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## Share in the spirit of local giving this holiday season

*Arapahoe County 'Adopt a Family' Holiday Giving program seeks donators*

**Aurora, Colo.** – Your holiday budget may be a bit slimmer this year, and that's why the Arapahoe County Adopt a Family program is asking for your help in whatever shape it may take.

Adopt a Family is a non-profit organization created by County employees that seeks to give a special holiday season to local children, seniors and families in-need. The program identifies residents through the County's Department of Human Services who are victims of abuse and neglect or are experiencing dire financial hardship, and would otherwise likely go without gifts.

Now in its ninth year, the Adopt a Family Program is experiencing the highest level of need ever, with a record 301 households and 959 individuals who need to be adopted by Nov. 30.

"The economic downturn has hit families hard, and the need is greater than ever for community members, businesses, and organizations to pledge to adopt a family or child this holiday season," said Arapahoe County Commissioner Frank Weddig. "No matter how much you can give, we guarantee that your generosity will bring joy to your neighbors here in Arapahoe County."

Once you sign up to donate, you will be matched with a family whose needs and wishes fit your budget and touch your heart. For example, you can choose to give to a foster child who needs sneakers, but wishes for an MP3 player like their peers; or you can adopt an entire family of six that needs winter clothes, but also wants board games or movies to enjoy together.

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 feels good to see so much 'good' close to home," said Pam Miles, a lifelong Arapahoe County resident and IT analyst at Merrick & Company who coordinates an annual company-wide effort to donate gifts through Adopt a Family. This year, the Aurora-based engineering company has adopted 14 families. "We already have a commitment from more than 30 employees. We can do much more when we work together and everyone involved just loves it."

“We have two boys of our own, ages 14 and 9, and we would like them to experience the true meaning of the holidays and giving,” said Rebecca Jackson of Centennial, who will give gifts to a household that includes a grandmother, a mother, and two school-aged boys.

Donators are asked to deliver new, wrapped gifts or contributions between 8 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. on Dec. 6 or 7 to a specially-created Winter Wonderland in 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 also will be treated to a holiday party sponsored entirely by Convention Designs and The Wildlife Experience.

If you would like to make a difference for your neighbors in need this holiday season, sign up to be a donator through Adopt a Family at [www.co.arapahoe.co.us](http://www.co.arapahoe.co.us) or call 303-636-1150 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/>

**MerrickDonates.jpg:** Employees at Aurora-based Merrick & Company join forces each year to donate gifts to needy county residents through the Adopt a Family holiday giving program.