

DHSS Adopt-A-Family Holiday Program Seeks Donors to Provide Gifts for Delaware Children, Families and Seniors in Need

NEW CASTLE (Nov. 16, 2017) – The Department of Health and Social Services' Adopt-A-Family Holiday program is seeking donors to help make the holiday season a happier one for thousands of children, adults, people with disabilities and seniors in need in Delaware.

The Adopt-A-Family Holiday program anonymously matches donors to a senior, individual with a disability or a family with at least one child. In 2016, the Holiday Adopt-A-Family program, through the leadership of the Human Services Councils of New Castle County and Kent/Sussex counties, helped 1,927 Delawareans.

"It's important those of us who have the ability to help others in need take the opportunity to do so, especially during this time of year," said Gov. John Carney. "Donating through Adopt-A-Family's Holiday program is a good way to make sure the needs of some of our fellow Delawareans are being met over the holidays."

The deadline to "adopt" a family is Dec. 8, and all gift cards and gifts must be delivered to the Adopt-A-Family office by Dec. 15.

Adopt-A-Family provides the donor with the age and gender of each child in the family and a brief description of the circumstances that led to their need for assistance. The donor then provides gift cards for the head-of-household to use to

purchase holiday gifts. The recommended minimum gift is \$100 per child, with a gift card for the parent/guardian optional but thoughtful.

Those interested in adopting a senior or a person with a disability will be matched to an individual in need who is living in a nursing home or living alone receiving in-home care services. A wish list of things the individual enjoys, needs, or would appreciate, as well as clothing preferences and sizes, will be provided.

“Even as many Delawareans face their own struggles, they continue to show their generosity each year by giving to the Adopt-A-Family Holiday program and helping neighbors who find themselves in even more vulnerable positions,” said Dr. Kara Odom Walker, Secretary of DHSS. “I am heartened by the true spirit of giving witnessed through this program.”

Families who are adopted are contacted by Adopt-A-Family to pick up their gift cards from their respective Adopt-A-Family office. Eligible recipients are referred to Adopt-A-Family by a social worker or case manager through state agencies and human service nonprofit organizations.

“Each year we find that many of our neighbors in need are referred to Adopt-A-Family through our State Service Centers, and other organizations, because of serious medical conditions, behavioral health challenges, domestic violence, homelessness and unemployment,” said Renée P. Beaman, Director of DHSS’ Division of State Service Centers, which operates the program. “The stories of those in need are poignant, and I am hopeful that my fellow Delawareans will respond generously.”

These circumstances serve as a sampling of the hundreds of individuals and families available for adoption this season.

- Single veteran father and teenage son experienced homelessness this past year, but were recently placed into permanent housing. Father is seeking employment. His 15-year-

old son is active in school and loves football. This family would appreciate any assistance to brighten up their holiday.

- Mother and four children lost their apartment earlier this year. After staying with friends and in shelters, the family is now living with the children's paternal grandfather. Family lost most of their belongings. Mom is working three part-time jobs as well as taking classes to become a certified medical assistant with a goal to complete the program by next year.

- Family of seven, including a new baby. Husband is no longer in the home due to domestic violence. In addition to her children, the mother is caring for her elderly mother who has stage 4 cancer. Mother is seeking resources and assistance to ensure her children can enjoy the holiday season despite their hardships this year.

- Family of eight. Grandmother recently gained custody of six grandchildren. The parents are not active in the children's lives. Grandmother cannot work because she is the only caretaker of the children. Her 18-year-old daughter is still in school and helping with younger children when possible. Grandmother is struggling to keep her grandchildren out of foster care.

To "adopt" an individual or family, please contact:

- New Castle County: New Castle County Adopt-A-Family at 302-792-6150 or email sharon.brown@delaware.gov. Hours are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Mail or drop off donations to this address: Adopt-A-Family, 3301 Green St., Claymont, DE 19703.

- Kent and Sussex counties: Kent and Sussex Adopt-A-Family at 302-424-7260 or email elizabeth.senato@delaware.gov. Hours are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Mail or drop off donations to this address: Adopt-A-Family, 13 SW Front St., Milford, DE 19963.

After shopping for the residents, items can be dropped off at Adopt-A-Family offices in New Castle County (3301 Green St., Claymont) or Kent and Sussex counties (13 SW Front St., Milford). Donors will be given a code when they are matched to include with the gift cards or items when they drop them off so the Adopt-A-Family knows who should receive the items.

If you need to arrange an alternate "time" for delivery, please feel free to ask the Adopt-A-Family Team as they are able to make accommodations when needed.

The Adopt-A-Family program aids families in crisis – those struggling with illness, homelessness, domestic violence, poverty or unemployment – throughout the year. The program began in 1973 by Marge Meyerman and is coordinated by the Division of State Service Centers in all three counties.

For more information about Adopt-A-Family, go to the website or contact your nearest state service center.

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The Department of Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of life of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations.