS

*Building lifelong health starts with learning healthy habits early. We believe by supporting children and youth with access to the right programs and resources to help build these habits, we're setting them up to live healthier, more fulfilling lives.*

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### **AMA Youth Run Club** | *Partnership*

Kids aren't made to sit still; they're made to move. The AMA Youth Run Club helps to get kids moving through a free, school-based running program that helps children and youth build healthier habits they can carry through the rest of their lives. Today, the club has more than 500 participating schools across the province and more than 26,000 students. As a partner, we're able to help make this program free and we also provide prize draw funding so schools can purchase sports equipment or fund other activity-related infrastructure costs. Ninety-eight per cent of students participating in the program said they'll keep running once their club is finished for the year.

#### **Smoking and vaping stops here** | *Partnership*

We are working in partnership with The Lung Association to expand the Breathe Smart Program to deliver lung-health workshops to schools across the province. The Lung Association's Smoke-Less program aims to intercept rising smoking and vaping rates among youth in Alberta. The program reached 17,000 youth across the province in 2019.



*"If wellness is a puzzle, then the partners are the pieces. Our friends at Alberta Blue Cross are not only an important piece of the puzzle but are committed to completing the puzzle, the bigger picture—physical activity for all."*

*Brian Torrance, director of Ever Active Schools*

### Healthy Communities Grant program | Program

The Healthy Communities Grant program exists to help Albertans build spaces for active living in their community. Whether it be a skate park, playground, outdoor gym or arena, we're helping Albertans, young and old, get and stay healthy on their own terms.

Each year, grants of \$50,000 are awarded in Edmonton, Calgary, one secondary city and one rural community with a focus on ensuring grants are equitably distributed on a regional basis. Over the last two years, we've added a special merit grant and a grant specifically for Indigenous communities. Funding for the program comes from the ABC Benefits Corporation Foundation.

The program started in 2013 when we recognized the challenges communities face in creating amenities to promote active living. Over the years, we've supported more than two dozen projects across the province with funding totalling \$1.6 million.

In 2019, we were proud to give another six communities a chance to make their dreams of active living a reality. All six projects awarded funding happened to be playgrounds. Through the new spaces, kids will get the chance to see, first-hand, the joys and benefits of active living.

*"Fundraising can be such a lonely and daunting task, especially when your community has done everything it can for you. Finding out we were receiving funds through the Healthy Communities Grant program was like winning the lottery—it alleviated the anxiety and doubt that we wouldn't complete our playground. It was like Alberta Blue Cross really saw us, our community and our kids."*

*Carrie Keylock, Healthy Communities Grant program recipient project committee co-chair*





## HEALTHY COMMUNITIES GRANT PROJECTS AWARDED IN 2019

### EDMONTON

*St. Elizabeth Parent Advisory Board—  
playground replacement*

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### CALGARY

*Riverbend Elementary School—  
inclusive playground development*

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### SECONDARY CITIES

*Christina Gordon Public School  
in Fort McMurray—accessible and  
inclusive playground enhancement*

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### RURAL COMMUNITIES

*Alder Flats Elementary School fundraising  
society—playground redevelopment*

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### INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

*Enoch Cree Nation—Maskekosihk  
community playground project*

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### SPECIAL MERIT

*Medicine Hat Early Childhood Coalition—  
natural playground*

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## FOR STUDENTS—POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Post-secondary education opens doors to young Albertans to lead better lives. For this reason, we're committed to alleviating some of the financial barriers surrounding education in Alberta.

Through our scholarship programs, we support students at almost every post-secondary institution across the province and through our scholarships for Indigenous students, we support recent high school graduates and mature Indigenous students pursue further education.

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### Scholarships for Indigenous students | Program

Our scholarships for Indigenous students work to address education inequity faced by Indigenous peoples in Alberta by making post-secondary studies more financially accessible. Scholarship recipients are selected by an external committee with expertise in academia and Indigenous education.

