

# Adopt-A-Family FAQs

## Q: How does the family selection process work?

There are several steps. First, determine the number and type of family(ies) you are interested in — elderly, single-parent, large family, disabled — characteristics important to you. Second, come to or contact the office by phone, website or email, and staff will provide a variety of applicants who meet your selected criteria. Step three is selecting family(ies) and getting choices back to agency staff as soon as possible. Please keep in mind each family under review will not be shown to other adopters. Quick adopter responses make it possible for staff to get all the families adopted. Once a decision is made, staff will need a few basic details, such as delivery information and type of assistance being provided.

## Q: What does it cost to adopt a family?

The amount spent on each individual is completely up to the adopter. A good estimate is \$50 for children under 5; \$75 to \$80 for children from 5 to 12; and \$75 to \$100 is common for teens.

## Q: What type of gifts should be given?

Due to quality issues, ONLY NEW ITEMS can be given to families. Any family given used items by adopters will be asked to return items to the agency and will be allowed to shop in the gift room. The only exception to this rule is a prior understanding/conversation between adopter and adoptee.

## Q: Do I buy for everyone on the list?

There are no buying requirements for the entire family, however it is essential for every child to be given items. Many parents will indicate they do not want/need gifts.

## 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: Do I have to wrap all the gifts?

Wrapping gifts should be determined on a case-by-case basis. If parents are planning on using the gifts as something from Santa, many times they like them unwrapped. However, some parents enjoy any “surprise” gifts they might be given, and most elderly recipients enjoy unwrapping gifts.

## Q: What if I have questions about the gift list?

Adopters can call the family directly, or call the agency if the adoption is anonymous; the family will be contacted by staff, who will act as a go-between. (Please be sure to speak with an adult, as some do not tell children about the program.)

## Q: What if I can't reach my family?

Many times families do not have a phone or they may lose service. If adopters cannot contact families through the message number on the information sheet, they should contact the agency at 816.364.1131.

## Q: Can I meet the family I adopt?

After choosing a family, adopters are welcome to contact them directly to make arrangements for an agreed-upon delivery. If adoptees are willing to meet (and most are), the parties can schedule a date and time.

## Q: Can I participate anonymously?

Yes. Adopters can select a family, shop for them and bring items to our office to be delivered. Families are not given information about anonymous adopters.

## Q: How do I know they aren't getting help somewhere else?

Many area organizations that sponsor a holiday program report to our agency; staff uses a database that tracks all adoptions. If it is discovered a family applied with more than one agency, they are asked 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 food or additional household items that are remaining.

## 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 vouchers. Food vouchers include items for a Christmas dinner and can be purchased for \$60-\$80, based on size.

AFL-CIO Community Services  
1203 N. Sixth St.  
Saint Joseph, MO 64501

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INFO INSIDE



AFL-CIO COMMUNITY SERVICES

FALL 2024

## UPCOMING events

### NOVEMBER

**Oct 28 - Dec 6** — Adopt-A-Family applications available to adoptees  
**Nov 13** — Adoption applications ready for review for adopters  
**Nov 28 - 29** — Thanksgiving Holiday, offices closed

### DECEMBER

**Dec 9** — Last day adoption applications accepted (5 pm)  
**Dec 4** — Radio Telethon with Q-Country 92.7  
**Dec 13** — Last day to deliver family gifts to AAF offices  
**Dec 17 - 18** — Gift Room set-up **V**  
**Dec 16** — Shopping Day for nursing home residents & disabled adults **V**  
**Dec 18 - 24** — Gift Room open **V**  
**Dec 19 - 20** — Deliver gifts to elderly & disabled adults **V**  
Nursing home staff pick up gifts from agency  
**Dec 20** — Shopping Day for nursing home residents & disabled adults, Round 2 (if necessary) **V**  
**Dec 24, 12 pm** — Conclusion of AAF program (tentative)  
**Dec 25 - Jan 3** — Christmas & New Year Holidays, offices closed  
**Jan 6** — Agency resumes regular hours

**V — volunteers needed** If you would like to volunteer for any of these projects, please call 816.364.1131 and ask for Becky. Volunteers are needed daily from December 16 through noon on Christmas Eve (except Sundays).



Have a question not answered here? Please email [adopt@helpmenow.org](mailto:adopt@helpmenow.org) or call 816.364.1131.

