

# Tree program growing new roots through partnerships

*Continued from p.1*

cards and phone cards for the teen and elderly applicants. “We know the teens and elderly are usually left out, so it’s a good way to get them taken care of for the holidays,” she said.

The phone cards give them much needed access to communication and food cards give them some independence, she added.

“If the teens have friends that are going to grab food, it allows them to be a part of the group when they might not otherwise be able to,” Eaton said. “It might seem silly to adults, but that type of interaction is priceless to those kids.”

Mark Matthews’ Edward Jones office has hosted a holiday open house for more than 18 years and has encouraged their clients to bring a toy for Adopt-A-Family for almost half of that time. Office Administrator Marcy Hopkins said they have about 100 people who come through the open house each year and everyone takes the toy drive to heart.

“We ask that they bring one new toy, but many will bring more than one,” she said. “I already have some calling to say they have their toy bought, or asking what we need the most of this year.”

The customers’ enthusiasm has been a huge asset for the Adopt-A-Family; more than 250 toys were collected last year.

“They just really get behind it,” Hopkins said. “It’s tradition now.”

A local insurance agency has a version of the program as well. The office holds an incentive-based toy drive that is free to its customers. For every three referrals provided by existing clients, the company donates a toy for the agency gift room. It’s a win-win

for both. The office gains potential customers, and the Adopt-A-Family gift room inventory grows.

As these donors have shown, there are several ways for a business to be involved in the gift collection program. Other participation options for businesses include:

- Discount-based collections offering a deduction in cost or a free service in exchange for a toy donation
- Employee-based drives for smaller companies that would struggle with adopting entire families
- Customer-based drives that allow customers to shop and purchase items that can be collected by agency staff

The options do not stop there; agency staff will work with businesses to tailor the program to fit their individual needs and goals. In addition to picking up donated items, other materials, such as trees, collection containers, and printed materials, can also be supplied by the agency.

“Without community support, the gift room would have nothing to offer families who are not publicly adopted,” Adams said. “So building these relationships and ensuring gift room inventory is essential to the program.”

For businesses involved, it just seems like the right thing to do. “It’s just a good way to give back to the community; it brings our customers, employees and community together,” Eaton said.

## Small change, big impact

*Continued from p.1*

Over the years, more than 200 locations have hosted boxes and directly contributed to the program’s success. The agency is currently looking for new collection box locations for the 2019 holiday season.

“We do not ask the businesses to solicit customers for change, but to leave the box in an area that makes it highly visible and encourages donations,” Adams said. It is a no-maintenance investment for businesses, as the agency maintains the boxes and assumes all financial responsibilities, she added.

In 2012, the agency created the Master Elves traveling trophy in honor of the Casey’s General Store staff at 22nd & Walnut.

“The staff at Casey’s raised more than \$2,500 for the program three separate years, setting an all-time record for the 5-year contest,” Adams said. “Now the trophy is awarded to the business that raises the most funds each year.”

Currently, Sav-On Furniture Mart holds the trophy for their efforts during the 2018 holiday season, which came close to breaking Casey’s record, with a whopping \$2,239 collected.

These top 12 locations raised more than 75 percent of the total funds collected in 2018: **1st)** Sav-On Furniture Mart; **2nd)** Casey’s General Store, 22nd & Walnut; **3rd)** Green Hills, 7014 King Hill Ave; **4th)** City Star, 22nd & Frederick; **5th)** Imperial Gas, 811 S 6th St; **6th)** Green Hills, 205 W Main St, Savannah; **7th)** Little Caesar’s Pizza, Ashland Ave.; **8th)** Casey’s General Store, 401 E Hyde Park; **9th)** Riverside 66, 5430 Frederick Ave; **tied for 10th)** Casey’s General Store, 2423 N Woodbine Rd; **Little Caesar’s Pizza**, Mitchell Ave; **Jax Mart**; Alabama & Lake Ave.

“We thank these businesses for their continued support and exceptional efforts,” Adams said.

