

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding MOM's Sharing Christmas Program

Thank you for your interest in MOM's Sharing Christmas Program. We hope this FAQ will answer all of your questions. If not, please feel free to contact our volunteer Sharing Christmas Coordinator, Elaine Bogen, at 826-3415, sharingchristmas@momhelps.org. The matching process takes time, so we thank you in advance for your patience.

Do I get to pick my family? We ask each donor what size family they would like to sponsor and recommend that donors spend not more than \$50 per person in their chosen family. We make every attempt to honor special requests (i.e. families with children; families without children; elderly; etc.)

How do I know what to buy the family? Each family completes a Wish List that includes 3 "wishes" per family member, each with a value not to exceed \$50. You may purchase one or more gifts from the list or you may choose to purchase something else. You do not need to purchase all 3 items, rather, use the list as a guide. Please remain as close to the \$50 limit as possible. We encourage you to be creative (things on clearance, homemade goods, etc.!).

What if they ask for something over \$50? The items on the lists are those that the family members "wish" for. In some cases, the "wishes" may exceed \$50. Feel free to skip those items and purchase something else on the list or something that you think the family member might enjoy. You can also be creative. Each item need not be brand new. For example, a child asked for a new bike (clearly over \$50). The donor knew of someone who had outgrown their bike and was willing to donate it. The donor spent her \$50 on getting the bike tuned up and purchasing a new helmet.

How do I find out more information if I have questions about my list? You are encouraged to call the family directly. All families have agreed to be contacted as a qualification for signing up for the program. If you aren't sure about a size or color and have difficulty reaching the family, consider including a gift receipt with your gifts so that the family may return or exchange the item.

Should the gifts be wrapped? Will the children know who they're from? Please wrap the gifts and address them to whom they are intended. In some cases, parents put gifts under the tree and say they have come from the parents themselves. We don't discourage this, as it is often important for parents to show children that they are providing for them. Your donations to families help to relieve a lot of stress. Sometimes parents say the gifts are from Santa, and in other cases, parents tell the children that the gifts were donated. No matter how they are presented, what's most important is that as a donor, you have given from the heart to families in need. You may wish to put gifts in a garbage bag so they are less obvious to the children whose parents may wish to keep the donation secret. You may work this out directly with the parents.

Do I need to purchase gifts for the adults in the family? Yes! Our program provides for entire families, not just children. In many cases, adults in families haven't been able to purchase things for themselves in quite some time. A gift is always a joyous blessing and surprise.

How do the gifts get to the families? Because MOM has very little storage space, we ask that donors deliver gifts directly to families. Families often enjoy meeting the donors. Some donors and families prefer to have donations dropped off at picked up at a neutral location. We ask donors to remain as flexible as possible when choosing the option they prefer, but understand if you are interested in one method or another.

When do gifts need to be delivered? Gifts should be delivered to families between December 15 & 20. Many families leave within a week of Christmas to visit family, etc. School will be out for some on December 20 and we want to assure gifts are delivered before then.

Why do families ask for things that seem unnecessary when they are in need? We all enjoy items of luxury and comfort. Such things add quality to our lives. At MOM we are able to help with many things that families need, but few of the luxury items they really want. Our goal is not to judge, but only to provide.

Why do families ask for things that they are in need of instead of toys and fun items? There are many reasons, but often families feel that these items would make them most happy. Since the purpose of our program is to add joy and comfort to people's lives, it is okay to give them these types of items. Again, we do not judge, we merely provide.

Can I donate a Christmas tree or ornament to my family? Each year we get many requests for trees so that families can have something around which to celebrate and add the Christmas spirit to their homes. In general, families are thrilled with real or artificial trees. Any ornaments, lights or trees that you can donate, even older ones from your collection, are welcomed and appreciated. You may make arrangements with the family according to whatever is most feasible to you.

Can I purchase my family food or a meal? If you are interested in doing this, you may call and ask the family with whom you have been matched. We never discourage food donations. If you have items to donate you may also consider donations to the Food Pantry.

Will the families be contacting me as a donor? The families only know that they have been matched with a donor, but not specifically who their donor is. You are free to call and talk with your family and you may choose to provide your contact information if you wish, but this is not required. Donors often choose to remain anonymous.

What do I do if my family doesn't speak English? In all cases we've asked families to identify someone who can help translate. If you need to contact someone in your adopted family and have difficulty communicating, please call the Sharing Christmas Coordinator.

Will my family be getting gifts from elsewhere? We ask participating families not to enroll in any other gift giving programs (such as Toys for Tots) and we work with these organizations to make sure that no one is taking part in more than one program. Families may receive gifts from other family members or friends. Each family that is participating has been screened and determined by MOM staff to be eligible. We do not require that families receive no other gifts. In fact, we think it is wonderful if we are not a family's only support network.

Have the families who participated been screened? Each program participant is screened by MOM staff and is verifiably in need. In some cases, donors in the past have brought gifts to families and have felt, by seeing certain items in the home, that perhaps they are not in need. Due to confidentiality and privacy issues, we cannot tell you WHY a family is qualified. Perhaps they have been laid off or have acquired an illness that has drained their resources. Please give from the heart and know that your purchases are going to help make someone's holidays much brighter.