#### Scholarship program | Program

In 1998, we celebrated our 50th anniversary by establishing a \$1 million scholarship program to assist young Albertans pursuing their dreams of post-secondary education. Each year we present more than 80 scholarships that range from \$750 to \$1,500, with most awarded by institutions directly to full-time students based on academic achievement and financial need. Over the life of this program, we have provided well over \$1 million in support of post-secondary education in Alberta.

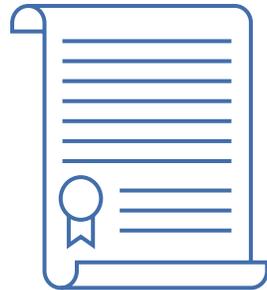


*"I was honoured to be a recipient of the Alberta Blue Cross scholarship for mature Indigenous students. Thanks to your generous support, I am the first in my family to attend medical school and I hope to assist more Indigenous students' journeys into healthcare in the future."*

*Andrew Volk, scholarship for mature Indigenous students recipient*

# THE ALBERTA BLUE CROSS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

*helps students across Alberta pursue post-secondary education*



## \$1 MILLION SCHOLARSHIP FUND

*In 1998, we celebrated our 50th anniversary by establishing a scholarships fund*

**+80**



## SCHOLARSHIPS GIVEN OUT EACH YEAR

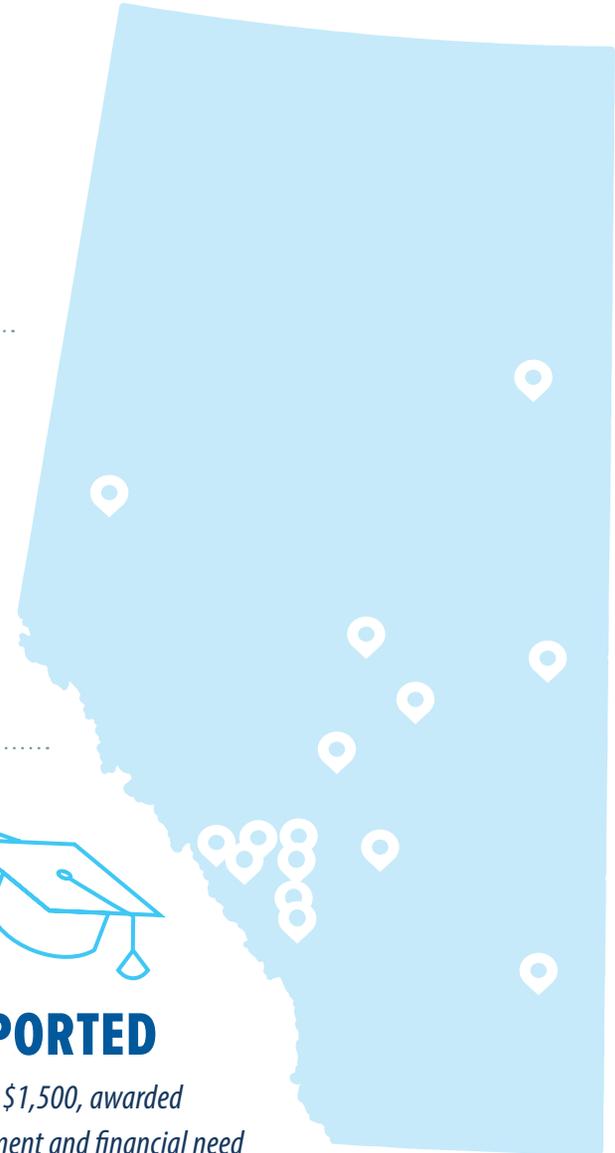
*To help students pursue their dreams of post-secondary education*

**+20**



## POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS SUPPORTED

*With scholarships ranging from \$750 to \$1,500, awarded to students based on academic achievement and financial need*





*Top row: The Lois Hole Hospital Women's Society speaker series—Lady Talks—creates an inclusive space for women to learn from researchers and doctors on women's health topics.  
Bottom row: The Alberta Blue Cross cycling team—the Blue Rollers—took on the MS Bike ride raising more than \$8,000 for multiple sclerosis research.*



## FOR ADULTS FACING CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS—ACCESS TO INFORMATION

*Those facing chronic health concerns don't get a break. It's no common cold—it's everyday. Adults with chronic health issues often face the challenge of minimal support, advocacy and resources. We work with partners to make the latest resources and information available through events and campaigns that not only make information accessible but create a space for belonging and connection.*

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### Reducing the stigma of mental health | Partnership

Improving mental wellness is something we're passionate about and it often starts by empowering people with knowledge. We partnered with an established organization, the Calgary Counselling Centre, to work to create awareness around the signs of depression, reduce public stigma and encourage the development of support systems.

