



# Gemeente Voorschoten

Dear Voorschoten residents,

2023 is a year that we won't soon forget. Our thoughts turn first to that Tuesday morning on April 4th, where a train accident placed our village on news platforms such as CNN. No matter how sad and intense the accident, the assistance provided was phenomenal. This was thanks to the great efforts of the emergency services, ProRail and the Dutch Railways, as well as help from local residents. It also didn't go unnoticed by comedian, actor and columnist Peter Heerschop. He handed out a ribbon on NPO Radio 1: "The award in the Order of 'open the door and join us mentality' goes to Voorschoten." We can be proud of that!

When I think back on 2023, I'm filled with gratitude towards the efforts of our volunteers. These individuals arrange such beautiful events in our village every year, from King's Day and the Voorschoten Weekend to the Horse Market and Open Monument Day. Our sports, welfare and cultural associations and community centers are run entirely by volunteers, who ensure we have a rich club life. Scouting played a role in Remembrance Day for the first time this year. Many residents manned the polling stations during elections in March and November. Thanks to this commitment, we can look back on how well the election process panned out. It's fantastic that we always roll up our sleeves in Voorschoten and get the job done (whatever it may be) together.

I'm making a big leap from our own village to the rest of the world. I don't know about you, but I'm already feeling dizzy with the thought of all those horrible wars. Time and again there are leaders who believe they have a reason to attack a neighboring country or population. I continue to find it incomprehensible why we inflict such misery on each other. There are three flagpoles at the town hall with which we draw attention to what is happening around us. Last October we hoisted the flag of peace. Because making peace is the only solution.

What does 2023 mean for me personally? Here I mention the train accident again, because you can imagine what an impression that makes on me. I would especially like to mention the follow-up meeting at Duivenvoorde Castle, where I could thank more than 200 emergency responders from the police, fire brigade, ambulance, control room, etc. for all their efforts. It was an emotional meeting. The moment I stood there, my thoughts went to my parents. My father, a former police officer, and my mother, raised in a blue family with two brothers who were police officers. How they would have loved to have been there too.

Christmas is a time to look back and make plans for the coming year. It's also a time for family, friends and getting together. A time of hope, warmth and light. Days in which we meet each other and celebrate new beginnings, if possible, with a nice meal and red-green Christmas decorations. And who knows, another crackling white carpet of snow, frozen ditches and skating. Under these circumstances, I wish you and your loved ones a very Merry Christmas and a peaceful New Year!

Yours sincerely,

Nadine Stemerding,

Mayor