AFL-CIO Community Services  
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AFL-CIO Community Services

Fall 2019

1203 N. 6th St.

St. Joseph, MO 64501

816-364-1131

www.helpmenow.org

Dear Friends,

The Adopt-A-Family program is preparing for its 36th year. Thirty-six years of: helping single parents to put gifts under the tree for their children; making it possible for ill parents to concentrate on re-gaining their health instead of worrying about providing gifts for their children; allowing the unemployed to look for work without fretting about the lack of funds for the holidays; and providing basic staples for seniors and disabled adults who are living on a tight budget with zero wiggle room.

Over the years, 78,584 individuals have been adopted for the holidays. While gifts provided through the program are an enormous asset, it means so much more than packages under the tree. Many of the seniors have few, if any, visitors. Some of the families are alone outside of their household. Many of the single parents have no one they can turn to for help. When they are given gifts, it says to them, “you matter, someone noticed, and someone cares.”

We know this because they tell our staff year after year. They hug us because they can’t hug the adopter. They cry because they are overwhelmed by the generosity they have received. They adopt when their circumstances change because they want to give back to those who gave to them.

This program is a testament to the kindness that exists in our community. We feel blessed to bear witness to it each year and hope you decide to be a part of that kindness as well. Please continue to make Adopt-A-Family part of your holiday tradition and if you have never adopted before, please consider becoming a donor. You have no idea how many lives you can touch with simple kindness.

*Penny B Adams*

Penny B Adams, Director

## Small change makes big impact

While it might seem like small change to most, the coins collected at nearly 100 collection boxes throughout St. Joseph and Savannah adds up to a Merry Christmas for individuals assisted by the Adopt-A-Family Christmas program.

“In the past four years, the agency has been able to collect more than \$30,000 in loose change that has helped to provide gifts for seniors, disabled adults and families that would not have otherwise received gifts because they were not selected by a public adopter,” said Agency

Director Penny Adams.

A long-standing addition to the program, the boxes allow individuals to donate a little at a time as they visit local businesses. They can be found in a variety of places, including grocery stores, boutiques, banks, restaurants, convenient stores, gas stations, auto repair shops, and specialty shops.

If you are interested in hosting a collection box or have any suggestions for businesses that may be interested, please contact the agency at 816-364-1131.

*See pg 2 for more on Small change*

## Tree program growing new roots

The Adopt-A-Family program is re-vamping its retail-based gift collection program, moving it away from strictly department store-based businesses and opening it up to any company interested in helping gather items for the program’s gift room. The gift room is utilized by those families who are not publicly adopted; they are able to pick two to three new items per family member.

“We have found it is difficult for the local management of a lot of the bigger chains to get approval from corporate offices to do fundraisers for small, local non-profits,” said Director Penny Adams.

“So we are adapting by working with more local businesses, building on some relationships we already have that have proven to be successful and expanding outside of retail-only businesses.”

One such relationship is with Collision Repair Specialists. For several years, the company has collected items and monetary donations from its customers and employees for the agency’s gift room.

Owner Janice Eaton starts their personalized version of the program at the Josephine Expo in the first week of October. “We start it early so we can get ahead,” she said. “We also have a jean program where employees can pay \$2 to wear jeans on Fridays and the money goes to our Adopt-A-Family gift card fund.”

Cash donations are used to purchase gift cards for families who are unable to find appropriate gifts within the gift room and to provide restaurant gift

*See pg 2 for more on Tree*

AFL-CIO Community Services

Fall 2019

## Important Adopt-A-Family Dates to Remember

### NOVEMBER

- Nov 4** — Adopt-A-Family applications begin
- Nov 18** — Adoption applications ready for review
- Nov 28- 29** — Thanksgiving Holiday, offices closed

### DECEMBER

- Dec 4** — Radio Telethon with Q-Country 92.7
- Dec 7** — Last day for adoption applications
- Dec 16** — Last Day to deliver gifts to AAF offices
- Dec 17** — Food Baskets assembled, 9 am **V**  
Gift Room set-up, 1 pm **V**
- Dec 18** — Shopping Day for nursing home residents & disabled adults **V**  
Food Baskets ready for pick up
- Dec 19** — Gift Room opens **V**
- Dec 20** — Deliver gifts to nursing home residents & disabled adults **V**
- 1 pm, Dec 23** — Conclusion of AAF program (tentative)
- Dec 25 - 26** — Christmas Holiday, offices closed
- Dec 27- 31** — Offices closed to public
- Jan 1** — New Year’s Holiday, offices closed

**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 daily from December 17 through noon on Christmas Eve.



# Terms to know for the program

**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.)

**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.

**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 \$60- \$80, based on size, and will be available for pick up starting Wednesday, December 18.

