



## Gemeente Voorschoten

Dear Voorschoten,

Christmas and New Year's Eve are just around the corner. The moment to look back on an eventful year. A year of big changes and a year that hasn't been easy. Peace on European soil is under pressure. The largest refugee influx since World War II is underway and every day there are more families wondering how to make ends meet.

But Voorschoten has shown resilience under the circumstances and has been ready to help people who need it. When a request came to receive those from the Ukraine, our doors opened. The Congregation of Huize Bijdorp and town hall also welcomed them. The official organization worked with volunteers and entrepreneurs to prepare and furnish part of town hall for this very purpose. The Ukrainian families who have been living in Voorschoten for years helped familiarize their compatriots with the area. The way to schools, sports and cultural associations were quickly highlighted so children and entrepreneurs could fill vacancies. About a hundred Ukrainians have been staying in Voorschoten for almost a year. Thanks to everyone's help, we can offer them a safe haven and these individuals have become part of our society. I am incredibly proud of that.

I am also proud that since this summer, Voorschoten has been offering temporary emergency shelter to 200 status holders and following relatives in the Van der Valk hotel. The situation in Ter Apel is degrading. We've all seen the footage. With this temporary emergency shelter, we offer a helping hand to beneficiaries who are waiting for a home elsewhere in the Netherlands. They have good living conditions until then.

This year also brought the realization that things are not as obvious as they seem. Paying an energy bill and worrying whether there is still money left at the end of the month for expensive groceries is a conundrum more families face. Our vulnerabilities have been brought to the surface overnight. The uncertainty that this entails touches us all deeply, every day. We need each other now more than ever. After helping each other get through the corona pandemic, we as a society, now face the next challenge. I have seen in the past year though that those from Voorschoten look out for each other and help where is necessary. I find that heartwarming. Together we can ensure this winter feels warm despite the uncertainties.

It has been a year of changes, for me as well. My tough, energetic, indestructible and extremely strong mom is now with her greatest love (my father), dearest mom and dad and two fantastic brothers. I'm grateful for everything my mom gave me. I would like to thank everyone for all the thoughtful cards, letters, apps and flowers I received. Also a big word of thanks to the city council, aldermen, clerk, city clerk and the civil service organization who offered me the time and space to be with her until the last moment.

Christmas is a time of hope, warmth and light. A time when we gather with family and friends. This year we can celebrate Christmas together again and ring in the new year. I hope that you spend this holiday season with the people you love and that we continue to look out for each other and help each other in the new year.

I wish you a very happy Christmas and a very beautiful and healthy 2023!

Sincerely,

Nadine Stemerding  
Mayor

