

Inform Refer Connect

AFL-CIO Community Services

November 2012

1203 N. 6th St. St. Joseph, MO 64501 816-364-1131 www.helpmenow.org

Dear Friends,

It's hard for many of us to imagine winter without Christmas or the chance to gather with the ones we love and experience the joy that comes with giving. We have no idea what it is like to have a tree without gifts, a table without a holiday meal, or a holiday without celebration. Yet 888 families in our area would have gone without Christmas last year had it not been for the AFL-CIO Community Services Adopt-A-Family Christmas Program. It may be difficult to imagine being one of those families, but it can be very easy to help.

I have been with the Adopt-A-Family program since its inception and have personally witnessed the impact this program has on the families it helps. From the single parent or incapacitated family unit, to the handicapped individuals and single senior citizens who are helped, I can tell you there is nothing more rewarding than knowing you are touching lives and giving hope where little is left. To these families, donors are their Santa Claus; adopters are their Christmas blessing.

The Adopt-A-Family Christmas Program is once again reaching out in fellowship to area residents to make the celebration of the season possible for those in our community who are struggling to make ends meet. Since 1983, more than 63,000 individuals have been able to experience the spirit of Christmas because of the kindness and generosity of people like you. Last year, all of those 888 families (2,998 individuals) received assistance through the Adopt-A-Family Christmas Program but we anticipate an even greater number this year because of the still-struggling economy.

Please make the Adopt-A-Family Christmas Program part of your holiday tradition by adopting a family in need or donating to the program. There are several ways to participate in the program, and those options are outlined on page 2 of this newsletter. To join in the Adopt-A-Family program this year, please call 816-364-1131, fax 816-364-2304, email adopt@helpmenow.org or make a monetary donation with the included envelope. Donations can also be made online at helpmenow.org. Is there a better way to celebrate the season of giving than by bringing joy to others?



Penny B. Adams
Director



Presidential Prose

As I write this the colors of the season are evident but not in their full glory. The date on the calendar shows that Christmas is just ahead, but my mind and spirit aren't there yet. For the staff at AFL-CIO Community Services, Christmas is in full swing as they prepare for the largest program the agency sponsors – the Adopt-A-Family Christmas Program.

If you've never had a chance to experience giving through the Adopt-A-Family Christmas Program, you should adopt a family with your family or at least sign up for a few volunteer hours. The program is the epitome of the true spirit of giving and nothing will make you feel better than seeing how many lives are touched by this incredible program. The testimonials in this newsletter explain it better than I can. (See pg 5.)

If the holidays have you too busy to invest any time, you can still participate by donating to the program. In this newsletter there are instructions for getting involved in a variety of ways.

As we approach our 30th year of giving, we want to take the time to thank all of those who have helped in the past by volunteering, donating and adopting families. This program would not be possible without the incredible support of the Northwest Missouri community.

Becky Hughes
Board Chairperson

FAQ's

Q What is the family selection process?
There are several steps. First, you should determine the number and type of family(ies) you are interested in – elderly, single-parent, large family, disabled – characteristics important to you. Secondly, come to or contact our office by fax, phone, website or email, and we will provide a variety of applicants who meet your criteria. Step three is selecting family(ies) and getting your choices back to us as soon as possible. Please keep in mind each family under your review will not be shown to other adopters. Your quick response makes it possible for us to get all the families adopted. Once your decision is made, we will need to know a few basic details, such as delivery information and type of assistance you're providing.

Q How much does it typically cost to adopt a family?
The amount spent on each family is completely up to you. The only thing we ask is each child receive one new gift. If you are buying two to three items for each member, a good estimate is \$30 to \$50 per person depending on age.

Q Do I have to buy for everyone on the list?
There are no requirements on buying for the entire family. Many times parents will indicate they do not want gifts for themselves. We do ask that all children under 18 are given at least one new gift.

Q Do I have to buy all items on the list?
Not at all. Some items on the list are included strictly to offer additional gift ideas, such as kitchen or bathroom items, that might be needed by the family. There is no requirement to buy those.

Q What if I have questions about the family's gift list?
You can call the family directly or call our agency if you'd rather be anonymous and we will contact them. (Please be sure to talk to an adult as some do not tell their children they are being adopted.)

Q Can I meet the family I adopt?
After you chose your family, you are welcome to contact them directly to make arrangements. If they are willing to meet (and most are), you can work with them on a date and time.