**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.

**Gift Vouchers/Certificates** – Vouchers/Certificates are purchased with donated funds to provide those who are not publicly adopted the opportunity to purchase gifts for family members. They are also used to purchase gifts for elderly and disabled adoptees who are not adopted publicly. Donors can purchase gift vouchers/certificates for adoptees through our agency by calling 364-1131.

**Helpers/Elves** – Volunteers who work within our agency during the holiday season by taking applications, sorting gifts for the gift room, helping families shop in the gift room, shopping for elderly and shut-ins, delivering gifts to families, helping adopters select families, preparing food baskets and collecting gifts from sponsor retailers. To volunteer for the 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, snow, and cookies and milk. Must have twinkling eyes and rosy cheeks.

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

**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.

**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.

**Donation Items** – Donations of new clothing, toys, stocking stuffers, hygiene products 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. Items may also be collected through participating businesses and collected by an agency representative. (See article on pg. 1 for additional details.)

## Don't forget Christmas Dinner

In addition to holiday gifts, food baskets make a wonderful gift for the families that apply for adoption during the holiday season. The agency has food baskets available for purchase through Friday, December 13. A large basket can be purchased for \$80, and a smaller version will be available for \$60.

Baskets may vary, but will include the following: a turkey or ham, potatoes, canned vegetables, stuffing, butter, rolls, fruit, and some type of dessert, which may be cookies, pie or candies. For additional information about food basket options, please contact the office at 364-1131.



## Gifting that comes with Free Delivery

By visiting any of our business sponsors and participating in their gift tree program, you will be helping to create inventory for our gift room. (Please see article on p. 1 for more details.)

Participating stores collect the gifts and an agency representative regularly collects them throughout the holiday season. For a list of participating businesses, please visit our Adopt-A-Family Program Facebook page.

## Are you a thrifty shopper?

Put your bargain-hunting skills to good use by buying much-needed, teen-related items for our Gift Room.

We get a large number of gifts for young children, but struggle with providing enough for teens age 13 to 18. Cologne, CDs, DVDs, MP3 players, video games, hair products, hygiene sets, purses, wallets, or tennis shoes are all good items to purchase for this under-provided age group.

**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 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 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 If I don't have enough time to shop can I still help a family?**  
You can shop for general items and bring them to our agency, 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. Food baskets include items for a Christmas dinner and can be purchased for \$60-\$80, based on size, through Friday, December 13.

## 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 18**. 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 privately by you or through our agency. Our agency will have holiday food baskets available for pick up starting **Wednesday, December 18 for \$60-\$80 each**. The deadline to order food baskets is **Friday, December 13**. 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 **Monday, December 16**. Our staff will contact the family to make delivery arrangements.

If you would like to make your selection in person, please visit our office from 8 am to 5 pm beginning **Monday, November 18**. If you prefer to make your selection digitally, please provide the following information. Upon completion, please email, fax or mail the form to our agency. We will then send you a variety of information 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 agency?  
 Will the food basket be delivered to family or through agency?
- If supplying gift certificates, will they be purchased through the agency? What is the dollar amount?
- Will gifts be delivered to the family or agency?

AFL-CIO Community Services  
 1203 North Sixth St. St. Joseph, MO 64501  
 Phone: 816-364-1131 Email: adopt@helpmenow.org Fax: 816-364-2304  
 helpmenow.org



# FAQs

**Q How does the family selection process work?**  
 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 \$50 to \$70 per person, depending on age.

**Q Do I 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.