



*Ho-ho-ho! Suzan and Ashley Philpott prepare to deliver happiness right to our members' doors.*

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

# Suzan & Ashley

## In a Tough Year, The MSA Elves Bring Joy

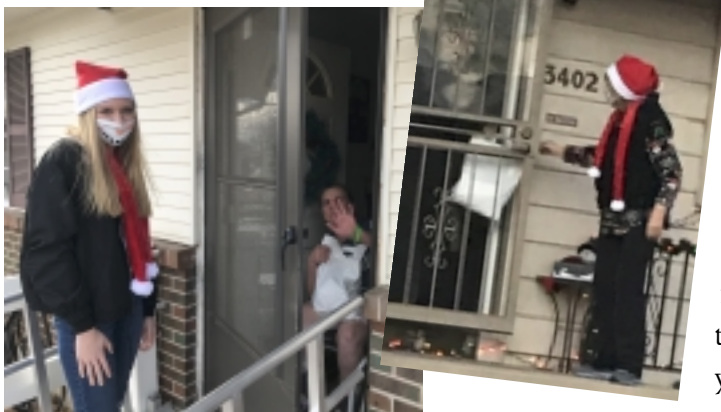
All year long our MSA clients look forward to the annual Christmas Party; a time when we all can get together to converse, laugh, inspire one-another, and share a holiday meal. For the past five years, the MSA's elves, Suzan and Ashley Philpott, have appeared to pass out gift bags filled with fun, delicious, and practical goodies to each guest. It has become the highlight of our evening. But last December, Covid-19 was the Grinch that stole our Christmas party. It left us all separated, isolated, and cheerless. And without our holiday gift bags.

Well, the elves would not let this stand. They donned their caps and sleighed into town to hand-deliver gift bags to every client's home. The joy this brought our community cannot be overstated! The MSA office has been flooded with calls, emails and posts absolutely bubbling with gratitude. It has since occurred to us, that our community deserves to know a little more about these extraordinary elfin creatures.

### Santa's Southernmost Helpers

Suzan and Ashley do not come from the North Pole. Nor do they come from Colorado Springs. They live 700 miles away in Grapevine, Texas. Each year, they begin their work on December 26th when they send scouts around town in search of great deals and fun finds. As fall approaches, they roll up their sleeves for the year's handmade additions. They've knitted hats, created ornaments, made yummy Christmas-themed chocolates, and more.

One year they developed a seek-and-find game inside glass orbs that provided hours of stimulating fun for our members.



*"Just hear those doorbells jingling, ring-ting-tingling too." Left: Ashley chats with Dian DeCasper who waves to our photographer. Right: Suzan passes a gift back to an MSA client.*

## With Love Across the Decades

Why would an elf in Texas choose to serve a group in Southern Colorado? As it turns out, Suzan and Nikki have been friends since middle school in Fort Collins. Life quickly moved them physically in separate directions, but mentally they remained close. Pre social media, this wasn't easy, and long-distance phone calls were pricey! The two friends made it work, however. Nikki even travelled to be a bride's maid in Suzan's wedding.

Later, while living in California, Nikki became active in charity work. Suzan would fly in to participate in each of Nikki's fund-raising events. Together with their families, the two ladies raised over \$100,000 for a children's cancer camp in San Diego.

After Nikki was diagnosed with MS, the focus for both women's charity work shifted. The Multiple Sclerosis Alliance of Southern Colorado eventually became the happy (and very lucky!) beneficiary of their efforts.

## With Love Across Generations

No one jumps out of the cradle ready to work on behalf of others. A child's innate sense of compassion must be nurtured and groomed toward this end. Nikki and Suzan both introduced their children to charity work at young ages. Now Suzan is doing the same with her granddaughter. Ashley's first work on behalf of the MSA was making Christmas tree chocolates for the 2015 holiday bags. She was nine years old at the time. Now at fourteen, Ashley has become a roll model to her friends. And when Suzan's projects have run behind schedule, Ashley has called on her friends to help out.

And here's a little-known secret about charity work: As Suzan and Ashley have worked to improve lives



here at the MSA, their work for the MSA has improved the lives of Suzan and Ashley. They are happier, more fulfilled and are spiritually enriched by their efforts. So to

**Left:** 9-year-old Ashley makes Christmas tree chocolates for the 2015 gift bags. **Right:** 12-year-old Ashley and her friends pack gift containers for the Grand Opening of the new MSA offices.

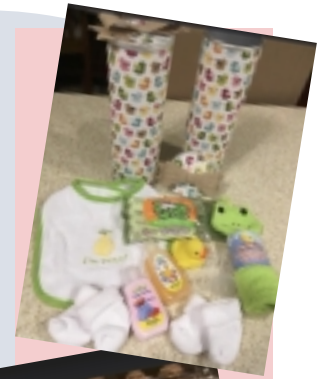
Suzan and Ashley we'd like to take this opportunity to say, "Thank you so very much." And... "You're welcome." 🧑‍🎄 We can't wait to see you at next year's Christmas party. ✨



*Right after Christmas, Suzan and her team of shoppers find the best deals!*



*Lifelong friends, Nikki (left) and Suzan (right), visit with Santa at the 2015 Christmas Party.*



*Holiday gift bags are just the beginning of Suzan and Ashley's contributions. They keep the MSA office stocked with gift cans for birthdays, child-birth, or to welcome new members. These charming cans are made from old Pringles containers.*