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AFL-CIO Community Services

November 2013

1203 N. 6th St.

St. Joseph, MO 64501

816-364-1131

www.helpmenow.org

Presidential Prose

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 919 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 65,500 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 919 families (3,061 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



As we approach our 30th year of giving through the Adopt-A-Family Christmas Program, we want to take the time to thank all of those who have supported the program in the past. The success of Adopt-A-Family would not be possible without the incredible support of the Northwest Missouri community.

Since 1983, the program has helped more than 65,500 area residents – which is only 7,000 individuals short of the entire City of St. Joseph population. Said like that, it really is a program that touches this community and all the people living in it. Even more impressive is the fact that these numbers only represent the families who were helped, not the thousands of people who participated in the program by volunteering, donating, or adopting families.

In 30 years, Adopt-A-Family has been able to help every qualified family that has applied for the program in some form or another. By Christmas Eve of each year, the list of unadopted families has been empty before the staff concluded the program and went home to celebrate the holidays with their families.

For Director Penny Adams and her staff, I doubt it would be Christmas if they were not able to help everyone who applied. And they could not do their job without the support of this community. It is this circle of giving that helps so many.

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.

Did you know...

If your club or charitable organization donates toys during the holiday season, you might be able to get a discounted rate from Mattel Toys. You can find out more about this discount program or sign up at www.matteltoystore.com/discount-programs.aspx

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.



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 Donation Items — 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 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 15 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 15 local businesses were responsible for more than half of the total money collected in the boxes during the 2012 holiday season.

Casey's, 2332 S 22nd St

Kovac's, 2202 Frederick Ave

Culver's, 3910 N Belt

Imperial Gas, 811 S 6th St

Kovac's, 7014 King Hill Ave

Break Time, 402 N Woodbine Rd

Little Caesar's, 2120 Mitchell Ave

Taco John's, in East Hills Mall

UMB Bank, 3601 Mitchell Ave

Crumbly Burger, 2701 Frederick Ave

Casey's, 2423 N Woodbine Rd

Casey's, 401 E Hyde Park Ave

Riverside 66, 5430 Frederick Ave

Original Pizza, 3702 Frederick Ave

City Star, 2130 Frederick Ave

Important AAF Dates to Remember

NOVEMBER

- Nov 1-2 – Donation boxes distributed V
- Nov 4 – Adopt-A-Family applications begin
- Nov 9 – Adoption Trees distributed to stores V
- Nov 11 – Adoption applications ready for review
- Nov 28-30 – Thanksgiving Holiday, offices closed

DECEMBER

- Dec 6 – Radio Telethon
- Dec 6 – Last day for adoption applications
- Dec 12 – Food Baskets assembled V
- Dec 13 – Gift Room set-up V
- Dec 16 – Food Baskets ready for pick up & Gift Room opens V
- Dec 18 – Last Day to deliver gifts to AAF offices
- Dec 20 – 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 12 through noon on Christmas Eve.

TESTIMONIALS

It takes a company effort...

Each year we ask the employees here at NMPRC to help us by donating a much needed item or items for our families. The generosity of our state employees is over whelming to our committee and the families we adopt. Although this project is near and dear to the Employee Relations Committee it is truly the employees of NMPRC that make it all possible.

Each year we place a request of items needed in our front lobby for our families. Staff then take a request and purchase the item. Each time a gift is brought to the committee it is like we are receiving the gift for ourselves. This project puts life back into the committee after a long year of hard work. It gives us renewed energy and satisfaction like no other project the committee takes on. We look forward to this project every year and can hardly wait to deliver the gifts to the families.

The families are always so appreciative that we usually leave the home crying happy tears. This is by far the most rewarding project that our committee is a part of.

Tammy Robertson, Employee Relations Committee Chair, NMPRC

Volunteer and adopter feels blessed

There are a wealth of reasons to get involved in the program. For me, it's when I see the faces of the people who the program helps out and those who are adopted, its addictive. Luckily, I have never been in a position to need help but I think it's a blessing that I am in a position where I can help the people who need it.

In the beginning, I was only going to help a couple times when it fit into my schedule and I could get away from work. Now I take an entire week of vacation each year to help with the program. And it's not just one part for me. The applicants, the adopters when they drop off presents, picking gifts up at the stores that have trees, or the tons of food that are used for the food baskets - all the things they are able to give the folks who need it. And I feel so lucky that I get to help each year. It's just amazing.

Mike Veale, President Northwest Missouri Labor Council

A heartfelt thanks

I have thought my Christmas of 2012 many times....When I think about opening that big, heavy box, not expecting to get - but to my surprise, a nice DVD/VCR combo. I couldn't believe anyone would get me such a gift and all the joy I'm getting out of it is beyond words. I cannot put into words my thanks, other than I appreciate and thank you a thousand times over.

When I was a kid, the oldest of six, I was lucky if I got a new doll for Christmas. We were poor, very poor. You have given me the best Christmas I have ever had. Thanks again for making my Christmas so special.

Jeannette Moore, 2012 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 11**. 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 16 for \$75 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 choose to remain anonymous. If adopters choose anonymity, gifts should be delivered to our agency no later than **Wednesday, December 18**. 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?



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1203 North Sixth St. St. Joseph, MO 64501
Phone: 816-364-1131 Fax: 816-364-2304 helpmenow.org

A program of AFL-CIO Community Services

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 1203 N. Sixth St.
 Saint Joseph, MO 64501

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AFL-CIO Community Services

November 2013

We would like to thank these volunteers for their support:

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| Nicole Bennett | Kendal Evans | David Johnson | Coby Moore | Doug Stanton |
| Olga & Wayne Bisig | Breona Ewing | Randy & Marcia Johnson | Gwen Muscavage | Mark Struthers |
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| Ann Dotson | Debbie Hueser | | Cindy & Marty Soper | |
| | Bailey Hughes | | | |

The staff at Casey's General Store at 22nd & Walnut raised the most change for the 2012 AAF drive. L to R: Markie Fleshman, Carrie Ingram, Manager Heather McKinney, Kenny King, Justin Milichich. Front: Becky Meadows



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