FALL 2024

# HelpMe Headlines

AFL-CIO COMMUNITY SERVICES

1203 N. 6th St., St. Joseph, MO 64501

[www.helpmenow.org](http://www.helpmenow.org)



## Adopt-A-Family program returning to its roots in starting with children first



*Nichi's Notes*  
Nichi Seckinger,  
Executive Director  
AFL-CIO Community Services

Over 40 years, the Adopt-A-Family program has grown into the area's largest holiday giving program, with more than 100,000 individuals receiving gifts through the program since it began in 1983. Just like our community, the program has had years of wealth and years of strife; times when adoptions were wrapped up days before the holiday, and years when our Santa's helpers were still delivering during the wee hours of Christmas morning. Wonderful and expansive partnerships have come and gone over the years, helping the families with additional goodies like bicycles and cleaning supplies. Adoptions were so successful adopters began assisting seniors, disabled adults and households without children.

However, the past several years have proven to be more difficult for the agency, its partners, and adopters. Dollars are harder to come by and the number of households needing assistance continue to climb.

Because this program was created for families with children, it has been decided the focus of the program needs to return to its original intent to ensure children are able to experience the joys of Christmas. Therefore, the agency will continue to process applications for families with children, as well as seniors and adults who currently receive disability or social security benefits, but those adult-only household that do not receive federal cash benefits will not be eligible for the 2024 Adopt-A-Family program.

This decision was not an easy one for the agency, as the Christmas spirit is something everyone should enjoy. Yet, those of us who has experienced the wonder of being a child who left cookies for Santa, found goodies under the tree, or got to unwrap that one gift you put on your letter to Santa (more than once!), all know that Christmas is for children! With that in mind, the program is returning to its roots and putting the children in our community first.

This program has always been about assisting the most vulnerable in our area — low- to no-income families, seniors and disabled adults on fixed incomes — and this change will work to ensure these households are given the chance to celebrate the season the way it is intended — with joy in the spirit of giving!

We hope you can join us in making this a season to remember for so many deserving families in our community.

Make it merry

How you, your business or organization can bring joy to others this season.

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Program FAQs

We answer your questions on everything Adopt-A-Family.

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Upcoming events

Mark your calendars now for important 2024 dates.

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# Ways **YOU** can help others this holiday season

## Adopt

Experience firsthand the excitement of shopping for each family member and meeting the adults when delivering their gifts. (Or the agency can deliver, if adopters choose to be anonymous and have Santa take the credit.) Gift cards can also be purchased from the agency and given to the families to purchase family gifts, if preferred.

You or your organization can choose the family or senior, based on their story, number of family members, or even the ages of the children.

Stop by the agency to read through the stories of available families and seniors to select, or contact 816.364.1131 or adopt@helpmenow.org for more information.

## Donate Funds

One of the best ways to help is to make a monetary donation to the Adopt-A-Family program. The agency uses the funds towards purchasing gift cards, food vouchers, and gifts for individuals and families not adopted by an outside adopter. Without these critical donations, the agency would not be able to secure a happy Christmas for so many children, families, and seniors who ask for help.

Donations can be made by scanning the QR code; online at helpmenow.org; calling 816.364.1131; or dropping by/ mailing to the agency at 1203 N. 6th St., St. Joseph, MO 64501.



DONATE NOW

## Volunteer

Without volunteers, the Adopt-A-Family program would not survive. There are numerous opportunities for individuals and teams to help, from accompanying parents through the gift room at the agency, to shopping for seniors and delivering gifts.

If you or members of your organization would like to volunteer or to get more information, please contact Becky at 816.364.1131 or becky.gach@helpmenow.org.



*On behalf of agency staff and Board of Directors, we want you to know how much every effort you provide to the program matters to us and in the lives of others. Simply put, the seniors, families and especially the children who apply to this program would not be able to celebrate the holidays without YOU.*

## Give Gift Items

Donations of NEW toys, games, stocking stuffers, clothing, household items, hygiene products, blankets, and more are placed in the gift room for applicants (who are not adopted by an outside adopter) to shop for their children and teens.

This is an ideal way for individuals, families and organizations to collect gifts without shopping for specific individuals, and is a fun way to pick out toys and other items, big or small, you think others would like.

Gifts can be dropped off at the agency at 1203 N. 6th Street, or shop our convenient Amazon wish list by scanning the QR code.



SHOP AMAZON  
WISH LIST



### Help with gifts for teens

Think you can decipher the minds of what teens want these days? The gift room gets a large number of items for young children, but struggles to provide enough for teens age 13 and up.

Cologne, DVDs, earbuds, gift cards, phone cards, video games, throw blankets, bedroom decor, jewelry, hair products, hygiene sets, art sets, purses, wallets, sports items or tennis shoes are all good gifts to purchase for this under-provided group.



### Families need Christmas dinner

In addition to holiday gifts, food vouchers are for families who apply for adoption during the holiday season. These can be purchased through the agency.

A large voucher can be purchased for \$80 (up to 6-8 people) and a smaller version (up to 4-6 people) for \$60.

Amounts vary based on voucher size, but include the following: a turkey or ham, potatoes, canned vegetables, stuffing, butter, rolls, fruit, and dessert.