In 2019, through an online depression screening tool, nearly 17,000 people were screened for depression. For the first time since this program has been running, there were more male participants than female participants—demonstrating a potential reduction in the stigma surrounding mental health, more prominently found in males.

#### Creating space and solidarity for those facing MS | Partnership

MS Connect 2019 is a conference that brings together people experiencing multiple sclerosis, health professionals and researchers from across Alberta and the Northwest Territories to discuss and learn about the latest developments in fighting MS and managing symptoms. We were proud to partner with the MS Society as they serve Albertans facing MS—creating spaces for conversation and collaboration.

#### No health topic is too taboo | Partnership

Health is personal and sometimes we're reluctant to speak openly about it. The Lois Hole Hospital Women's Society speaker series—Lady Talks—creates an inclusive space for women to learn from researchers and doctors on women's health topics. From pelvic floor health to breast health, no topic is too taboo. The sessions are a collaboration between Alberta Blue Cross and the Lois Hole Hospital Women's Society.



## FOR SENIORS—ENABLING LIFELONG WELLNESS

*Wellness is a lifelong pursuit and we're here to help at every stage. As we age, family and work obligations often take over and wellness isn't our priority. We partner with organizations who help Albertans maintain a lifelong relationship with their physical, mental, social and financial well-being.*

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### HIGHLIGHTS

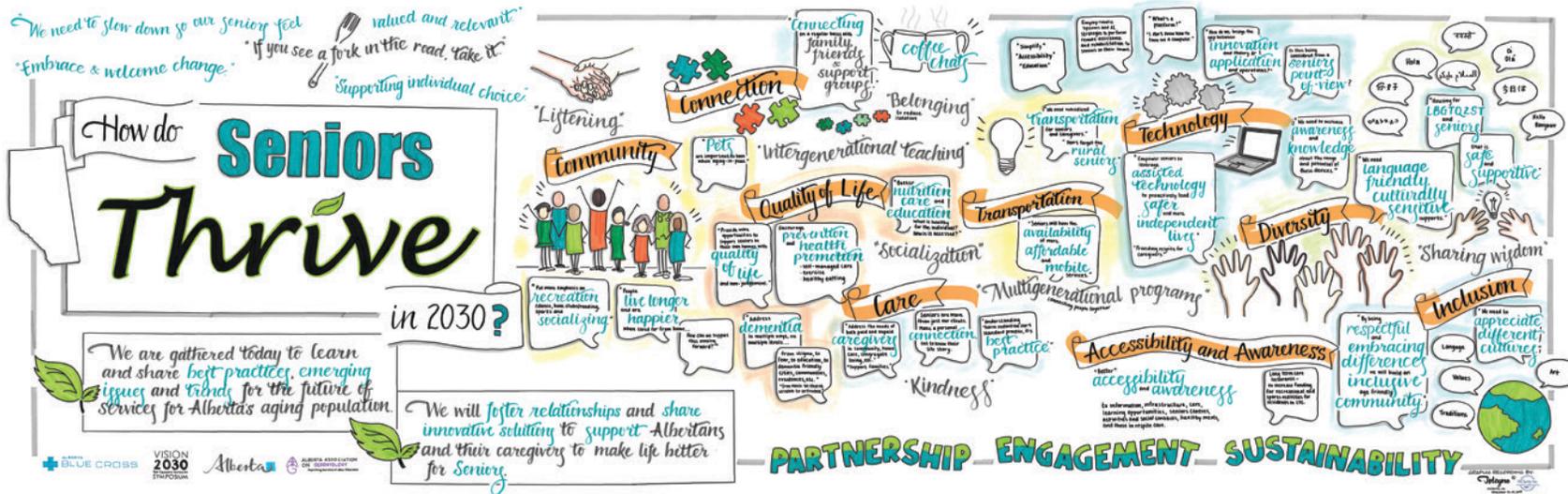
#### Competition isn't just for kids | Partnership