Q What if I can't reach my family?
Many times families do not have a phone of their own or they may lose service. If you cannot contact them through the message number on the information sheet, contact our offices at 364-1131 and we will assist you in reaching them.

Q Do I have to wrap all the gifts?
We find wrapping the gifts should be determined on a case by case basis. If the parents are planning on using the gifts as something from Santa, many times they like them unwrapped. On the other hand, some parents enjoy surprise gifts they might be given. Generally, elderly recipients like unwrapping gifts. We suggest talking to your family to help you decide.

Q Can I participate anonymously?
Yes. You can select a family, shop for them and bring the items to our office to be delivered. The families will not be

told anything about anonymous adopters.

Q How do I know they aren't getting help somewhere else?
All regional organizations that sponsor a holiday program report to our agency; we have a database that tracks all adoptions. If we find a family applied with more than one agency, they have to select one program or it is determined for them. Any fraudulent actions result in immediate removal from the program.

Q What if my budget doesn't cover the family I'm interested in?
You are welcome to find someone to partner with to provide for the family, or we can do it for you. We may be able to find a separate party to provide a food basket or additional household items that are remaining.

Q Can a family be adopted in memory/honor of someone?
Absolutely. Honorary adoptions are handled in the same way as any other adoption and the family is told they were adopted in honor of the named donor. The honoree will also be sent a certificate of notification.

Q If I don't have enough time to shop for a family can I still participate?
You can shop for general items and bring them to our offices, where we will try to match them with a family or add the items to our gift room inventory. You can also make a monetary donation to help purchase gift cards and food basket items.

Q What type of items are needed for the gift room?
We get a large number of gifts for young children, but struggle with providing enough for teens from 13 to 18. Cologne, CDs, DVDs, MP3 players, video games, hair products, hygiene sets, purses, wallets, and tennis shoes are all good items for this age group.

Did you know...

Since it began in 1983, the Adopt-A-Family Christmas program has provided services to more than 63,000 St. Joseph area residents. By the year 2016, the program would have served the equivalent of the entire St. Joseph population of approximately 76,000.



Getting involved with Adopt-A-Family as easy as 1 — 2 — 3

1 Adoption — If you choose to adopt a family or individual through the program, you will be able to experience firsthand the excitement of shopping for each family member and meeting the adults when delivering their gifts. (Or we can make the deliveries for you if you'd rather be anonymous and have Santa take the credit.) Gift cards can also be given as gifts if preferred.

2 Monetary Donation — If holiday time is at a premium or funds are limited, another option is making a monetary donation. This donation will be used to purchase gift cards and provide gifts for those who are not adopted by an outside adopter. Donations can be made on our website at helpmenow.org or by calling 364-1131. We accept debit and all major credit cards.

3 Physical Donations — Donations of clothing, toys and household items are placed in our gift room for applicants to shop for family members. Items can be dropped off at our offices after Nov 1. Gifts can also be purchased at any sponsor stores including Wal-Mart South, both K-Mart stores, and all Walgreens and Dollar Generals. Purchases at sponsor stores will be held for our staff to collect.

Adopt-A-Family Glossary of Terms:

AAF — Abbreviation for the Adopt-A-Family Christmas program; keeps staff hands from cramping when they have to type entire name.

Adoptee/Applicant — Local residents who cannot afford to buy holiday gifts for their family members due to circumstances outside of their control including job loss, illness, financial setbacks or other unforeseen events.

Adopter — Community members who provide Christmas gifts for those in the community that cannot afford to provide gifts for their family members. Adopters consist of individuals, families, businesses and other groups. (Adopter forms can be found on pg 3.)

Food Baskets — Filled with the supplies needed to feed a family for Christmas Dinner, along with some basic food staples. Food baskets can be purchased from our agency for \$AMOUNT and will be available for pick up starting Monday, December 17.

Gift Trees — Located at Wal-Mart South, both K-Mart stores, and all Walgreens and Dollar General locations throughout the city, gift trees have gift suggestion “ornaments” donors can use to buy gifts that are collected by our agency several times throughout the giving season.

Collection Boxes — Cash donation boxes located throughout the area at 70+ vendors, including service stations, retail, dining and banking institutions. Donations are collected weekly through the giving season. Donations are used to supplement the AAF program.

