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Arapahoe County Adopt a Family seeks holiday gift sponsors

Share the holiday season with local foster youth, at-risk seniors and families in need

Littleton, Colo. – Imagine the holiday season through these eyes: You are a foster child in a temporary home while your family works to resolve concerns for your safety and well-being. You are an elderly citizen who has been abused, neglected or exploited by someone you trusted. You are a single parent struggling to get by on food assistance who dreads telling your children why ‘Santa’ can’t come this year.

The season will be brighter for many such citizens, thanks to the generosity of community members who donate new, wrapped gifts through the Arapahoe County Adopt a Family Holiday Giving Program.

Adopt a Family is a non-profit organization created by County employees that matches gift sponsors with foster children, at-risk seniors and families in dire financial hardship who are referred by the Department of Human Services. Last year, the program helped more than 230 households. Now in its 10th year, the Adopt a Family Program has 275 households and more than 950 individuals who need to be adopted by Nov. 30.

“No matter how much you can donate, your gifts will help brighten the holidays and help fill a family’s needs for months to come,” said Arapahoe County Commissioner Nancy Jackson, who signed up with her fellow commissioners to personally adopt a household that includes a single mom with four kids.

By signing up as a sponsor, you can be matched with a family whose needs and wish list fits your budget and touches your heart. The lists include basic needs, such as household items, toiletries, grocery cards and bus passes, as well as a few wishes, such as toys or games. Gift cards and monetary donations also are welcome. All contributions and purchases toward the program are tax-deductible, with 100 percent of the gift going to local citizens in need.

“It is rewarding to not only help a family in need, but to also watch our staff of more than 200 rally with gifts and monetary donations,” said Pam Bilash, Executive Vice President of Human Resources for Centennial-based onTargetjobs, Inc, which keeps its annual holiday giving efforts local by supporting Adopt a Family. The company’s employees donated \$11,000 to the program in 2009 and have adopted two families in 2011.

Sponsors are asked to deliver new, wrapped gifts or contributions between 8 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. on Dec. 5 or 6 to the County’s CentrePoint Plaza (14980 E. Alameda Dr, Aurora.) The adopted families must remain anonymous due to confidentiality requirements, and will arrive at a later time to pick up their gifts. The

adopted families and individuals also will be treated to a holiday party sponsored entirely by Convention Designs and The Wildlife Experience.

“Being in the system is not easy around the holidays,” said an 18-year old foster youth, who was one of 1,060 individuals who received gifts through Adopt a Family last year. “My life has been hard. I never was a kid; I grew up so fast. So when I opened those amazing presents, I felt like a little kid... That is something I will never forget... because I have people out there in the world that have big hearts and are willing to put kids that are in foster care first before them.”

If you would like to make a difference for your neighbors in need this holiday season, please sign up to donate online at www.co.arapahoe.co.us or call 303-636-1851 for more information.

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To download photographs, please click on the following link:

<ftp://www.co.arapahoe.co.us/Pub/CM/Photos/AdoptaFamily/>

GroupVoyagers.jpg – Employees at Littleton-based Group Voyagers hired a motorbus in 2010 to haul the gifts for 14 needy families to the Adopt a Family Winter Wonderland.

Wonderland.jpg – County employee Julie Schilling (left) accepted gifts in 2010 from Pam Miles with Aurora-based Merrick & Company, who coordinates an annual company-wide effort to donate gifts through Adopt a Family.