Getting older does not mean slowing down. That's what more than 1,000 adult recreational athletes showed us in Rocky Mountain House at the Alberta Masters Games. Adults between the ages of 35 and 65, from rural and urban Alberta, took part in the competition. We were proud to sponsor the event—supporting and providing adults and seniors a competitive way to stay engaged physically and socially.

The 2019 Canada Winter Games brought fun, competition and community to Red Deer. As a sponsor of the event, we had a chance to cheer on the competitors and share the experience with over 20,000 athletes, volunteers and visitors from across Canada.

#### Aging into 2030 | Partnership

According to Alberta Health, the population of seniors in Alberta is currently more than 600,000 and is expected to grow to one million by 2035. We're committed to supporting seniors to live their best lives—where they feel connected, valued and cared for. To remain at the forefront of meeting the needs of seniors, we added our support and voice to Vision 2030—a symposium bringing together leaders in the field to discuss and inform the future of services for Alberta's aging population. Topics addressed included wellness and independence, enhancing community capacity, addressing diversity, integrating health and social services and meeting future anticipated health care needs. At the event, conversations around the future of senior care in Alberta were captured in an illustration by a local artist (see it on the next page). The learnings from Vision 2030 will inform a policy proposal on the future of senior care in Alberta.



Caring for seniors' wellness now and into the future.



*Connecting with our community at the International Children's Festival and the Grey Cup Festival.*



## FOR EVERYONE—ENCOURAGING VIBRANT AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

*When you imagine a healthy community, you likely think about a place where neighbours interact, where safety is a given and where people are connected. We think the same thing. Through sponsorships, we're able to contribute to the inspiring initiatives taking place across our province that keep our communities vibrant, inclusive and strong.*

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### **Children's festivals** | *Partnership*

For a kid, your best life looks something like the 2019 International St. Albert Children's Festival. As the sponsor of Toddler Town, we were able to create and support a place where kids with all different kinds of interests could find something just for them—from musical performances, to sensory experiences, to active fun. We also wanted to make sure parents could find a few moments of quiet with our stroller parking, nursing and diaper-change areas. Toddler Town was a way for us to connect with more than 4,000 visitors—from toddlers and up—and show firsthand how much we appreciate them.

#### **Calgary Pride** | *Partnership*

The Calgary Pride Festival promotes equality, celebrates diversity and brings colour to Calgary's streets. As an advocate for community vibrancy, we wanted to be part of something that, literally, brightens the day. Our Street Team celebrated the day with Calgarians and Albertans from around the province to promote a city free from discrimination against gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation.

#### **Grey Cup Festival** | *Partnership*

As an official sponsor of the Grey Cup Festival held in Calgary, we got the chance to celebrate with our communities by meeting and interacting with more than 50,000 people enjoying the event.

#### **Tackling poverty—United Way** | *Employees*

We're focused on bringing health and wellness to our communities, but to do that, we need to start with Albertans' basic needs. That's why it's so important for us to take part in the United Way campaign every year—an effort that brings together community organizations across the province to tackle poverty. Through our ongoing commitment to the United Way, we support hundreds of organizations that serve vulnerable populations across the province.

In 2019, through employee donations and corporate matching, we contributed a record \$265,000 to the United Way campaign. Our donations will be used to help break the cycle of poverty, to lift people out of poverty and to provide a safety net for when life takes a turn.