Gift Cards — Cards purchased with donated funds to provide those who are not selected by an adopter the opportunity to purchase gifts at a local discount store for family members. Cards are also used to purchase gifts for elderly and disabled adoptees who are not adopted publicly. Donors can purchase gift cards for adoptees through our agency by calling 364-1131.

Gift Room — A “store” located in our building used to provide gifts for families that are not selected by adopters. Gifts are collected at sponsoring stores, through walk-in donations made by community members, and throughout the year in the AFL-CIO Community Clothes Closet.

Helpers/Elves — Volunteers who work within our agency during the holiday season by taking applications, sorting gifts for the gift room, delivering gifts to families, helping adopters select families, preparing food baskets and collecting gifts from sponsor retailers. To volunteer for the AAF program, please call 364-1131.

Santa Claus — Someone who embodies the concept of providing happiness to those around them through acts of selflessness and giving. Also has strong attraction to the color red, reindeer, chimneys, and cookies and milk. Must have twinkling eyes and rosy red cheeks.

Christmas Tree Locations

You can help AAF every time you shop. By visiting any of our retail sponsors and purchasing a gift from their gift tree, you will be helping to create inventory for our gift room.

Please visit these stores during the holiday season: Wal-Mart South, both K-Mart stores, and all Walgreens and Dollar General locations.



Top 10 Collection Box Sponsors of 2012

It might just be nickels and dimes, but the change collected at the more than 70 collection boxes throughout the city adds up to a Merry Christmas for the people assisted by our agency during the holiday season.

These top 10 local businesses were responsible for more than half of the total money collected in the boxes during the 2011 holiday season. We thank them again for all they do each year.

Break Time, 6108 Lake Ave
Break Time, 402 N Woodbine Rd
Casey's, 2332 S 22nd St
Casey's, 2423 N Woodbine Rd
Culver's, 3910 N Belt
Kovac's, 2202 Frederick Ave
Kovac's, 7014 King Hill Ave
Taco John's, 2205 N Belt Hwy
Taco John's, 6110 Lake Ave
Taco John's, 1315 S Belt Hwy
UMB Bank, 3601 Mitchell Ave

Important AAF Dates to Remember

NOVEMBER

- Nov 1 – Adopt-A-Family official launch
- Nov 1-2 – Donation boxes distributed V
- Nov 10 – Adoption Trees distributed to stores V
- Nov 12 – Adoption applications ready for review
- Nov 24 - 26 – Thanksgiving Holiday, offices closed

DECEMBER

- Dec 6 – Radio Telethon
- Dec 12 – Last day for adoption applications
- Dec 13 – Food Baskets assembled V
- Dec 14 – Gift Room set-up V
- Dec 17 – Food Baskets ready for pick up & Gift Room opens V
- Dec 19 – Last Day to deliver gifts to AAF offices
- Dec 21 – Shopping Day for nursing home residents & disabled adults V
- Noon, Dec 24 – Conclusion of AAF program
- Dec 25 - 27 – Christmas Holiday, offices closed

JANUARY

- Jan 1 – New Years Day observed

Tired of mail?

To receive our newsletter online please notify us by email at afl-mail@helpmenow.org. We would be happy to send an email version for your convenience (and to save a little on postage for our agency.)

V – volunteers needed

If you would like to volunteer for any of these projects, please call 364-1131 and ask for Becky. Volunteers are needed everyday from December 17 through noon on Christmas Eve.

TESTIMONIALS

Volunteer and adopter feels blessed

It always does my heart good to see the excitement, not just on the kids' faces when we show up to deliver the things to the adopted families, but also on the parents.' The relief the parents receive when they find out they've been adopted usually shows in the form of hugs when we make the deliveries. Even the excitement with the singles and the seniors that we've adopted is heartwarming. My family has adopted for several years now and I've also helped in the Adopt-A-Family Gift Room, and each year I feel more blessed than the year before. We always look forward to that time of year and the blessings that we receive from the adopted families.

Darrick Inscho, 1st Vice President Outside Craft, CWA Local 6360

In the business of giving

In the spirit that it is better to give than receive the Adopt-A-Family program is a rewarding way for Apple Market to give back to the community. My favorite story has to do with a certain person (Mike Decker) dressing up as Santa Clause to deliver gifts to the three families we had adopted that year. As Santa Mike made his way from the store, one small boy saw him and started yelling with excitement, "HO HO HO!" "HO HO HO!" The small boy did not speak English but he did not need to, everyone knew why he was excited.