# Donations make it a merry Christmas for families

## Agency looking for toy donation locations to supply gift room

The agency is once again looking for community partners willing to collect toys and other gift items for the Adopt-A-Family gift room. The gift room is utilized by those families who are not publicly adopted; those adoptees are able to pick two to three new items per family member from the items donated. In addition to toys, common needs for the gift room include household goods, bedding, small appliances, cookware, clothing, electronics, video games, hygiene/grooming kits, cologne, etc.

"These items are crucial to the success of the program," said Executive Director Nichi Seckinger. "Without the gift room, approximately one-third of our families would not be provided with sufficient gifts for all of their family members."

Agency staff will work with businesses to tailor-fit to their individual needs and goals. In addition to picking up donated items, other materials, such as trees, collection containers, and printed materials, can be supplied by the agency.

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

## Businesses, organizations get creative to collect

The Buchanan County Courthouse hosts annual employee events in the first weeks of December, to raise funds for Adopt-A-Family. Some of their creative ideas have included "Santa-grams," in which employees can send a card with a note to a co-worker/friend (any employee of the courthouse or county), charging a quarter per card; a door decorating contest, with a different theme each year, with employees using money to vote for their favorites; and an ugly sweater contest for one day, employees again voting with money. Their biggest event is a silent auction of everything including coats, jewelry, toys and many miscellaneous items — employees donate the items and bid. This auction raised \$1,000 in one day last year.



Club Geek's annual toy drive collected 314 toys in 2023, surpassing their goal of 250.

Club Geek bar in Downtown St. Joseph holds a yearly toy drive, to collect items for the Adopt-A-Family gift room. As co-owner Bridgette Ballinger explains, "Geeks buy the best toys," and their patrons bring in action figures, LEGO sets, character lines like Pokemon and anime, as well as toys they would have enjoyed as kids. The bar tries to break their record of donations every year — in 2023, they collected 314 toys for the program.

Tubes bike shop on Frederick Avenue incorporated donations for Adopt-A-Family into their customer holiday party/year celebration last year. They asked guests to bring toys and cash, as well as raffled off bike-themed items supplied by their vendors.



The Buchanan County Courthouse employees went all out in their decorating contest last year, including snowman, Grinch and winter scenes, to raise funds for the program.



### Toy collection suggestions

There are several ways for a business or organization to be involved in the gift collection program, including:

- Discount-based drives offering discounts for a toy donation
- Employee-based drives for smaller companies that might struggle with adopting entire families
- Customer-based drives allowing your clientele to purchase items which can be collected by agency staff

## Collection boxes bring needed change

A long-standing program asset, collection 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, banks, restaurants, convenience stores, auto repair shops, and specialty boutiques. Over the years, more than 200 locations have contributed to the program's success.

Businesses are not asked to solicit donations; instead, we ask participants to leave boxes in a highly-visible area to encourage donations. It is a no-maintenance 'donation' for businesses, as the agency maintains the boxes and assumes all financial responsibilities. **The agency is currently looking for new collection box locations for the 2024 holiday season. To host a box, please call 816.364.1131.**

### Master Elf Traveling Trophy

The agency created the Master Elves traveling trophy in 2012 to honor those who embrace the program and to encourage friendly competition. The staff at Casey's General Store (22nd & Walnut) raised a record-setting \$2,500 for the program three separate years.

Now, the trophy is awarded annually to the business that raises the most funds. Currently, Brothers Market, in Savannah, holds the title for their 2023 efforts, collecting more than \$412.

### Top Collectors for 2023

These top 12 locations raised more than 50 percent of the total funds collected in 2023:

- 1st) **Brothers Market**, Savannah;
- 2nd) **Brothers Market**, 5th Ave.;
- 3rd) **Green Hills**, King Hill Ave.;
- 4th) **City Star**, Frederick Ave.;
- 5th) **Ray's Green Hills #2**;
- 6th) **Nodaway Valley Bank**, King Hill Ave.;
- 7th) **TIE City Star**, Edmond St. and **Little Caesar's Pizza**, Ashland Ave.;
- 8th) **Commerce Bank**, Frederick Ave.;
- 9th) **TIE Casey's General Store**, Wathena, and **Little Caesar's Pizza**, Mitchell Ave.;
- 10th) **Culver's**.



## Program seeking gift cards sponsor!

In past years, a very generous local business has sponsored gift cards for the agency to use as supplemental gifts for struggling families. These include small-denomination cards for things like fast food and coffee to larger-denomination cards to big box stores for supplying food, household essentials and additional gifts. Due to retirement, the agency is now in need of a new sponsor for these gift cards. If your business is willing to help, please contact Nichi Seckinger at 816.364.1131 as soon as possible.