*"The moment that stands out for me was at our wrap-up event. I announced to our fundraising team that we just reached our goal hours before. They were jubilant. We set a very ambitious goal and no one was sure if we were actually going to reach it. Then, the United Way representative spoke about the impact of our donation to those affected by poverty, and how it was going to help. It reminded me what this was all about."*

*Matthew Elliott, Alberta Blue Cross 2019 United Way campaign chair*

**\$265,000** *donated to*  
**UNITED WAY**

**392 EMPLOYEES DONATED**

**9 COMPANY EVENTS**  
*held over the course of the campaign*



**42 VOLUNTEERS  
MADE IT HAPPEN**

*14 committee members  
and 28 ambassadors*

**\$122,210** *raised by*  
**EMPLOYEES**



*Leading from the inside out:  
Hearts of Blue*

*We believe we have the ability and responsibility to impact Albertans' lives for the better and this happens at a grassroots-level because of our employees. Our employees take the lead on projects—big and small—that make a direct impact in the communities where they live and serve. For our team, living their best lives includes active service.*

Year after year, our employees support causes they believe in. We've been supporting local charities for more than 20 years because we believe that being part of our community means being there for the long-term, contributing in new ways as needs change.

**WHAT IS HEARTS OF BLUE?**

Hearts of Blue is our employee-led charity at Alberta Blue Cross. Employees pick the causes, run the fundraisers and deliver the donations to the charities supported. Hearts of Blue also includes Days of Giving, through which team members coordinate volunteer opportunities for staff during work hours. Hearts of Blue gives our employees an avenue to connect to their communities, it strengthens our team and it helps us live our values out in the community.

**HOW DO WE SERVE**

Hearts of Blue focuses on making tangible, practical donations to support grassroots charities in their day-to-day operations. It's not about the items themselves though; it's about the difference these items make. When we donate to the Red Deer Central Alberta Victim and Witness Support Society's Christmas party, we're celebrating strength and survivors. When we provide games, puzzles, toys and craft supplies to the Autism Asperger Friendship Society in Calgary, we're contributing to discovery.



**>45 CHARITIES**  
*supported by Hearts of Blue in 2019*

**+100**  
**EMPLOYEES**  
**VOLUNTEERED**  
*at Days of Giving events*



**\$45,000**  
*worth of items donated*



**21 YEARS**  
*supporting Operation Friendship,  
Sacred Heart and more*





*Our employees lead from the inside out by serving in the community and connecting with charities across the province.*

## WHAT IT'S LIKE TO SERVE



*"On a personal level, Hearts of Blue is important because sometimes on the day of an event, I'll wake up in the morning and think about how long my day is going to be and how my routine is going to be messed up. But then I go to the Operation Friendship dinner—I get to serve, I get to see giant smiles and hear heartfelt thank yous. When I'm done, I don't feel like I lost an hour, I actually feel time-rich, time-affluent. I don't know how to say it, but you feel good about how you spent your time and you become more reflective and appreciative for what you can do for others."*

**Gayathri, Hearts of Blue committee member**



*"We were absolutely amazed by the number of items they collect and donate to women and children in need. We were happy to donate all these items on behalf of Hearts of Blue."*

**Joan, Hearts of Blue volunteer on Lurana Shelter**



*"I didn't know the extent of the services they provide to these children. The statistics they shared were shocking and it was a nice feeling to give something back, even though quite small, to such an amazing organization."*

**Colleen, Hearts of Blue volunteer on Little Warriors**



*"It was amazing to hear of all the work this organization does for their local community and I was reminded of just how powerful selflessness can be in others' lives."*

**Matthew, Hearts of Blue volunteer on Families First Society**

*Please take a moment to tell us what you think  
of the 2019 Community Accountability Report at  
[ab.bluecross.ca/aboutus/annual-reports](https://ab.bluecross.ca/aboutus/annual-reports)*

Your feedback helps us share information that's important to you.



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Alberta Blue Cross is the largest benefits provider in Alberta and one of the largest in Western Canada. We serve more than 1.8 million individuals with coverage through more than 5,000 small and large employer group plans, individual plans and government-sponsored programs. In 2019, Alberta Blue Cross processed more than 64 million claim lines with a value exceeding \$3 billion.

Alberta-based and Alberta-grown, we are an independent, not-for-profit organization. We provide health and wellness plans, programs and services on a viable, not-for-profit basis for the financial protection and well-being of our communities.



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