We are very fortunate to have the opportunity to give back to our community, and at the most special time of the year. Seeing the childrens' eyes light up and the smiles on the adults who had lost hope of being able to give their loved ones a special Christmas makes the Adopt-A-Family program so rewarding for all our associates that get involved.

Todd Euler (& Mike Decker), T.D. Supermarkets Inc., Apple Market

In the business of giving

A huge warm hug of thanks to you – all of you! I was able to shop for presents for my children at the "store" you provided. This helped me to be able to keep up with my bills and to keep Christmas with my kids – all four of them. I can't wait to see their faces as they open their presents. They will love the toys. Thanks you for the stocking stuffers, too.

This card isn't enough of a thank you. We will always give to your organization as we can in future years. I know my life will get better. Thank you for lifting my spirits! I can tell my children sense that and are able to relax. Thank you! May God bless each of you and this organization. May you be happy and peaceful.

Jane Scamurra, 2011 Adoptee

ADOPT-A-FAMILY CHRISTMAS PROGRAM HOW TO ADOPT A FAMILY OR INDIVIDUAL

Adopters have a variety of options. Families with children, adult individuals, senior citizens or multi-generation families are available and adopters can select as many families as they would like. Once the type of family has been determined, adopters review info sheets for several families fitting the criteria. Info sheets include clothing, shoe sizes and other items on each family member's wish list. Reviews can be done by email, fax, at our office or by mail. Families will be available for review starting **Monday, November 12**. After reviewing, adopters should notify the agency which family(ies) they would like to adopt.

If adopting a family with children we ask adopters to provide at least one new gift for each child. If adopting a young child, preferably the gift would be a toy. Gifts for the parents are at the adopter's discretion. Family holiday food baskets are also available. (Please note on the application if the family requested food.) If adopting an individual or a senior citizen, we ask the adopter to provide either a gift or a food basket. Adopters determine how much more they would like to provide.

Adopters have the option of giving gifts, gift certificates and/or holiday food baskets. If gifts – adopters shop for the gifts. (Wrapping gifts is optional.) If giving gift certificates or holiday food baskets – they can be purchased from a store or through our agency. Our agency will have holiday food baskets available for pick up starting **Monday, December 17 for \$70 each**. A food basket consists of the traditional Christmas dinner food items.

You are welcome to make contact with the family to let them know of the adoption. They should be able to provide any additional information needed. It is also good to set a time and date for delivering gifts. Adopters can also chose to remain anonymous. If adopters choose anonymity, gifts should be delivered to our agency no later than **Wednesday, December 19**. Our staff will contact the family to make arrangements.

To help with selection, our staff will need the following information. Upon completion, please email, call, fax or mail the form to our agency. We will then send you a variety of info sheets to review.

Today's date _____ Date info needed by _____
Send info to me by: Email Fax Mail I will come to office to review
Name: _____
Organization/Department: _____
Address: _____ Box # _____
City & Zip: _____
Phone: Work _____ Ext _____ AM/PM Cell _____ Home _____
Email Address _____ Fax: _____ Work or Home _____
I plan to adopt a total of # _____ families.

I want to review the following types of families:

- Family with Children - # of children- _____ Ages - _____ (ex: 5-15 yrs; infant; any)
With the following Parents - Mother Dad Both parents
 Adult Individuals - # of individuals - _____ Male Female Both Ages - _____
 Senior Citizen - # of seniors - _____ Male Female Both

Upon reviewing the info sheets and selecting a family(ies), please have the following information:

- What is being provided for the family: toys, clothing, food, gift certificates, etc.
- If supplying food, will it be purchased from our agency?
When will the basket be needed?
- If supplying gift certificates, will they be purchased through our agency? What is the dollar amount?
- Will gifts be delivered to the family or agency?
What is the delivery date?

AFL-CIO Community Services

1203 North Sixth St. St. Joseph, MO 64501

Phone: 816-364-1131 Fax: 816-364-2304 helpmenow.org



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1203 N. Sixth St.
Saint Joseph, MO 64501

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AFL-CIO Community Services

November 2012

We would like to thank these volunteers for their continued support:

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George & Carmen Clinton	Darrel Hanson	Sharon & Bob Koranda	Jason Palmer		
	Tiffany Harman		John Palmer		
			Pam Partridge		

If you are a volunteer and we excluded you from our thank yous, please let us know so we can update our files

“The best way to find yourself, is to lose yourself in the service of others.” – Ghandi