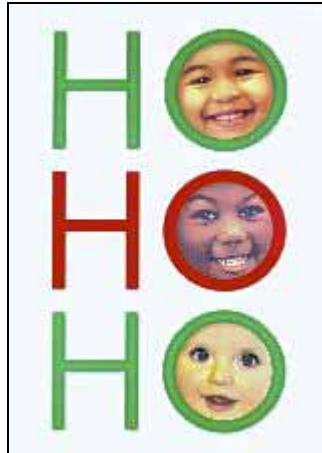


Charity cards greetings for good causes

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By Virginia Linn,
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Offering special holiday cards has been a popular fundraiser for local charities, and the effort takes on new urgency this year for many nonprofits that have been slammed by the effects of the still-slumping economy.



"Ho Ho Ho" is one of the cards benefiting Heritage Community Initiatives.

This is especially the case for Heritage Community Initiatives, a 25-year-old nonprofit in Braddock that is bracing for the Jan. 31 closing of UPMC Braddock Hospital that will send 650 jobs out of the area.

Formerly known as the Heritage Health Foundation, the organization has its roots in the former Braddock Medical Center and has gone on to create a comprehensive network of support for the struggling community. In addition to operating a quality preschool for 200 children in its 4 Kids Early Learning Network -- 3,500 children have gone through the program so far -- it also provides job training and family, health, nutrition, transportation and housing support.

While Heritage executive director Bob Grom calls the pending hospital closing "catastrophic" for Braddock, he said his organization would work hard to keep the community on track.

"Our goal is to find a long-term solution to poverty, bad health, bad jobs," he said. "We use the kid for the basis for what we grow. What does he need to grow up healthy and capable of supporting himself? He needs a safe community, good nutrition, good parenting skills, health insurance. ... We try to build off that platform at the beginning of a child's life."

To that end, Heritage also uses the children's talents to help promote the organization's mission. In its holiday cards -- as well as in an assortment of other special occasion cards -- Mr. Grom blends his photography with the crayon drawings made by preschool children.

"We wanted to tell the story through the kids, let them draw," said Mr. Grom, who has been executive director for 15 years.

A box of eight holiday cards is \$11.95. You can order either assorted boxes (one of each of the eight cards) or single-theme boxes (eight of the same card). Available online (www.kards4kids.org) or by calling Heritage at 1-877-745-4321, ext. 8.



Mary Lois Verilla's "Pittsburgh: A View From the West", the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's annual holiday card, peers at the city from the McKees Rocks area.



Cards from Make-A-Wish were designed by four Make-A-Wish children.

Here's a sampling of other charities offering holiday cards:

- **Cards of Hope:** These cards were designed by West Virginia University Children's Hospital cancer patients, survivors and their siblings during an annual summer party. They're the main resource for the Cure Kids Cancer Fund, a hospital project. Cards are \$15 per set of 20. Purchase in a single design or collection. Order online at www.cardsofhope.com or by calling 1-304-598-4346, ext. 2.
- **Junior Achievement:** This year's card of a Christmas tree with presents underneath was designed by Kathleen Dunn when she was 8. She's now a fourth-grader at St. Ursula School in Hampton. Cards sell for \$10 for a set of 25, with proceeds benefiting local JA programs. To order call Junior Achievement at 724-772-5900 ext. 111. Checks and credit cards accepted.
- **The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society:** Watercolorist Mary Lois Verilla, known as "the lady who paints Pittsburgh," celebrates her 12th year as designer of the society's card with a sledding scene and a view of Pittsburgh from McKees Rocks' Bottoms. They're available in boxes of 20 for \$20 and can be ordered by phone 1-800-726-CURE or by mail at The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, River Walk Corporate Centre, 333 E. Carson St., Suite 441, Pittsburgh, PA 15219. Mail orders include a \$5 shipping charge.
- **Little Sisters of the Poor:** Created by Sister Martha Lieb, this year's card provides a dark-green pencil drawing against an ivory background of Mary sitting and holding the baby Jesus. They're sold in groups of seven cards at \$10 (plus \$1.50 to cover shipping costs); 12 for \$15 (plus \$2); and 30 for \$25 (plus \$3). Check or credit card accepted. The cards are also available online at www.littlesistersofthepoor-pittsburgh.org. Send requests to 1028 Benton Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15212 or call 412-307-1100.
- **Make-a-Wish:** Four children, ages 8-14, who received trips to Disney World from the foundation designed this year's cards. They cost \$10 for a pack of 15 cards of the same design (plus shipping and handling). To avoid shipping charges, pick them up at the Make-A-Wish office, 37th Floor of The Gulf Tower, Downtown Pittsburgh. To order, fill out the form at www.wishgreaterpa.org, or call 412-471-WISH.

• **Multiple Sclerosis Service Society:** Two card designs are available this year, including one showing the skyline of Downtown Pittsburgh from the "City of Champions." Packs of 20 cards sell for \$22, plus postage and handling. The society also offers three calendars as gifts featuring scenes of Pittsburgh, priced \$9 or \$17, plus shipping costs. All details at www.mspittsburgh.org (click on Holiday Gift Ideas) or by calling 412-539-1090.

• **Pauline Auberle Foundation:** Brandon T., 18, created this year's design of a snowman tipping his hat for the foundation, which helps at-risk children and their families. Cards are \$8 for pack of 12. Make checks payable to the Pauline Auberle Foundation and mail them to Ann Yeager, Auberle marketing and communications manager, 1101 Hartman St., McKeesport, PA 15132. There also is a form on the foundation's Web site, www.auberle.org, to fill out and send to the office. Questions: 412-673-5856.

PEAL Center: This year's note cards feature the artwork of Mary Hamilton entitled "Peace and Harmony". Proceeds benefit PEAL (Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership) Center. Comes in packs of 8 for \$10; For details and to order go to www.pealcenter.org or call 412-281-4404 or toll free: 1-866-950-1040; Credit card or check to "PEAL Center" accepted.

• **St. Clair Hospital Auxiliary:** The gift shop is selling notecards featuring South Hills landmarks by artist Leroy G. Pettis. Packages of 12 cards cost \$12.95 and are available at the Mt. Lebanon hospital's fourth-floor gift shop, Proceeds benefit the auxiliary.

• **Seraphic Mass Association:** This year's card features the three wisemen visiting the holy family. Order as many as you want for a free-will donation. Recipients are remembered in a Novena of Masses beginning on Christmas Eve. Offerings support the Capuchin missionaries. To order, write to Seraphic Mass Association, Capuchin Mission Office, 3600 Butler St., Pittsburgh, PA 15201 or call 412-683-4700 or visit the Web: www.seraphicmass.org.

• **Three Hierarchs Eastern Orthodox School:** Its Mother of God cards support the education efforts at the only pan-Orthodox school in Western Pennsylvania. There are three versions, all blank inside. Cost is \$20 for 18-card sets; get the same design or order in mixed sets. You can download an order form at www.immanuelicons.org/theoscards.html and mail to Immanuel Icons, 931 N. Negley Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15206. Make checks out to T.H.E.O.S., and include postage costs in the total (\$5 for the first box plus an additional \$1 for each box after that). If questions: 412-396-9617.